

Conversation with Angie & Mwangala

In this People First Talk, we heard from *Angie Murimirwa*, CEO of CAMFED, the [Campaign For Female Education](#) and her colleague *Mwangala Mukelabai* about how they've been catalyzing the power of the most vulnerable girls and young women across Africa. Watch the talk [here](#).

Key ideas

- The challenge is systemic - 95% of girls from the most marginalized families in Sub-Saharan Africa never complete secondary school. We need to foster a shared understanding that **girls excluded from education are women excluded from leadership**.
- Despite a challenging context, CAMFED has grown from 400 members in 1998 to 250,000 women now, impacting 6.5 millions girls & boys. Their **approach is asset-based & collective**, building community ownership and pride over what can be created collaboratively. We also heard that *"When you put people first, you build systems that sustain beyond a generation."*
- Both Angie & Mwangala were supported themselves by CAMFED as girls which changed their life trajectories, reminding us of **the importance of leaders who bring 'lived experience.'** As Mwangala shared: *"We're able to support the next generation of girls, not because we have the financial means and resources, but because we understand the power of education."*
- CAMFED has seen **a multiplier effect of sisterhood**. Every member, on average, supports at least 3 other girls to go to school. Members also give back by mentoring and role-modeling, which provides a powerful statement for other girls in the community that they too have potential.
- The model also **fosters agency by elevating the voices of those who have been traditionally excluded and by creating access to opportunities**. For example, member elections held last year gave many women a platform for the first time to *"fearlessly share their brilliant ideas."*
- **To transform systems, there must be a focus on both community-level work and partnering with governments to scale**. In Malawi, CAMFED worked with the government to provide social support to students in 2,500 schools, resulting in 3x fewer dropouts & better academic outcomes.
- **Deeply rooted and local does not mean unsophisticated**. In generating support for their work, CAMFED never loses sight of centering the child. At the same time, they also put energy in proving impact at scale by investing in robust monitoring & research, staying connected to relevant global issues (e.g., climate), and doing the bridging work to engage with different stakeholders.



Angie Murimirwa
CEO, CAMFED



Mwangala Mukelabai
Program Manager, CAMFED Zambia

"In terms of our community engagement, we don't work from a place of 'we do this *in spite* of communities.' We do this *because* of communities."

— Angie Murimirwa

Our next People First Talk will be with **Jackie Chimhanzi, CEO of the African Leadership Institute (which runs the Archbishop Tutu Leadership Fellowship)** on May 22 at 10am EST / 2pm GMT / 4pm CAT. You can register [here](#).

For more information on the People First Community and effort, please visit peoplefirstdev.org or sign-up [here](#).