

New Funding for Strategic Initiatives to End Extreme Poverty

- Award-winning DREAMS poverty graduation program to be piloted among households living in extreme poverty in Kenya for the first time.
- The grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation is expected to impact over 4,000 lives in Kenya and empower the launch of 240 businesses
- Funding will also allow Village Enterprise to lay the foundation for three county governments in Kenya to manage poverty graduation programs

SAN CARLOS, Calif., February 29, 2024 — Village Enterprise, the non-profit seeking to end extreme poverty in rural Africa through entrepreneurship, innovation, and collective action, today announces a \$1.5 million grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.

The grant will fund two new strategic initiatives in Kenya to sustainably scale Village Enterprise's proven poverty graduation model through collective action. The aim of the project is to strengthen partnerships with county governments, empowering them to independently manage graduation programs. It also aims to work with private sector businesses to better link entrepreneurs to markets through the award-winning DREAMS model.

Empowering local delivery of poverty graduation

Village Enterprise will work closely with three county governments in Kenya - Makueni, Taita Taveta, and West Pokot - to develop and implement clear poverty graduation policies, build the capacity of government officials to manage the programs, and develop an integrated monitoring system to track graduation program participants efficiently.

The aim is to lay the groundwork for county governments to independently manage and scale graduation programs to help more people lift themselves out of extreme poverty.

Building private sector networks

In addition, Village Enterprise will pilot its innovative Delivering Resilient Enterprises and Market Systems (DREAMS) model, developed with Mercy Corps, in Garissa County of Kenya. The targeted outcomes for the initiative include training 720 people living in extreme poverty to become first-time entrepreneurs who will launch 240 new businesses in groups of three. These new businesses will positively impact the lives of 4,800 people living in extreme poverty.

This is the first time the DREAMS approach will be tested in Kenya after successful implementation in Ethiopia and Uganda. It is also the first time DREAMS will target and work with general populations living in extreme poverty, as the model has previously been implemented with refugee populations living in settlements. DREAMS aims to link graduation program participants not just to markets but also to private sector actors like financial institutions, and agriculture input providers. If successful, it could demonstrate a sustainable model for integrating graduation with market systems and the private sector that could be replicated across sub-Saharan Africa.

Dianne Calvi, CEO and President of Village Enterprise, commented:

"This generous grant will allow us to demonstrate how our graduation approach can be scaled sustainably through partnerships with local governments and private sector actors to transform the lives of families living in extreme poverty in rural Africa. We are very grateful to the Bill & Melinda Gates

Foundation for their investment in these two strategic initiatives in Kenya to end extreme poverty through collective action.”

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Notes to editors:

Find out more about Village Enterprise’s work [here](#).

About Village Enterprise

Village Enterprise’s mission is to end extreme poverty in rural Africa through entrepreneurship, innovation, and collective action. We work with vulnerable women, refugees, and youth who are most impacted by climate change, conflict, and displacement, and equip them with skills and resources to launch climate-smart businesses, build savings, and put themselves and their families onto a sustainable path out of extreme poverty. Village Enterprise has started over 74,000 businesses, trained over 264,000 first-time entrepreneurs, and positively transformed the lives of over 1,565,000 people in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo-Brazzaville, Mozambique, and Tanzania.

