Cameras for Girls: Nonprofit Spotlight

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Nonprofit Spotlights
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Cameras for Girls

HQ: Manilla, ON, Canada

Mission: Cameras For Girls, a Canadian registered charity, pursues Women’s Empowerment and Gender Equality in Africa using photography as our catalyst. We provide women who face gender-based barriers to employment with a camera to keep and a 4-phase photography, storytelling, and business-skills curriculum to support their goals of becoming paid journalists and photographers in male-dominated spaces.

We offer comprehensive training in photography, storytelling, and business skills tailored for young women from our university partners in Africa. Many of our students lack practical skills due to the theoretical nature of their journalism education, leaving them ill-prepared for the male-dominated media industry in Africa. By providing them with their own camera and a 4-phase curriculum, we equip them for success. In our Uganda program alone, we’ve served 64 young women, with over 75% of them securing full-time jobs in the media sector.

As we work internationally, all our partners are based on the African continent. We built an online training platform during the pandemic, when we could not return for our in-person workshops. This platform opened up a gateway to partnerships and collaborations outside of our core program, and has allowed us to provide our training to girls and young women, across Africa, who want to learn how to tell visual stories. These partnerships come from NGOs/Nonprofit partners on the continent, who mainly serve girls, but also sometimes boys, that are from marginalized communities, such as refugee settlements, or small community-based organizations with limited resources.

We pride ourselves on the difference we are making.

However, through our core-program, to successfully recruit the right student demographic, we partner with universities, such as Makerere University and Uganda Christian University in Uganda, and the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. We found this to be a great partnership, as they lack the adequate resources, and/or skills-based training that will help their graduates, especially young women find work in the male-dominated media spaces, which is where we come in with the gift of the camera and our 4-phase curriculum.

Since 2018, we have offered our 4-phase curriculum to young women, recruited through our university partners.

Beginning in June 2024, Cameras For Girls embarks on a transformative journey in Uganda, amplifying our impact through the launch of the "Train the Trainer" program. This initiative is
pivotal as we empower 5 accomplished graduates from our renowned year-long 4-phase program to become the next generation of skilled and paid trainers for Cameras For Girls.

At Cameras For Girls, our primary need is funding support. As a relatively small and new charity, sustaining our programs can be challenging, especially considering that each girl receives a camera to keep. You might wonder why we provide cameras instead of solely focusing on training. The answer lies in the unique challenges faced by girls in Africa. From financial barriers to gender and cultural biases, many girls simply cannot afford a camera, a tool often associated with gender bias in the male-dominated media space. By providing cameras, we break down these barriers and empower girls to pursue their dreams without limitations.

Additionally, we are actively seeking to increase brand awareness. With greater visibility, we can attract major partners such as camera brands, donors, sponsors, corporate partners, and more. These partnerships are essential for expanding our reach, enhancing our programs, and making a greater impact in the lives of young women across Africa.

Impactful Stories
Patience Natukunda. In 2019, Patience joined Cameras For Girls seeking to enhance her skills. Despite being a talented writer for an online magazine, she faced obstacles due to her lack of photography skills. This meant fewer opportunities for her articles to be published and limited career advancement. When the pandemic hit and Uganda went into lockdown, Patience continued working without pay. When we reunited after the lockdown, I encouraged her to quit her job, update her LinkedIn profile, and connected her with a mentor. Through our mentorship program, Patience flourished. She went on to win Travel Writer of the Year and now runs her own consulting business, empowering other young women to pursue their writing dreams. Patience’s journey exemplifies the transformative impact of our program.

Annet Namusisi, a recent graduate of our program. Despite her aspirations to become a journalist, Annet faced a harrowing experience of workplace harassment. Her male boss subjected her to inappropriate advances and withheld her pay. Despite standing up against systemic harassment and resigning, Annet struggled to find a new job due to industry stigma. Cameras For Girls supported her financially and provided mentorship during this difficult period. While Annet eventually secured a job she loves, she’s understandably hesitant to return to the media sector. Her story highlights the pervasive issue of workplace harassment and the urgent need for systemic change. While we’re dedicated to advocating against such behavior, we recognize the challenges in dismantling a broken system alone. Annet’s resilience underscores the importance of our continued efforts to empower and protect young women in the media industry.

Our approach is innovative because it starts with job creation first. At Cameras For Girls, we stand out by prioritizing job creation in Africa’s male-dominated media sectors right from the start. In regions where women’s voices are often sidelined, providing meaningful employment opportunities is crucial for fostering sustainability, lasting change, and gender equality while also helping women escape poverty. Without economic empowerment, our mission and values lose their meaning. By focusing on job creation, we empower women across Africa and ensure the sustainability and impact of our work.

WikiCharities Profile:
https://www.wikicharities.org/nonprofit/CAN/715593075RR0001
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