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A Message from Our Director on COVID-19



As COVID-19 continues to disrupt our daily lives, I've been reminded of the reality of our work – there is no quick fix, nor does there exist a one-size fits all approach. Already, the global pandemic has disrupted economies, labor markets and educational institutions all the while disproportionately impacting the world's most vulnerable and marginalized populations.

Across the world, global responses to COVID-19 have all had one thing in common – providing nonpermanent solutions to systemic problems. Although temporary relief is needed in times of crisis, it is important to recognize that the impacts of COVID-19 will continue to have far reaching social consequences.

[Read the full statement here...](#)

Innovative Approaches from Our Partners

COVID-19 RESPONSE: TULLOW STEM RADIO SCHOOL BRIDGING THE EDUCATION INEQUALITY AND DIGITAL DIVIDE GAPS



There is no shortage of opinion that the COVID-19 pandemic will have huge impacts on student learning across the globe, specifically those impacts in Africa are far-reaching. Not only will the gap between the rich and the poor grow during the pandemic but also, the gap between high- and low-income communities within the Continent will widen placing those in rural and peri-urban communities in a position of being most negatively affected.

Our partner, [Youth Bridge Foundation](#) (YBF), through a proposed model that emulates the tripartite model of Government-Civil Society-Private Sector Partnership, have urgently supported the governments' response to school closures due to COVID-19 in effort to increase remote learning opportunities and provide guidance to teachers to support student learning needs during the pandemic.

Recognizing the importance of addressing the digital divide and anticipating the post COVID-19 reality of needing to sustain interest and ensure children and youth return to and stay in school when schools reopen after closures, Youth Bridge Foundation has acted with urgency and consideration for the needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized boys and girls and their families.

Through their "Educate To Innovate with STEM" Project, YBF has secured private sector funding to initiate and facilitate teaching and learning through the use of radio platforms. YBF relies on corps of teachers drawn from Ghana Education Services (GES) and local community teachers are trained on radio teaching to complement Government's efforts. Private sector funding for the Tullow STEM Radio School is provided from Tullow Oil Ghana Limited within the context of their Shared Prosperity/Social Responsibility Initiative.

The Tullow STEM Radio aims to support junior and senior high school students, support parents' struggle to facilitate learning wards, provides training on remote teaching during the pandemic, guides teachers to communicate with students and builds the capacity of teachers on subject areas of difficulty.

[Learn more here...](#)



Tullow STEM Radio School

PLUSTV Africa Interview with Seth Oteng, Youth Bridge Foundation on COVID-19 Response to Education



Impact Stories: Students & Teachers

Addressing Oppressive Practices in Research & Academia

At GSDI, we do not ignore the history and ongoing presence of white supremacist ideals and imperialistic practices that endure throughout our work. We remain committed to acknowledging and actively dismantling those practices that continue to harm the individuals and communities we aim to serve.



The UNC School of Social Work community, of which our center is a part of, has begun the work of uprooting racism within our school. Our director, Dr. Gina Chowa, is working closely with the UNC School of Social Work by serving as a member on both the Anti-Racism Task Force and Reconciliation Standing Committee.

UNC School of Social Work News:

[A message from Dean Gary Bowen](#)

[Faculty members create "Community Conversations"](#)

[SSW establishes Anti-Racism Task Force and Reconciliation Standing Committee](#)

Additionally, we are welcoming Dr. Neil Bilotta, a Clinical Assistant Professor at the School of Social Work at UNC at Chapel Hill, to our team of researchers.

Dr. Bilotta frames his research, teaching, scholarship, and mentoring within an intersectional approach that explores social justice, anti-oppression, social inclusion, and cultural



responsivity. His work examines how colonialism, oppression, power, whiteness, privilege, and capitalism inform social work policy, research, theory, and practice, both globally and within North America. Dr. Bilotta is excited to bring his commitment and experience of social justice and social inclusion engagement to GSDI.

Dr. Bilotta completed his doctorate in Social Work at McGill University in Montreal, Canada. His dissertation unpacked the ways “research ethics” are defined and understood by research participants in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya. Moreover, this project examined how researchers, particularly those working in contexts where research partners face marginalization and subjugation, could incorporate socially inclusive and equitable methods, theories, and analysis in their work. Dr. Bilotta has worked with forcibly displaced youth in Africa, the Middle East, and North America. He is looking forward to collaborating with faculty, students, and researchers at GSDI and within the School of Social Work at UNC.

NEW in Research & Publications

Longitudinal Descriptive Results from the Siyakha Youth Assets for Employability Study: Effects of the Combined Employability and Financial Capability Program



Siyakha Youth Assets was a longitudinal, cluster-randomized study implemented in South Africa between 2015 and 2019. Siyakha’s primary research objective was to examine the causal impacts of youth employment and financial inclusion programs on financial capabilities, employability, and longer-term employment effects for South African youth. The study was conducted by the Global Social Development Innovations at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and

the Centre for Social Development in Africa at the University of Johannesburg, in partnership with eight organizations providing youth employability programs in South Africa.

In this brief, we describe how the treatment cohort compared to the control cohort differ over time on employment and financial capability outcomes. The longitudinal descriptive data show that a slightly higher proportion of youth who received the combined employability and financial inclusion program (or the treatment group) reported better money management skills (saving and spending) compared to youth that received the employability program only (or the control group).

[Read the full brief here....](#)