

JANUARY – JUNE 2021

Insider Report



African
Visionary
Fund



Photo: SaCoDé

A Letter from Our Co-CEOs

Dear Partners,

While the world around us continues to change, we remain steadfast in our mission to drive resources to incredible African visionaries. Through the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, economic disruptions, and climate change crisis - African social innovators have shown time and time again their staying power, their innovation, and their impact. They are the future of development on the continent and we are determined to continue to accelerate their impact.

In the last six months, we have committed our first US\$1M in funding, announced our co-CEO, partnered with African visionaries to review & revise our grantmaking criteria, reached close to \$4M towards our \$10M by 2023 goal - and more! We are deep in the phase of organizational growth & change that comes with entering our second year of operations and continue to balance our wildest dreams with our realist capacities. Read on to meet our incredible Visionary Partners and get under the hood of the happenings at the Fund in the first half of 2021.

With 100+ referrals of African-led organizations into our pipeline in the last six months and philanthropic systems change in our sights - we know this is just the beginning. Thank you for your partnership, support, and mentorship. We could not do this work without you.

With gratitude,

Atti Worku
CO-CEO

Atti Worku

Katie Buntin-Wamaru
CO-CEO

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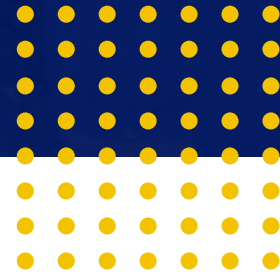
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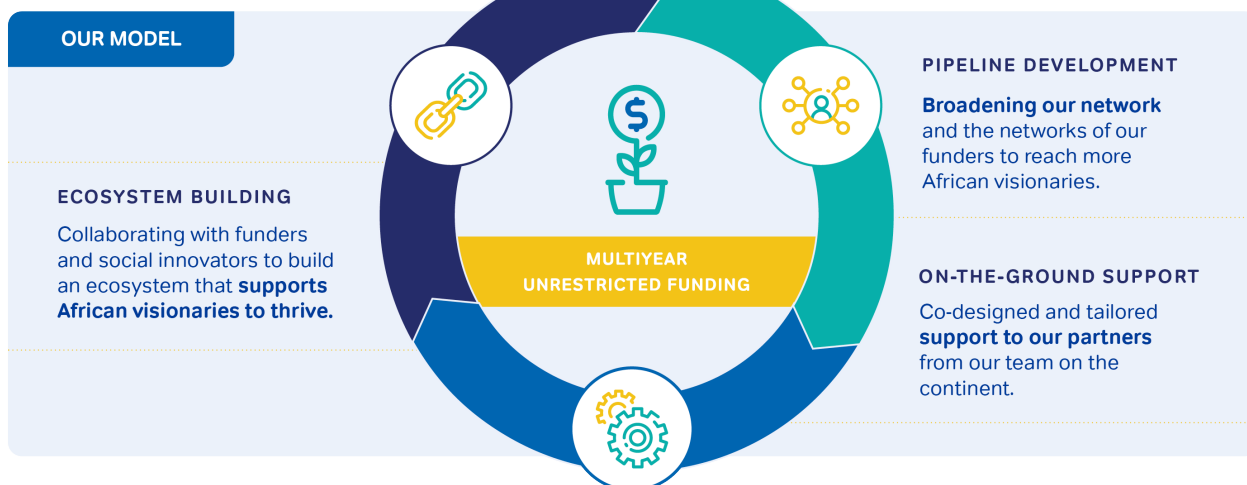
About The African Visionary Fund



The **African Visionary Fund** is a pooled fund on a mission to drive more resources to African visionaries to accelerate their impact. We are unleashing breakthrough impact by driving resources to high-impact African founders. We are tackling inequities and righting the power imbalances in philanthropy by offering unrestricted, unburdensome funding to African visionaries.

We envision a world where African visionaries have access to the resources they need to accelerate their impact and are recognized by funders as critical drivers of systems change on the continent.

Our Approach



By the Numbers



Over **3 million** people impacted across 5 countries by our Visionary Partners



\$3.9M raised towards our \$10M goal by 2023



\$1M committed to **6** high-impact African-led organizations



On track to commit **\$2.5M** to **15** African-led organizations by close of 2021



80+ applications reviewed for co-CEO position bringing Atti Worku on board



100+ peer & network referrals of African-led organizations into our pipeline

Meet our Visionary Partners

In February 2021, we announced our first [\\$1 million commitment](#) to African visionaries and welcomed **six high-impact African organizations** doing work in a broad range of sectors including education, health, human rights, and livelihoods to our [portfolio](#). Here is an overview of their work and impact from the first half of 2021.



BarefootLaw

[BarefootLaw](#) is all about tech-enabled legal support. They envision a world where access to legal support is freely and readily available to everyone that needs it. Starting in Uganda, BarefootLaw's passionate team is harnessing the power of digital technology and innovations like Artificial Intelligence to ensure that every Ugandan has access to justice.

The Differentiator

BarefootLaw provides legal services to beneficiaries in need through multiple channels including SMS, interactive voice response, toll-free number support, radio, and social media platforms. Their innovative tech-enabled model positions them for growth and wider reach in the future. Their goal is to make legal services readily available to 50 million Africans by 2030, particularly those farthest from available services.

Why Their Work Matters

Globally, 5.1 billion people face injustice or have an unmet legal need—needs that often directly impact the livelihoods of those most marginalized. BarefootLaw's work focuses on the foundational issue of access to justice, which when provided to individuals and communities, has the potential to have a tremendous impact on the peace and livelihoods of people and communities.





Midyear Updates

Highlights

- **38,555** beneficiaries received legal guidance from BarefootLaw
- **4.8%** increase in beneficiaries that receive legal support across all BarefootLaw platforms
- **25.8%** increase in direct users served with legal information
- **5,929** women trained on their rights and on the use of digital solutions to access legal solutions (Jul 2020-June 2021)
- **136+** cases resolved by BarefootLaw's team

Challenges

- Complications and setbacks from the ongoing COVID19 pandemic prevented the BarefootLaw team from conducting over 5 planned community outreach initiatives
- A nation-wide, election-related internet shutdown resulted in serious communication breakdowns with key stakeholders. Facebook, a platform that BarefootLaw relies on to reach people, was blocked during the election period further presenting communication challenges for the BarefootLaw team

Forecast

- BarefootLaw is working to expand its grassroots activities to the last mile, including scaling their Community NODES from the current 12 to 50.
- BarefootLaw is synonymous with innovation. Over the second half of 2021, BarefootLaw's tech team will be fully operationalizing their call center and improving the accuracy and efficiency of their AI system to better support the legal team's response to inquiries.



Dandelion Africa

[Dandelion Africa](#) is a grassroots innovator on a mission to improve the health and economic well-being of youth and women living in marginalized and rural communities in Kenya. Founded on a model of community ownership, they take an innovative approach to community outreach that includes representative community governance across all demographics.



The Differentiator

Dandelion is finding success in improving community health in the conservative and culturally complex communities it operates. For instance, through its out-of-the-box approach to community health, boys are empowered to be ambassadors of eradicating deep-seated gender norms such as Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).

Why Their Work Matters

Women and children living in the rural villages where Dandelion works have limited access to health care facilities, quality education, and employment opportunities due to the effects of cultural norms such as early marriage and FGM. Dandelion is at the forefront of confronting the fundamental root causes of gender inequality that impact women across many aspects of their lives; from their ability to complete schooling, to having time for productive work, to vying for leadership positions at all levels of society.



Dandelion Africa

Midyear Updates

Highlights

- **10,000+** people reached with accurate & current COVID-19 information through Dandelion's community health workers and mobile nurses
- **6,637** clients received family planning services through Dandelion's Mobile Backpack Nurses
- **38%** increase in patients served at Dandelion Medical Centre
- **404%** increase in numbers of women delivering at Dandelion's Delivery Center
- **3,000+** people, including 100 living with disabilities, reached with information on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) during community dialogue forums
- **15** Gender Desk Police Officers received training on Standard Operating Procedures of prevention and response to gender-based violence
- **Founder Wendo Aszed** was named a Change Champion by Population Matters, alongside Prince Harry & Meghan Markle, for her organization's progressive & effective work promoting gender equity & women's reproductive rights, more [here](#).

Challenges

- Dandelion operates in a rural area where the roads tend to be heavily impacted during the rainy season. Heavy downpour experienced in Q2 presented logistical challenges as some roads were rendered impassable thus limiting the movement of Dandelion's mobile nurses.
- Increase in COVID-19 strains continues to increase cases and claim lives in the communities that Dandelion serves, only increasing the need to ensure accurate & up-to-date information is available across their communities

Forecast

- Dandelion is working to incorporate a monitoring and evaluation software in their work to improve their data management and increase their ability to track health outcomes across their communities.
- Dandelion is celebrating its 10th anniversary in August of this year - including the launch of its new youth center and an exciting brand refresh!



Rays of Hope

[Rays of Hope](#) is a Malawian organization that seeks to improve the learning outcomes of disadvantaged children by providing educational support and empowering teachers with hands-on technical skills. They improve learning outcomes in primary schools by equipping teachers with innovative pedagogical methods to create content-rich and creative lessons.



The Differentiator

Rays of Hope is a unique education system strengthening organization that is looking at the complete education cycle of disadvantaged learners. They are one of the few organizations implementing teacher training at such a large scale in Malawi.

Why Their Work Matters

Malawi's education system faces several challenges. In 1994, the Malawian government implemented universal primary education. However, in practice, the implementation has been met with several hiccups. The dropout rate between primary and secondary school is very high, particularly among girls. There is an average ratio of 1 teacher to 120 students in public schools, and there have been very limited investments made in teacher training and infrastructure. RoH is working to establish itself as an early-stage education system strengthening program looking at various aspects of youth education access, training, and employability, as well as teacher and student support.

Highlights

- **Rays of Hope** developed workbooks and handbooks that were officially approved by Malawi's Ministry of Education, Science & Technology. This gives RoH the potential to reach about 3 million students with practical, hands-on learning support
- **341** new afterschool clubs formed across four districts in collaboration with Save the Children, CARE Malawi, and other partners
- **2,679** teachers trained in literacy, numeracy, and inclusive teaching approaches, impacting the learning experience of **259,318** students
- **18.3%** increase in reading comprehension by standard **4** across **57** primary schools
- **10** new sponsorships secured that will enable students from disadvantaged backgrounds to get access to high-quality education
- **23** out of **24** students in 12th-grade enrolled in Rays of Hope Academy passed their O-Level exams, with 3 set to proceed to university

Challenges

- Logistical disruptions arising from COVID-19 lockdowns affected the team's speed in program implementation and hiring of key staff

Forecast

- Rays of Hope is working on advancing its scale-up strategy for its teacher skills strengthening programs and looking for potential mentors & scale strategists to support them with this.



SaCoDé

[SaCoDé](#) is an organization dedicated to unlocking opportunities for women and youth in Burundi.

Their organization is focused on providing reproductive health products and services alongside economic empowerment programs that help women and youth enjoy healthy and financially independent lives.



The Differentiator

SaCoDé is the only grassroots organization in Burundi using SMS technology to reach out to and engage women and youth in Burundi with free health and economic empowerment content. This method is efficient in terms of organizational resources engaged as it takes into account the cultural context by allowing each beneficiary to ask questions and get answers in private. Additionally, this approach is also preferred in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic and the resulting restrictions that limit social gatherings and encourage social distancing.

Why Their Work Matters

In a context where 80% of women cannot easily afford sanitary pads, SaCoDé's production of reusable and affordable sanitary pads has an impact, not only on the health, education, and productivity of girls and women, but also on the economic wellbeing of the 125 women who work in the 5 production centers spread across the country, and their families.

Midyear Updates

Highlights

- Over **2,800** adults educated on sexual reproductive health with a focus on family planning, and close to **4,000** boys and girls educated on responsible sexual behavior and reproductive health
- **200** women trained on the principles of entrepreneurship including business law, how to file taxes, and how to approach insuring their businesses
- **665** Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) formed in the communities SaCoDé operates. Through this initiative, close to **20,000** women received training on the importance of saving, menstrual health, and hygiene as well as sexual and reproductive health
- **45** households trained on food security and safe nutrition with each household successfully setting up vegetable gardens

Challenges

- COVID-19 continues to greatly impact the community that SaCoDé serves. In collaboration with UNICEF, SaCoDé is installing handwashing stations in 191 schools across Musinga province and Bujumbura municipality. This emergency project will not only mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in schools but also contribute to the reduction of waterborne diseases.

Forecast

- 40,000 kits of SaCoDé's flagship AGATEKA sanitary pads on track to be distributed in schools and communities across the country by the end of the year.
- Launch of new community center in Musinga province set for August 2021.



Shule Direct

[Shule Direct](#) provides versatile learning opportunities through accessible technologies. Their team has created the first locally-based e-learning platform in Tanzania based on the national curriculum approved by the Ministry of Education.

The Differentiator

Shule Direct created the first local-based e-learning platform in Tanzania recognized by the Ministry of Education. Their content has been entirely designed and developed locally and covers the entire O-level curriculum with plans to include primary and high school curriculum. In 2020, they expanded their reach to the last mile by ensuring their content is accessible via SMS and in schools without internet access.

Why Their Work Matters

Access to educational resources is a huge challenge in Tanzania's education system, with many schools lacking labs and libraries. Furthermore, the quality of education & educational resources is very poor; only about 7% of the GDP goes to education and on average 67% of teachers are regularly absent from schools. Shule Direct leverages an online portal (Web and App), an SMS-based mobile application (Makini SMS), and an offline learning management system (LMS) to improve access to quality education across the country.





Midyear Updates

Highlights

- **2.8 million** users on their online platform
- **200,000** Shule Direct app downloads
- **80,000** active subscribers to their SMS learning service
- **45,000** new schools using their offline Learning Management System
- **95%** higher learning time spent by users on Shule Direct's platforms than the international average
- Expanded offerings to include a website and mobile app to serve primary school kids with engaging content including learning games
- Conducted digital training capacity building initiatives including training teachers and students across **10** regions in Tanzania
- Appointed to lead the Technical Working Group for the Content and Mobile Applications Working Group under the Tanzania Community Digitization Initiative by the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology

Challenges

- The Shule Direct team is continuing to focus on understanding the needs of their users more intricately to ensure meaningful user experience across all their learning platforms

Forecast

- Shule Direct is looking to further diversify learning content available to learners by introducing more gamified content
- Shule Direct will be launching a behavior change communication campaign to raise awareness on digital education and skills.



Wezesha Impact

[Wezesha Impact](#) is a Ugandan organization on a mission to get young people into meaningful and productive employment. Their model blends a combination of entrepreneurship and workplace readiness experiences combined with long-term mentorship and coaching.



The Differentiator

Wezesha Impact is redefining the future of jobs in Uganda by turning skills into capital and inspiring an entrepreneurial mindset among in-school and out-of-school youth. They have built robust training programs that invest in systemic change and actively empower young people who don't complete formal schooling.

Why Their Work Matters

Many young people in Uganda miss out on opportunities to stay in school, find and keep a job, or get involved in their communities. The challenge of unemployment for youth who do not complete school is even greater. Wezesha designs interventions aimed at addressing youth unemployment at various levels in both rural and urban contexts.



Highlights

- **2,192** young people enrolled in Wezesha's Entrepreneurship Education & Skills Development (EESD) Program in vocational education centers
- An additional **619** young people enrolled in EESD through non-formal skills providers
- **200** young entrepreneurs trained on how to improve their business management skills to ensure the growth and survival of their ventures
- Signed a memorandum of understanding with **71** partner vocational schools across Eastern, Northern & Central Uganda
- **975** students graduated from their **2020** cohort
- Following the Presidential Directives on lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Wezesha Impact successfully designed a COVID-19 mitigation plan with a focus on virtual implementation strategies

Challenges

- COVID-19 lockdowns resulted in the prolonged closure of vocational schools in Uganda causing an overall slowdown in Wezesha's program implementation

Forecast

- Wezesha Impact, in partnership with Set Her Free and Action For Fundamental Change And Development (AFFCAD) under the Urban Local Coalition Accelerator, is developing a Skills Hub that will harness employment opportunities, business development, skills transfer, and sharing of best practices for 100 youth in the community Wezesha Impact serves
- Wezesha Impact will be kicking off recruitment of young people to participate in the Young Africa Works - Markets for Youth program aimed at empowering 3,250 rural young people, including refugees and persons living with disabilities, to increase their collective action and voice in the agricultural market system, improve their purchasing power and ability to influence key actors



Organizational Updates

- Welcomed our first Africa-based co-CEO, **Atti Worku**
- Successfully completed an audit on our organizational policies & financial systems
- On-boarded a new part-time financial consultant
- Co-CEOs began co-leadership coaching
- Acquired pro-bono legal support for our 501c3 application

At the Fund, we believe that proximity matters not only in the way we fund but also within our organizational design, this is why co-leadership is critical for us. In March, we welcomed the Fund's co-CEO, Atti Worku, a passionate advocate for equity in philanthropy & the Founder of Seeds of Africa, an Ethiopian grassroots organization focused on education & community development.

We're pleased to report that we acquired pro-bono legal support from Morgan Lewis to support the Fund's 501c3 public charity status application. To aid with this process, we recruited a Finance Consultant who is a CPA to help us prepare for the transition from being fiscally sponsored to a 501c3 public charity. We are also continuing to work with Edge Performance in Kenya on our organizational design and staffing strategy.



In her first few months at the Fund, Atti has spent time reviewing and revising the Fund's grantmaking criteria and selection process, co-designing and piloting our capacity support programming, and researching potential participatory governance structures that can be piloted and iterated going forward.

"After just 100 days in this role, I am more convinced than ever that having proximate leaders in positions of power in philanthropy is critical to a more equitable ecosystem. I have learned a great deal from our partners and look forward to working together to make radical shifts."

Program Updates



Founding Working Group engaged in participatory review of the Fund's grantmaking criteria centered on **equity and trust**



70+ referrals received from a diverse network of referral partners across Africa in our search for African-led organizations to invest in



Kicked off co-designing **capacity support programming** with our Visionary Partners



\$1M committed to **6 high-impact African-led organizations**



Started revision of the Fund's **selection process**

Earlier this year, we launched our grantmaking with an announcement of [US\\$1M committed](#) to six [African Visionary Partners](#). Our co-CEO, Atti, has begun co-designing capacity support programming with our Visionary Partners through surveys, key informant interviews, and research into existing organizational capacity assessment tools.

We are also conducting an in-depth review of our grantmaking criteria and selection process, which will be implemented in the selection process of our next round of grants scheduled to take place this November bringing in **8-10 new visionary partners**.



Photo: BarefootLaw

Financial Updates

- **\$3.9M** raised towards our **\$10M** goal by 2023
- **78%** of best-case budget goal raised for 2021
- **On track to commit \$2.5M** to **15** African-led organizations by close of 2021
- **80%** of funding raised is multiyear
- **95%** of funding raised is unrestricted
- **78%** programmatic spending from January to June

We have been honored to welcome new funding partners over the first half of 2021 including **New England International Donors, Schooner Foundation, Sint Antonius Stichting Projecten (SAS-P Philanthropy), Tawingo Fund, the Patrick J. McGovern Foundation, PilotHouse Philanthropy and Vibrant Village Foundation.**



Thank you for your generous support of our mission to drive resources to African visionaries and for believing in their unlimited potential for transformational impact across the continent!



Ecosystem Building



10 articles published on AVFund's work and partners



5 speaking engagements on African social innovators' rapid response amid a global pandemic and innovative approaches to addressing funding inequities

In the last six months, we were keen to take advantage of attending a wide variety of key virtual events and pen op-eds to share our learnings working with African visionaries and practical solutions that funders can incorporate in their work to approach local partnerships differently - in ways that **truly shift power and amplify their work**, not distract from it. Here are some highlights:

Virtual Events



Building Trust

Featuring co-CEO Katie, Founding Working Group and Advisory Board Member, Evelyn Omala and Funding Partner Pete Yao from Thankyou



Social Entrepreneurs' Rapid Response to Crisis

Featuring co-CEO Atti, and visionary partners, Wendo Aszed from Dandelion Africa and Françoise Nibizi from SaCoDé



Can Virtual Due Diligence Help Funders Prioritize Proximity?

Featuring co-CEO Katie and Solomon Mugambe, Founder of our Ugandan-based partner, Wezesha Impact

In The News

The New York Times

Foreign aid is having a reckoning
with the African Visionary Fund

The Guardian

Aid spending in Africa must be African-led -- it needs a Black Lives Matter Reckoning
Featuring co-CEO Katie

skoll

How African Visionary Fund built an organization centered on equitable funding for local leaders
Featuring co-CEOs Atti + Katie

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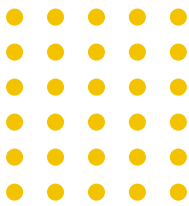
How funders can drive more money to African entrepreneurs
Featuring co-CEO Atti and Dandelion Africa's Wendo Aszed

AP ASSOCIATED PRESS

Pandemic shifted how donors gave, but will it continue?
Featuring Dandelion Africa's Wendo Aszed



Photo: Wezesha Impact



2021 Forecast

Looking ahead to the rest of the year, we are excited to deploy our revised grantmaking criteria during our next round of grant commitments scheduled for later this fall. We have raised **\$3.9M towards our \$10M goal by 2023**, putting us on track to commit another **\$1.5M to 8-10 high-impact African-led organizations** by year end.

“We are learning from our partners’ incredible work everyday as they continue to innovate and drive impact in their communities. The impact that is possible when African social innovators are invested in is undeniable. Together we are creating a roadmap for more equitable relationships, more meaningful investment, and accelerating African-led impact.”—Katie Bunten Wamaru & Atti Worku

We are also excited to be participating in the following key industry events and would be honored if you could join us!



Join us and our partners Faraja Nyalandu from Shule Direct & Gerald Abila from BarefootLaw at the Innovations in International Philanthropy Symposium brought to you by the New England International Donors (NEID). Our session on September 9 will focus on how to build sustainable relationships with proximate leaders for greater impact. **RSVP here:** innovatephilanthropy.org.



BMW Foundation
Herbert Quandt

We are honored to be speaking at the Future Summit this October upon the invitation of the Segal Family Foundation and the BMW Foundation. More details on our session to come, but in the meantime book your spot [here](#).



Connect with Us!



Photo: Wezsha Impact