

# 2023 Social Impact Report

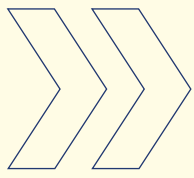


“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

- Nelson Mandela

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# FOREWORD BY MPOWER'S CEO AND CO-FOUNDER



**Manu Smadja**

**CEO and Co-Founder of MPOWER Financing**

What would the world look like if its brightest minds weren't constrained by geographic or financial barriers? What impact would that have on these eMPOWERed students, as well as on their host university, host country economy, and their community back home?

In this year's impact report, MPOWER tries to answer these questions by looking at the more than 15,000 students "eMPOWERed" to date.

### State of affairs

After a challenging period during COVID-19, International education continues to grow exponentially as it has since the middle of the last century. Indeed, today's 6 million international students are projected to grow by 50% to close to 9 million over the next 7 years according to analytical insights firm HolonIQ.

This growth is fueled by a mix of "push" and "pull" forces. Push forces are a young and growing middle class across the Global South that seeks the best education it can afford in order to climb the socio-economic ladder. The value of a U.S. or Canada university degree is transformational for this population. To illustrate this, 70% of MPOWER students come from households making under \$12,000 annually, while their average salary for their first year out of school is \$80,000, about a 7-fold increase.

Meanwhile, there are increasingly strong 'pull' forces coming from the host countries like the U.S., Canada, the U.K., or Australia. International

students provide a critical financial lifeline to host country universities and a boost to the host economies. For instance, higher education was the U.S.' 9th largest service export in 2022 and is a top 5 overall export in Australia, second only to precious metals and energy<sup>1</sup>. The impact these students make only grows after they graduate, as they contribute to critical jobs in STEM or Healthcare, launch companies of their own, apply for patents, run for office, and tackle global challenges from climate change to pandemics.

### MPOWER's work

The report dives into the growing role MPOWER plays in empowering international students and the positive ripple effects these students have in

the global economy. As a data company, we geek out over metrics so you'll find we try to quantify our impact wherever possible, by leveraging IRIS metric standards grouped around the UN's themes for Sustainable Development Goals.

With over 15,000 loans made to date (about 8,000 in 2023 alone), MPOWER customers on their own could form a mid-sized university. They're also a formidable source of powerful evidence. With nearly half of MPOWER students being first-generation college students and the great majority coming from the Global South, our customer base is a segment whose voice is under-represented in the higher education space and even within the international space;



our dataset amplifies the voice of this unique demographic.

When available, we share direct quotes and stories from our heroes to add context to the figures presented. Numbers alone wouldn't do justice to the amazing journey of Fatema, an Afghan refugee studying investigative journalism at the University of Maryland, or that of Kateryna, a Ukrainian refugee studying Public Policy and Data Analytics at Carnegie Mellon. These women have made significant sacrifices in order to get an education in the U.S., and they're dedicated to applying their newly gained skills to improving the lives of fellow citizens in their respective home countries.

This report also offers insights on the university side of international education where MPOWER can be transformational as well. I was reminded of this on a recent trip to Canada, as I visited a university partner of ours with about 800 graduate students total, inclusive of Canadian nationals. After MPOWER started lending to students going to that university, MPOWER received over 1,400 qualified funding requests for that university's graduate programs, enough to more than double the current enrollment. This is indicative of the international student demand that can get unlocked once bright minds around the planet are given access to no-collateral loans for their studies.

We're strong believers in living internally what we preach externally, so the report covers the empowerment we bring to our own employees. Last but not least, we touch upon our newly-formed Global Citizens Fund, a non-profit arm with zero overhead whose purpose is to amplify our scholarship program to international, DACA, and refugee students.

So... what would the world look like if its brightest minds weren't constrained by geographic or financial barriers? We don't yet know, but we do know that with 15,000 students to date we're only getting started.

Onwards and upwards,

### **Manu Smadja**

CEO and Co-Founder  
MPOWER Financing

#### **Footnote:**

- 1 <https://www.internationalaffairs.org.au/australianoutlook/the-economic-role-of-international-students-in-australias-higher-education-system/#:~:text=In%20a%20November%202019%20press,to%20coal%20and%20iron%20ore.>
- 2 Used throughout this report and first coined in 1969, the term "Global South" is the more current and widely accepted usage for terms such as developing countries, least-developed countries, underdeveloped countries, low-income economies, or the out-of-favor third world countries.



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



MPOWER Financing was founded in 2014 to offer no-cosigner education loans and scholarships for international and other immigrant groups, such as DACA and refugee students, who are shut out of the traditional lending system. For many students around the world, affordability is an enduring barrier to an international education – particularly for those from lower income households in the Global South.<sup>2</sup> When studying abroad, these students are prevented from accessing a range of funding options typically available to domestic students.

Based on information drawn from higher education institutions, organizational metrics, and a 2023 survey of MPOWER's students, this third MPOWER social impact report adopts a data-driven lens to examine how loans structured specifically for international and immigrant-origin students can have a multiplier and long-term impact on students, universities, and host country economies.



## Impact on Students: Increasing Access and Enabling Potential



**93%**

**93%** of MPOWER students indicate that the availability of an educational loan through MPOWER has been instrumental to their ability to study abroad.



**70%**

**70%** of MPOWER students reported belonging to a lower- to middle-income household - a sharp rise from last year (**46%**). Nearly half (**48%**) reported being first-generation college students.



**96%**

**96%** of MPOWER's female students report they faced challenges trying to finance their overseas studies and a loan from MPOWER was instrumental to their ability to study abroad.



**\$500k**

MPOWER's scholarship commitment of **\$500k** is creating opportunities for international, DACA and refugee students by addressing the structural barriers faced by underrepresented students.

## Impact on Higher Education Institutions: Diversity and Stability



**163**

MPOWER students hail from **163** countries, thus comprising a highly diverse study body.



**85%**

**85%** of MPOWER students come from the **98** countries that are part of the Global South. MPOWER students help diversify the American and Canadian institutions at which they study.



**\$40.1b**

NAFSA calculates that in the 2022-23 academic year, the financial impact of international students in the United States was **\$40.1** billion<sup>3</sup>. MPOWER estimates that the financial impact of international students in Canada was **C\$35.7** billion during this same period.

### Footnote:

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nafsa.org/policy-and-advocacy/policy-resources/nafsa-international-student-economic-value-tool-v2>



## Impact on The Global Community: Preparing the Workforce of Tomorrow



**163**

**163** countries: Comprising a highly diverse student body, MPOWER students see themselves as ambassadors both for MPOWER Financing – which made their global degree possible – and for the U.S. and Canada.



**65%**

**65%** of MPOWER students and counting have graduated and are contributing significantly to both the economies and civil societies in the U.S. and Canada.



**88%**

**88%** of MPOWER students pursue an advanced degree (master's degree or PhD), and primarily study business and management, engineering, computer science, and other technology fields: all in-demand fields required to power the economy of tomorrow.

## Impact on MPOWER Internally



**83%**

**83%**: 5 out of MPOWER's 6 executive team members are either immigrants and/or belong to racial minority groups.



**56%**

**56%**: 5 of MPOWER's 9 Board members are either immigrants and/or belong to racial minority groups.



**72%**

**72%** of MPOWER's U.S.-based staff are either immigrants and/or belong to racial minority groups, which has helped MPOWER gain recognition as one of the most diverse organizations in the U.S.



**28**

MPOWER's India-based employees collectively speak **28 languages** and U.S.-based employees collectively speak **17 languages**, facilitating diverse client interactions and cultural depth.



**33%**

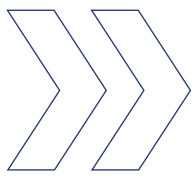
**33%** of MPOWER's executive team are female. **34%** of MPOWER's employees are women, compared to a tech industry average of **27%**<sup>4</sup> in the U.S. and **30%**<sup>5</sup> in India. MPOWER will continue to strive toward gender parity – within its workplace and on its Board.



**Footnote:**

<sup>4</sup> <https://explodingtopics.com/blog/women-in-tech>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.businesstoday.in/latest/corporate/story/indias-it-sector-has-the-highest-womens-representation-shows-study-372667-2023-03-08>



# INTRODUCTION

**After the COVID-19 pandemic halted educational plans for many international students, an increasing number of students are seeking an overseas education.** Enrollments have rebounded for the 2022-2023 academic year, with the United States hosting over 1 million students from around the world.<sup>6,7</sup> Canada is close behind, with over 800,000 international students. According to one projection, as many as 8 to 9 million students will study abroad by 2030.<sup>8</sup> However, those who do get to study abroad represent just a fraction of the overall global demand, as many students struggle to reach this goal due to a range of barriers and challenges.

The affordability of an international education is one such enduring barrier. The cost of a degree from the U.S. or Canada, including cost of living, has grown by 20% in the U.S. and 50% in Canada over the past ten years, representing over six years of family income for those earning the global median income.

Students from certain regions may face higher financial need than others. In 2023, MPOWER saw

17 times greater demand for education funding for students from West Africa as compared with students from Western Europe. Several reasons account for this, including the large number of strong universities in Europe, programs like Erasmus that allow European Union citizens to study abroad within the EU relatively affordably, a more mature banking sector, and relatively higher salaries enabling Europeans to study abroad more frequently than their classmates from Africa. Collectively, students from Global South nations both embody a high demand for an overseas education, and a higher financial need.

Historically, student loans have been a useful tool for broadening access to postsecondary education in the U.S., despite concerns about student debt.<sup>9</sup> But when it comes to financing their studies abroad, international students face a unique combination of challenges. International students and other immigrant groups, such as DACA students, are not typically eligible for U.S.-based student loans, private financing or financial aid. Similarly, banks in students' home countries often do not have lending options easily available to students wanting to go abroad. Where such loans are available, the collateral

**Footnote:**

- 6 <https://opendoorsdata.org/annual-release/international-students/>
- 7 Note: Includes recently graduated students on Optional Practical Training (OPT) status
- 8 <https://www.holoniq.com/notes/196b-international-education-market-set-to-reach-433b-by-2030>

required can be onerous. One study shows that one-third of the 300,000 Indian students going abroad in 2015 took out loans using family property as collateral.<sup>10</sup>

To increase access to education and to address this clear gap in financing, MPOWER Financing was founded to offer scholarships and no-cosigner, no-collateral loans for international and other immigrant student groups who are shut out of the traditional lending system. MPOWER's goal was, and continues to be, to broaden access to education. As higher education institutions in the United States and Canada seek to attract a larger number of international students and diversify their student bodies, loans structured for international students can be an important tool in a multi-pronged approach to broaden access to an international education. Loans are not a solution in and of themselves, but can be effectively deployed in coordination with approaches such as governmental and private scholarships, financial aid and friendlier policies that enable international students to work while studying.



## Measuring MPOWER's Social Impact

This social impact report by MPOWER Financing brings an evidence-based approach to understanding the impact that loans for international and immigrant-origin students can have on individuals, institutions and society at large. This year's report builds upon the social impact framework of the prior two reports.

Based upon multiple sources of quantitative and qualitative data at the student, institutional and organizational level, the report draws upon:

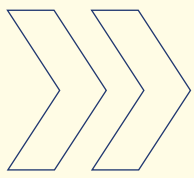
- ◆ Demographic data from over 15,000 student borrowers obtained from the organization's CRM system.
- ◆ Detailed data on the educational and career pathways of nearly 400 current and former students gathered through a survey in spring 2023.
- ◆ Interviews with students, select higher education institutions in the U.S. and Canada and other key stakeholders.

Taken together, these sources provide a comprehensive view of international and immigrant-origin students who procured MPOWER loans between 2015 and 2023 (June).

**Footnote:**

- 9 <https://econofact.org/is-taking-on-more-student-debt-bad-for-students>
- 10 <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/wealth/personal-finance-news/around-3-lakh-indian-students-go-abroad-annually-33-take-property-backed-loans/articleshow/48703656.cms?from=mdr>





# THE MPOWER MODEL



To meet its goals of enabling high-promise global citizens to further their academic and financial aspirations and to make socioeconomic mobility borderless, MPOWER’s social impact approach is grounded in a clear “theory of change” model that illustrates how **investments made at each critical juncture in a student’s journey can lead to a multiplier impact and to significant outcomes for students, higher education institutions, and the global community as a whole.**

### MPOWER provides a positive social impact to:

- ◆ Students, by promoting their access to education and helping them fulfill their potential
- ◆ Higher Education Institutions, by promoting diversity and financial stability
- ◆ The Global Community, by promoting workforce development and preparing tomorrow’s talent

All of this is underscored by the impact on MPOWER internally, including the firm’s commitment to diversity and inclusion.

MPOWER’s impact is grounded in the idea of contributing to **four of the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):**

4
QUALITY EDUCATION

5
GENDER EQUALITY

9
INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

10
REDUCED INEQUALITIES

**Goal 9, Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:** With its focus on attracting students in the STEM fields and supporting them through its Path2Success initiative, MPOWER is contributing significantly to workforce development, the science and technology sectors, and innovation in key countries like the U.S. and Canada, as well as in students’ home countries.

**Goal 10, Reduced Inequalities:** Providing loans to populations that are usually ignored is helping level the playing field for students who might be marginalized or disadvantaged otherwise—and for whom a global education is typically out of reach. These include students from the Global South and from lower income families, as well as those who are the first in their family to attend college.

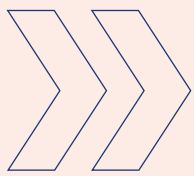
Framed by MPOWER’s financing model and its theory of change for facilitating long-term impact, this report, like the ones that preceded it, is organized by impact at multiple levels, from the individual to the societal, with a call-to-action for higher education institutions, policymakers, the private sector, and donors and philanthropists.



**Goal 4, Quality Education:** MPOWER’s no-cosigner loans have enabled a large number and diverse group of students to access high-quality international education at top-ranked colleges and universities in the U.S. and Canada.

**Goal 5, Gender Equality:** Attaining gender parity is built into all of MPOWER’s activities and services, whether as a lender or as an employer. MPOWER’s loans have reduced traditional societal barriers for women and enabled them to pursue a global education.





# WHO ARE MPOWER STUDENTS?



**163**

**163** different countries of origin for MPOWER students. Many students see themselves as ambassadors both for MPOWER Financing – which made their global degree possible – and for the U.S. and Canada, their host country.



**85%**

**85%** of MPOWER students come from the 98 countries that are part of the Global South.



**54%**

**54%** of MPOWER students are from five countries: India, Nigeria, Ghana, China, and Brazil.



**42%**

**42%** of MPOWER students are women; **58%** are men.



**70%**

**70%** of surveyed MPOWER students report belonging to families with an annual household income of **US\$12,000** or less, placing them at or below the world median GDP per capita of **US\$12,703**. This is a sharp increase from last year (**46%**). In addition, **86%** report belonging to households with an income of **US\$30,000** or below.



**48%**

**48%** of MPOWER students are first-generation college students.



**430**

**430** colleges and universities across the United States and Canada are supported by MPOWER.



**86%**

**86%** of MPOWER students seek a loan to obtain a master's degree (including an MBA), with a further **12%** pursuing an undergraduate degree and **2%** pursuing a doctoral degree. The top five fields of study are: business and management (**30%**), engineering (**12%**), computer science (**10%**), technology (**8%**) and legal studies (**6%**).



**44%**

**44%** of surveyed MPOWER students reported having received one or more academic honors, such as being on the dean's list or equivalent standings.



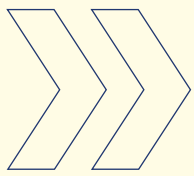
Chandana Hiran is an MBA Student at Western University in Canada who runs a campaign against colorism (favoring fair skin). Her Change.org petition accrued over 35,000 signatures and persuaded Unilever India to drop “Fair” from its “Fair & Lovely” slogan within 2 weeks. Chandana received an honorable mention in the MPOWER MBA Scholarship. “I am honored that MPOWER has not only acknowledged the value of my work but also helped me come closer to my future aspirations of creating a more equitable world,” she wrote. “I hope that people with backgrounds in social change see this and get inspired to apply to their dream programs and scholarships!”



**CHANDANA HIRAN**

**INDIA**

**MASTERS IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, WESTERN UNIVERSITY, LONDON, ONTARIO**



# IMPACT ON STUDENTS: INCREASING ACCESS AND ENABLING POTENTIAL



Access to student loans is critical for students who want to study in a foreign country and gain a global education. But the multitude of barriers that these students face are compounded by further economic and societal hurdles for various groups including women, students from lower-income families, students from the Global South, and first-generation college students.

MPOWER is tackling this systemic challenge by making credit decisions that focus on students'

ability to repay loans as well as projected student outcomes, by using a **forward-looking model centered on students' potential rather than the traditional model** requiring an established U.S. credit history, collateral, or a cosigner – all of which are barriers to financing faced by international students. Analyses by the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia and the American Enterprise Institute have suggested that MPOWER's forward-looking credit model may potentially be applicable to domestic U.S. student

lending by the Department of Education as well.<sup>11</sup> Amid increasing concerns in the U.S. about traditional student loans which are often blind to both credit factors or a degree's ties to gainful employment, MPOWER's model considers the return of investment on degree programs and places strict caps on total borrowing amounts so that students are not overburdened with unsustainable debt.

# 93%

**OF SURVEYED  
MPOWER STUDENTS  
INDICATED THAT THE  
AVAILABILITY OF  
AN EDUCATIONAL  
LOAN THROUGH  
MPOWER HAS BEEN  
INSTRUMENTAL TO  
THEIR ABILITY TO  
STUDY ABROAD.**



Through its approach, MPOWER is expanding the higher education market to serve more of the world's highest-potential students – regardless of income, family background or gender. In the long term, this enables tomorrow's doctors, lawyers, scientists, engineers and business and government leaders to realize their full potential and make powerful contributions to society.



MPOWER has had a significant impact on my life by enabling me to pursue my graduate studies at a top university in the USA. Without their financial support, I would not have had the opportunity to attend George Washington University and gain the knowledge and skills needed to achieve my academic and professional dreams.



**NIGEL NYAJEKA**

**ZIMBABWE**

**MASTERS IN BUSINESS ANALYTICS  
AT GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY,  
WASHINGTON DC**

**Footnote:**

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.philadelphiafed.org/consumer-finance/education-finance/future-potential-versus-past-performance-mpower-financings-innovation-in-student-loan-underwriting> and <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/looking-backward-or-looking-forward-exploring-the-private-student-loan-market/>

## Increasing Access to Education for Underrepresented Students



**95%**

**95%** of surveyed MPOWER students from families with an annual median income of US\$12,000 or less **reported that they would not have been able to study abroad without a loan** or would have had to defer their admission. Many of these students would have had to forfeit their aspirations to study abroad in the absence of self-financing options that offer the possibility for future economic growth and social mobility.



**85%**

**85%** of MPOWER students are from the 98 countries comprising the Global South, or the developing world. **Of those from the Global South, 93% reported an MPOWER loan was critical to their ability to study abroad, rising to 96% for women students.**



**48%**

**48% of MPOWER students are first-generation college students.**

Taken together, these findings suggest that **loans for international and immigrant-origin students can play a powerful role in increasing access for students whose families might not be able to afford a global education**, yet who have the potential to pursue a top degree and a rewarding career.



## Increasing Access to Education for Women

Educational loans can be especially important for female students aspiring to study abroad, particularly those from more patriarchal societies where families may be less inclined to support higher-education for women, especially an education that may be far from home.

No-cosigner loans can thus give women an independent option to pursue their educational goals. MPOWER's loans have helped address this type of challenge. When reflecting on the barriers to studying abroad, 80% of female survey respondents reported that prohibitive tuition costs are the biggest barrier to studying abroad. Further, **96% said an MPOWER loan was critical to their ability to study abroad.**



**56%**

**56% of MPOWER's female students are pursuing STEM fields.** This is significantly higher than the proportion of women globally and in the U.S. who pursue STEM (35% and 36% respectively).<sup>12</sup>



**21%**

Increasing access to education on female. However, within the broad category of STEM, a significant gender gap remains within **computer science and engineering, both of which continue to attract significantly more male students than female.** Conversely, the social sciences (such as economics, psychology and sociology, among other fields) attract significantly more women. This finding aligns with national-level statistics for the U.S., where only **21%** of engineering majors and **19%** of computer science majors are women.



**33%**

**33%** of computer science majors and 25% of engineering majors among MPOWER students are female, which is low but significantly better than national-level statistics from the U.S., where only **19%** of computer science majors and **21%** of engineering majors are women.

Despite these overall positive findings, women from Ghana, India, and Nigeria — three of the top MPOWER-serviced countries — continue to face challenges when pursuing an overseas education. Although 42% of MPOWER students overall are women, their proportion in these countries is much lower: Ghana (25%), India (39%), and Nigeria (40%). MPOWER will continue to promote its Women in STEM scholarships to students from these countries, and highlight student and employee success stories to inspire the next generation of women tech leaders.



### Footnote:

<sup>12</sup> <https://en.unesco.org/stemed>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.aauw.org/resources/research/the-stem-gap/>



My journey as a computer science student from India in the United States has been both challenging and exceptionally rewarding. Arriving with the dream of furthering my education and diving into the world of technology, I faced financial challenges while navigating a new culture and the complexities of the academic landscape. However, fueled by my passion for technology, support from my mentors, financial aid & research assistantships, and a desire to make a difference, I pressed on.

At MPOWER, I found a platform that resonated with my commitment to bridging the gender gap in STEM. As a computer science enthusiast and champion for women in STEM fields, being a part of MPOWER has allowed me to

work in my area of passion and expertise. I have witnessed firsthand the transformative power of education and financial support in empowering women to break barriers and pursue STEM careers.

In my role as the Head of Engineering at MPOWER Financing, I have taken on the responsibility of driving change within the industry. I focus on increasing the representation of women engineers by prioritizing mentorship and advancement opportunities. Recognizing that retaining women in STEM fields requires a holistic approach, we empower them to balance their professional growth with contributions to their families and communities.



**PARI LENNARTZ**

HEAD OF ENGINEERING,  
MPOWER FINANCING



I am inspired by the transformative impact that MPOWER has on students, especially women and those from marginalized communities. As a woman in a STEM field and an advocate for more women in STEM, equality for the disabled, LGBTQ, and other marginalized communities, empowering the next generation with higher education is not just a mission; it's personal. I truly believe that MPOWER is breaking down barriers encouraging acceptance, tolerance, and fostering inclusive prosperity for all individuals.

As the Head of Product, I can personally say that MPOWER innovates for progress, ensuring that every student we reach becomes a beacon of empowerment, resilience, and change. Together, we're not just shaping products; we're shaping futures, and that is a responsibility that fuels my passion every single day.



**LISA KAPLAN**

HEAD OF PRODUCT,  
MPOWER FINANCING



As a woman in tech in India, I have witnessed firsthand the hurdles that we often encounter in this dynamic field. It is both a challenge and an opportunity to break through stereotypes and carve our path in a predominantly male-dominated industry.

I am honored to be a beacon of inspiration for aspiring women in tech, proving that barriers can be shattered, and dreams can be realized. Joining MPOWER is not just a professional achievement for me; it's a commitment to democratizing access to education, ensuring that promising women from diverse backgrounds globally have the chance to thrive in the world of technology.



**NIDHI NANDA**

HEAD OF DATA INFRASTRUCTURE,  
MPOWER FINANCING



**Meet MPOWER's Women in STEM  
Scholarship Winners**



Priyanka is working towards her Ph.D. in Implementation Science at the University of Washington, Seattle. Her research helps develop interdisciplinary, community-lead healthcare initiatives for underserved communities. Priyanka says: Winning the MPOWER Global Citizen Scholarship means seeing my dream come a step closer to reality. I am grateful to MPOWER Financing for supporting international students like me and helping them work towards their career goals without any financial hardships. Now, I feel more confident to achieve my academic aspirations and focus on my endeavors to improve public health globally.



**PRIYANKA SHRESTHA**

PH.D. IN IMPLEMENTATION SCIENCE  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON,  
SEATTLE



Alli Abosedo Sarah studies how air pollution affects respiratory health in vulnerable groups like pregnant women, children, and the elderly. While studying for her undergraduate degree, she learned about the health burdens that high air pollution causes in Nigeria. Alli's doctoral research evaluates how air pollution can cause respiratory illnesses, obesity, and high blood pressure. After Alli completes her studies, she plans to teach in Nigeria as a professor. She hopes to "provide high-quality data to support environmental policies and locally relevant interventions to mitigate air pollution exposure."



**ALLI ABOSEDE SARAH**

**NIGERIA**

PH.D. IN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCES  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS,  
AMHERST

## Bridging the Education-to-Career Gap

International students face unique barriers when compared with their domestic classmates. To stay in the United States or Canada after graduation, they must contend with a difficult career-placement and immigration environment. Those wishing to return to their home country often find that their university's career services office is not equipped to support international job seekers. MPOWER's Path2Success approach takes into consideration these barriers by equipping students with professional and career-related resources that will position them for success after the completion of their studies.

## The Path2Success Initiative:

The Path2Success program seeks to remove these obstacles by positioning graduating students for the job market. MPOWER's Path2Success program offers free résumé reviews; free immigration webinars and free 30-minute consultations with an immigration attorney; free career coaching webinars with a professional career coach; webinars to help students identify scholarships for international, a monthly student newsletter, and frequent blog posts with tips to help students adapt to life in the U.S. and Canada.

According to a survey conducted by MPOWER in November 2021, **79% of MPOWER students indicated the high importance of MPOWER's career services**, particularly those aimed at facilitating post-graduation employment.



"I'm very (excited) to share with you that I just received an internship offer letter from Landmark Construction. Thank you so much for the support and coaching you gave me. I might not have made it without your help. I appreciate it."



**AARON TURKSON**

**GHANA**

M.B.A FROM THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK, BUFFALO



"I want to genuinely thank you for helping me with my resume. Thanks to your help, I got an interview from Hinge Dating App for Data Scientist Role and may have follow-up interviews after that in near future."



**SOHAM SATHE**

**INDIA**

M.S. DATA SCIENCE FROM THE NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, NEWARK



## Increasing Access through Scholarships

Access to financing is just one solution for enabling a larger and more diverse group of students to study abroad. Globally, scholarships and fellowships offered by governments, higher education institutions and the private sector are an enduring vehicle for increasing access to international education. Since 2020, **MPOWER has offered scholarships to international, DACA, and refugee students.**

- ◆ Scholarship recipients have come from countries including Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Brazil, Canada, China, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ecuador, Ethiopia, Ghana, Hong Kong, India, Iran, Jamaica, Japan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Mexico, Pakistan, Palestine, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts & Nevis, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Ukraine, Venezuela, Vietnam, Zambia and Zimbabwe. **As with MPOWER students overall, scholarship awardees are also primarily from Global South countries.**
- ◆ **MPOWER scholarships have also benefited DACA students,** a sizable group of students with limited opportunities and access in the U.S. because of their undocumented immigration status. DACA students face significant hurdles, as they can't access federally subsidized loans, and their parents typically have limited access to banking services. In addition to assisting DACA students pursue a higher education, MPOWER has partnered with the La Unidad Latina Foundation to launch two jointly funded programs: one exclusively for DACA students and the other for students from Latin America and the Caribbean.

- ◆ **The MPOWER Refugee Scholarship** supports students fleeing harsh conditions from around the world and coming to the U.S. or Canada for a better future. This scholarship, which announced its inaugural winners in 2023, was made possible by a generous donation to the Global Citizens Fund from Tytus Michalski, Managing Partner at Fresco Capital, once a refugee himself and now an active student mentor.



“Students can only benefit from education if they have the necessary access and resources. I was one of those fortunate enough to experience this transformation in access and support after moving to Canada from Poland during the early 1980s. Helping vulnerable students overcome challenges is also helping ourselves because we all benefit from their future success.”

**TYTUS MICHALSKI**

MANAGING PARTNER,  
FRESCO CAPITAL



Kateryna is a Harvard-educated and award-winning public policy consultant. She fled the Ukraine war as a refugee and now advocates for her country from Washington, D.C.

Since her arrival in the U.S., Kateryna has been actively speaking at fundraising events for Ukraine, running discussions with key public policy leaders and fostering partnerships between American and Ukrainian think tanks.

Kateryna has utilized her public policy expertise to drive international sanctions against Russia and to contribute to economic recovery plans for post-war Ukraine. Her mission to rehabilitate the damage done to her country drives her academic ambitions.

**KATERYNA SHAPOVALENKO**

**UKRAINE**

M.S. PUBLIC POLICY AND DATA ANALYTICS  
AT CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY,  
PITTSBURGH



Fatema has reported on the systematic oppression of women in Afghanistan and her own struggle to thrive under the violence and misogyny of the Taliban. In Afghanistan, Fatema reported on women's struggles in the workplace and home through the online publication Kabul Now. Her work gave women a safe, effective system to report complaints but was cut short by the collapse of the Afghan government in 2021.

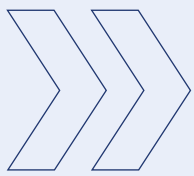
Fatema chose to pursue investigative journalism to “build a strong platform to be the voice of my people by defending their rights and disclosing corruption cases, helping people to know what happened in their country.”

**FATEMA HOSSEINI**

**AFGHANISTAN**

M.S. IN INVESTIGATIVE JOURNALISM  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND,  
COLLEGE PARK





# IMPACT ON HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: DIVERSITY AND STABILITY



The American and Canadian higher education institutions that host MPOWER students benefit both directly and indirectly from the no-cosigner loan model that enables a larger number and diversity of aspiring students to study abroad, while also allowing universities to prosper and internationalize.

## Diversity on Campus

Over the course of the last several years, American and Canadian higher education institutions have begun placing an increasing emphasis on growing the diversity of their student body, including attracting international students from a wider range of countries and socioeconomic backgrounds.

MPOWER loans have enabled these institutions to diversify their international student body and to meet their diversity, equity, and inclusion goals.



**85%**

**85%** of MPOWER students come from the 98 countries that are part of the Global South



**70%**

**70%** of surveyed MPOWER students report belonging to families with an annual household income of US\$12,000 or less, thus providing socioeconomic diversity to college campuses.



**54%**

**54%** of MPOWER students are from five countries: India, Nigeria, Ghana, China, and Brazil.



**93%**

**93%** of surveyed MPOWER students from the Global South report that **they would not have been able to study at their host institution without an MPOWER loan**, a figure that increases to 96% among female students



**40%**

**40%** of MPOWER students are from Africa, including the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, in contrast to only about 5% of international students in the U.S. coming from this region.<sup>14</sup>



### Footnote:

14 <https://www.jbhe.com/2022/12/students-from-sub-saharan-african-nations-at-u-s-colleges-and-universities-2021-22/>

15 <https://www.gradschoolmatch.com/resources/articles/international-students-stem-programs.html>



International students contribute in immeasurable ways to the internationalization and global appeal of American and Canadian campuses. Their presence and perspectives are especially valuable to those domestic students who might not have the opportunity to study or travel abroad and for whom international students offer a window into other worlds and cultures.

These students are also vital to sustain certain important but less popular academic disciplines - especially in STEM fields. In 2019, 72% of graduate students in computer science and as high as 81% in fields like petroleum engineering were international students. This contrast is particularly stark with regards to women students, adding a crucial dimension of diversity to these disciplines.

Overall, more than 60% of new graduate students in math and computer science, and half of the engineering students, were from abroad.<sup>15</sup> Increasing access to international students who want to study in the U.S. or Canada is therefore crucial to sustaining these degree programs and ensuring that all students have access to a STEM education.



“If it weren’t for MPOWER, we would not have the number of African students that we do, which would have effectively reduced the diversity of our international student population.”



**CHRIS JONES**

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF RECRUITMENT AND ADMISSIONS, ROTMAN SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT - UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

## Economic Impact and Stability

NAFSA calculates that in the 2022-23 academic year, the financial impact of international students in the United States was \$40.1 billion. MPOWER estimates that the financial impact of international students in Canada was C\$35.7 billion during this same period. This financial impact is mostly realized by universities through tuition fees. MPOWER funds contribute significantly to the overall financial impact of international students and sustains university budgets.

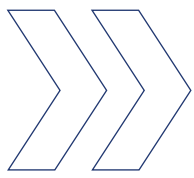
American and Canadian higher education institutions rely heavily on the revenue that international students bring in through their tuition, fees and other expenditures. Faced with declining domestic enrollment, American and Canadian universities are increasingly reliant on international students to fill their classrooms and sustain the universities’ operations.<sup>16</sup>

There remains significant room to grow the footprint of international students in the United States. Despite the U.S. having nearly nine times the population of Canada, the two countries host similar numbers of international students, excluding recently-graduated students from American universities on OPT status. Particularly when considered alongside declining domestic enrollment and workforce gaps, the United States has significant capacity to welcome additional international students to its shores.

### Footnote:

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0047272717301676>





# IMPACT ON THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY: PREPARING THE WORKFORCE OF TOMORROW



**The Global Community**  
Innovation & Workforce Development

International students have an impact on their country of study by developing the workforce, building knowledge economies and fostering innovation in their communities. This influence on their local region is especially important, as **an overwhelming majority (91%) of MPOWER students project that they would like to live in the U.S. or Canada in the future.**

## Preparing Tomorrow's Talent

Of MPOWER students who have graduated from university, 74% were either employed full-time or were seeking full-time employment; 18% were pursuing further education; and the remaining were launching a business or new enterprise.



MPOWER graduates predominantly enter the sectors of finance, business management and administration, information technology, government and public administration, STEM fields, and law, thus positioning them to contribute to key industry sectors in their host country.



**30%**

**30%** of MPOWER students pursue engineering, computer science, or technology fields: all in-demand professions in the global economy. This is increasingly important given the rapid expansion of Artificial Intelligence (AI), the semiconductor industry, and other areas of critical national need in the U.S. which increasingly rely on highly-trained global talent.<sup>17</sup>



**15%**

MPOWER graduates are contributing significantly to the economy and civil society in the U.S. and Canada: **15%** of graduates have raised funds and advocated for key causes; **11%** have founded or co-founded a company or organization; 10% have published written work; **6%** have served as elected officials; **4%** have developed an artistic production; and **2%** have received or filed for a patent.



## Impact on Host Countries

The United States and Canada have a proud history of welcoming students and migrants from around the world. And immigrants and international students have a demonstrated ability and willingness to contribute immensely to the economies of their host countries.

Jewish migrants fleeing the Nazis contributed significantly to the U.S. through Nobel-Prize winning research<sup>18</sup> and discoveries like penicillin<sup>19</sup>. Gujarati Indians represent a significant presence in American healthcare, owning nearly half of the country's independent pharmacies and practicing medicine in numerous capacities across the nation.<sup>20</sup>

Today, the majority of billion-dollar American firms were founded or co-founded by immigrants or their children, and almost 80% of American unicorns (privately-held billion-dollar firms) have an immigrant founder or an immigrant in a key leadership role<sup>21</sup>. A review of the founders and leadership of American tech giants, from Sundar Pichai (CEO of Alphabet, Google's parent) to Elon Musk (CEO of Tesla and SpaceX) to Satya Nadella (CEO of Microsoft) to Safra Cranz (CEO of Oracle) and many others illustrates this clearly.

Attracting immigrants may be key to accomplishing the U.S. government's goal of spurring a domestic semiconductor manufacturing industry. Despite significant national-level investments, currently the United States simply does not have the workforce with the right skills to build this new industry. One study found that for the U.S. to be self-sufficient in chip production, it would need to add an additional 300,000 fabrication jobs. The Arizona foundry being built by Taiwan Semiconductor

Manufacturing Company (TSMC) is months behind schedule because the firm can't find enough engineers and skilled technicians to build it.

International students and migrants could help to alleviate many of these challenges, thus giving American tech giants and investors like TSMC access to the brightest minds from around the world.



### Footnote:

- 17 <https://www.nasdaq.com/articles/fish-and-chips%3A-to-make-bidens-chips-act-successful-we-need-fresh-international-scholars>
- 18 <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/AnS/physics/brau/H182/Term%20Papers/Eric%20Weiss.html>
- 19 <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/the-real-story-behind-the-worlds-first-antibiotic>



Edgar Alan David completed his Master's degree in Computer Science at Northeastern University in 2022. Even from the early stages of his professional career, he knew that he wanted to pursue a degree in the United States.

In 2020 during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, Edgar saw the opportunity to turn his dream into reality. Therefore, he packed his bags and moved to the U.S. together with his eldest daughter, leaving his wife and two other children in the Philippines.

Edgar faced challenges funding the second (and final) year of his education. Knowing that his family in the Philippines was counting on him, Edgar came across MPOWER, which provided him with crucial support to complete his education.

Today, Edgar serves as a Product Development Engineer at Intel in Arizona, contributing to the growth of the American semiconductor industry. He recently relocated the rest of his family to the United States after more than two years of being apart, and his family looks forward to starting the next chapter in their life's journey together.

Edgar's story stands as a testament to the United States' ability to attract the best and brightest minds globally, fostering investment in the development of the workforce of tomorrow. This journey, marked by both professional achievements and personal sacrifices, underlines Edgar's belief in continuous education as a fountain of youth. Edgar asserts that with each passing year, one should deepen their commitment to learning, a principle he lives by. His story reflects not only his personal triumph but also the United States' role in nurturing global talent, emphasizing the importance of ongoing education in shaping the workforce of tomorrow.



**EDGAR ALAN DAVID**

**PHILIPPINES**

**MASTERS IN COMPUTER SCIENCE  
AT NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY,  
BOSTON**

## Impact on Origin Countries

The benefits of skilled immigration to the receiving country are well-documented, but sending countries also benefit tremendously.

In 2022, remittances to low- and middle-income countries reached \$626 billion. These remittances are crucial for recipient countries as they strive to reduce poverty, improve nutrition, and enable households to build resilience, including better housing and disaster recovery.

Immigrants often influence businesses in their new home to do more deals with businesses in their old country (Brain Gain), helped by the immigrant's shared ties of knowledge, culture, language, and kinship. And there are countless examples of immigrants moving back to their origin countries after a few years abroad, thus bringing foreign expertise and global best-practices with them in a phenomenon called Brain Circulation.

Empirical evidence validates this. In a 2008 analysis,<sup>22</sup> Beine, Docquier, and Rapoport find a positive correlation with high-skilled immigrants and later changes to the level of human capital in the origin country. And in a 2021 paper,<sup>23</sup> Abarcar and Theoharides discovered that when the U.S. adopted policy changes to attract foreign nurses, the Philippines saw a large increase in the number of students pursuing nursing degrees that exceeded those that eventually left for the U.S.

### Footnote:

20 <https://www.economist.com/christmas-specials/2015/12/19/going-global>

21 <https://nfap.com/research/new-nfap-policy-brief-immigrant-entrepreneurs-and-u-s-billion-dollar-companies/>

## Case Study: India

Origin countries benefit substantially from a well-educated and connected diaspora, as demonstrated best by India.

The Indian diaspora has long contributed to India's growth story. India received over \$111 billion of remittances in 2022, which the World Bank largely attributes<sup>24</sup> to high-skilled and high-tech Indian migrants in the United States, United Kingdom, and Singapore. U.S.-based doctors of Indian origin helped provide medical advice during India's COVID-19 wave, and diaspora engineers contributed to India's vast Aadhaar (digital ID) system.

There have been countless Indian entrepreneurs educated abroad who then returned home to create thousands of jobs. These include:

- ◆ Azim Premji, founder of Wipro, is Stanford educated
- ◆ Ratan Tata, founder of the Tata Group, was educated at Cornell and Harvard Business School
- ◆ Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, the founder and executive chairperson of Biocon Limited and Biocon Biologics Limited, studied at Melbourne University in Australia

- ◆ Kunal Bahl, co-founder of Snapdeal, one of India's leading online marketplaces, was educated at Wharton and worked at Microsoft
- ◆ Naina Lal Kidwai, the former Country Head of HSBC India and the former President of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry, was the first Indian woman to graduate from Harvard Business School
- ◆ All three founders of Ashoka University and other such trailblazing institutions in India, including ISB in Hyderabad and Plaksha University

In a 2021 paper, authors Gaurav Khanna and Nicholas Morales argue that American immigration policy and an internet boom spurred a Brain Gain-driven boom in India. The authors attribute this to American immigration policy raising the general level of education among the Indian populace by making it attractive for Indians to study computer science and similar fields. This provides strong evidence for an educated, engaged diaspora being vastly beneficial to both origin and host countries alike.

### Footnote:

22 <https://academic.oup.com/ej/article-abstract/118/528/631/5089483>

23 [https://www.amherst.edu/system/files/Abarcar\\_Theoharides\\_2020\\_July\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.amherst.edu/system/files/Abarcar_Theoharides_2020_July_FINAL.pdf)

24 <https://blogs.worldbank.org/peoplemove/remittance-flows-reached-all-time-high-2022-south-asia#:~:text=In%20India%2C%20the%208%20percent,South%20Asia's%20total%20remittance%20flows.>

25 [https://www.ecb.bt/wp-content/uploads/PP\\_Manifesto/DTT-Manifesto-03112023.pdf](https://www.ecb.bt/wp-content/uploads/PP_Manifesto/DTT-Manifesto-03112023.pdf)





Kinga Tshering is a Bhutanese businessman and politician who served as a Member of Parliament in the National Assembly from 2013 to 2016, when he stepped down to pursue a Masters in Public Administration at the Harvard Kennedy School.

After graduating from the Harvard Kennedy School, Kinga was a fellow at the Harvard Kennedy School's Ash Center for Democratic Governance and Innovation and founded the Institute of Happiness, a Bhutanese non profit think tank. He later returned to Bhutan to serve on the Board of Druk Holding and Investments (DHI). Kinga founded Druk Thuendrel Tshogpa (DTT), a new political party, to contest Bhutan's 2023 election.

The DTT's manifesto<sup>25</sup> is heavily inspired by coursework at Harvard University, particularly the Kennedy School's Adaptive Leadership framework. The DTT strives for good governance, social harmony, environmental stewardship, culture, and cutting-edge technology and finance.

While Kinga funded his education through fellowships and did not take advantage of MPOWER's funding, as Prime Minister, Kinga would work with firms like MPOWER to promote access to higher education for Bhutanese students in an effort to upskill Bhutan's workforce and create what he calls "Silicon Shangri-La" - the Silicon Valley of Bhutan.



**KINGA TSHERING**

**BHUTAN**

MASTERS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION,  
HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL,  
CAMBRIDGE

**Impact on The World**

MPOWER has determined that as of December 2023, there are 42 world leaders, including presidents, prime ministers, and their equivalents, who have received an American education. This figure rises to 86 when including those educated in Britain, the European Union, Japan, or other industrialized democratic societies outside of their own country, collectively representing the leaders of nearly half of the world's nations. Educated in advanced democracies, these leaders are able to serve as bridges between nations and act as a voice for good governance, democratic values, "soft" diplomacy, and potentially fuel a peace dividend.

Some of the most democratic nations in Africa - Mauritius and Botswana (as measured by the Economist Intelligence Unit) - have Presidents who were educated in the United Kingdom and United States, respectively.

Global challenges such as cybersecurity, curing cancer, and stopping pandemics require a collaborative, global response that global citizens are best suited for. Indeed, MPOWER students are already having such an impact: they are mitigating climate change, working in epidemiology, founding companies and nonprofits, conducting cancer research, contributing to cybersecurity and global security, running for political office, and more:

- ◆ Working in the field of education and maternal health to improve child outcomes.
- ◆ Scientific research on the causal inference of COVID-19 impact.
- ◆ Advocacy and public diplomacy against genocide.
- ◆ Award-winning clinical research.
- ◆ Behavioral science research to find innovative ways to treat cancer.
- ◆ Working at an ed-tech start-up.
- ◆ Publishing their research.
- ◆ Becoming a resident chaplain at a university.
- ◆ Developing a project on urban issues.
- ◆ Consulting for an international development agency.
- ◆ Co-leading a first-ever global survey of city mayors.
- ◆ Working with the World Health Organization.



Xuxu is a Ph.D. candidate at the Baylor College of Medicine from China. After completing her medical degree in China, she found her passion in translational research. Her research interests are focused on metastatic cancer and estrogen receptor (ESR1) gene fusions.

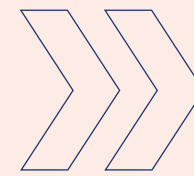
Xuxu wrote, “I have established a diagnostic gene signature to separate inactive ESR1 fusions from active ‘drivers’, and I identified new kinase targets for potential treatment for patients that express active ESR1 fusions.” She is a strong advocate for other women in STEM, and hopes to, “accelerate the application of precision therapeutics to improve clinical outcomes for patients with metastatic cancer.”



**XUXU GOU**

**CHINA**

**CANCER BIOLOGY RESEARCHER,  
BAYLOR COLLEGE OF MEDICINE,  
HOUSTON**



## IMPACT ON MPOWER INTERNALLY

Companies and organizations are increasingly being called upon to model internally the values they promote externally through their work. One of MPOWER’s core values is inclusion, broadly defined to include seeking out and embracing diverse viewpoints as well as supporting and celebrating diversity – race, gender, age, socioeconomic status, religion, national origin, physical ability and sexual orientation – across employees, students, investors, advisors, board members and partners.

### Diversity Among Employees and Stakeholders

Co-founded by a former international student from France and a refugee from Iran, MPOWER embodies diversity, from its employees to its senior-most leadership. Many are former international students, refugees, first- and second-generation immigrants and DACA recipients – sharing lived experiences with the students they serve.



**56%**

**56%:** 5 of MPOWER’s 9 Board members are either immigrants and/or belong to racial minority groups.



**72%**

**72%** of MPOWER’s U.S.-based staff are either immigrants and/or belong to racial minority groups, which has helped MPOWER gain recognition as one of the most diverse organizations in the U.S.



**34%**

**34%** of the MPOWER’s India-based team are women, higher than the 30% average in India’s tech sector.



**83%**

**83%:** 5 out of MPOWER’s 6 executive team members are either immigrants and/or belong to racial minority groups.



**46%**

**46%:** 13 out of MPOWER’s 28 member senior leadership team are either immigrants and/or belong to racial minority groups.



**28**

MPOWER’s India-based employees collectively speak **28 languages** and U.S.-based employees collectively speak **17 languages**, facilitating diverse client interactions and cultural depth.



31%

31% of MPOWER's India-based employees belong to a religious minority group and/or marginalized group, which represents MPOWER's efforts to strive towards a representative and inclusive workforce.



40%

40%: MPOWER's team reflects the diverse journey of its student body, having firsthand experience in navigating educational financing challenges. A significant 40% of staff have secured education loans, a number that rises to 59% among those with immigrant backgrounds. Furthermore, 76% of staff who pursued studies abroad navigated the challenges of obtaining credit while overseas. Their collective experiences inform MPOWER's understanding of the challenges faced by its students.

### Achieving Gender Parity

MPOWER's commitment to gender parity is both external, through enabling more women to study abroad, especially in the STEM fields, and internal, through increasing gender balance within the company and its leadership. This is no easy feat for a technology company, given the large gender gap in the tech sector where far fewer women enter and persist in tech careers, especially at higher levels.

- ◆ **Women make up 34% of MPOWER's team overall.** By comparison, in 2021, women performed only 27% of tech jobs in the U.S.
- ◆ **2 of the 6 MPOWER's executive team are women. MPOWER recognizes that there is an opportunity and need to appoint more women to its board of directors and board of advisors.** Currently, only 1 of the 9-member board of directors is female.

### External Recognition

By embodying its core values of diversity and inclusion, MPOWER has won numerous accolades, including:

- ◆ Topping the Washington Business Journal's Corporate Diversity Index of midsize firms in the Greater Washington, D.C. area
- ◆ Being recognized by Tech in Motion as the Best Tech Workplace for Diversity in Washington, D.C.
- ◆ Being Certified as a Great Place to Work in India

Additionally, in 2023 MPOWER completed B Corp Certification, which recognizes MPOWER's long-term commitment to making a positive social impact on a global scale and driving an inclusive, equitable, and regenerative economy. This is particularly important for a company like MPOWER which conducts outreach to students worldwide, as it allows MPOWER to effectively communicate with, and serve, students around the world.



Diversity is inherently embedded in MPOWER's business and culture: our students come from around the globe, and so do our employees. From the start, our organizational structure prioritized ensuring that different views were represented in decision-making. The opportunity we have ahead is to continue to create space within our company for a wide range of viewpoints and experiences, ensuring diversity and, at times, divergence in key decision areas. MPOWER fosters an environment that emphasizes continuous feedback and celebrates accomplishments aligned with the company's core values, including inclusion and compassion. This is further reinforced through performance evaluations, which also prioritize qualities like boldness and a data-driven approach.

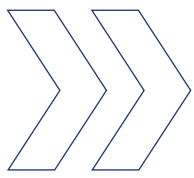
We have lofty growth goals as a company, and as a leadership team, we're committed to further fostering the various dimensions of diversity and creating an inclusive space for our team to make maximum social and business impact.



LANA LODGE

EVP OF BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND CORPORATE SECRETARY





# A CALL TO ACTION

Through evidence drawn from multiple sources, this social impact report demonstrates the importance of enabling students with otherwise-limited resources to access an international education. MPOWER's no-collateral financing can be a powerful lever to accomplish the dual goals of increasing access to global education and opening doors for students facing barriers, such as those from lower income families, those who are first-generation students and those who come from the Global South. These findings also have larger implications for ensuring access and equity in education at a global level, for educating and preparing future global talent and for building and sustaining knowledge economies and talent pools. MPOWER is however just one actor in a broader family of public, private, and non-profit enablers of global education. **Here are examples of how colleges and universities, policymakers, the private sector, and donors and philanthropists can take action to boost international education opportunities:**

## For Higher Education Institutions

- ◆ Universities should promote a comprehensive range of financial options, including government and private scholarships, institutional aid, and global student loans, to support and attract international students. This inclusive financial strategy is essential to diversify schools' international student population, especially among Global South nations.

- ◆ Higher education institutions could enhance socio-economic diversity by waiving or reducing deposit requirements for students from low-income countries and backgrounds. This change would significantly aid in attracting and enrolling a broader range of students, including refugees and other underrepresented groups.
- ◆ Colleges and universities should enhance the immigration and career support provided to international students. MPOWER's Path2Success demonstrates the potential in combining academic, career, and immigration-related guidance to help international students successfully navigate the full journey of international education through to graduation and gainful employment.

## For Policymakers

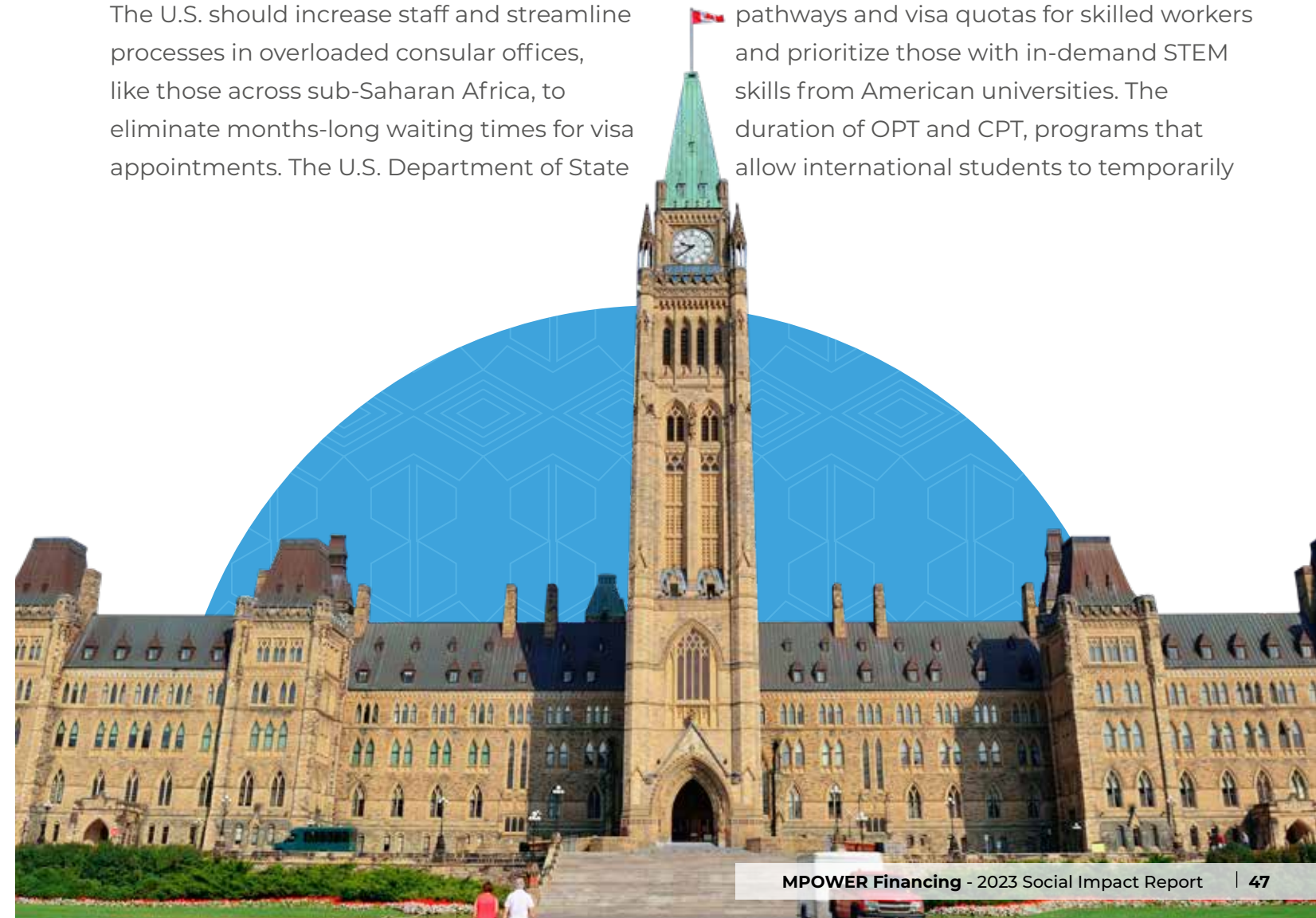
- ◆ Globally, women continue to be impacted by a "leaky pipeline" that often begins with social and cultural factors that remove girls and women from education at every step. MPOWER's loan model is one solution. By receiving loans not tied to a family's collateral and not requiring the approval and co-signatures of family members, women from cultures where key decisions are often made by male family members can feel financially empowered. At the same time,

governmental initiatives designed to increase the participation and retention of women along the educational pathway, especially in STEM fields, are needed to prioritize girls' and women's education and to address broader societal attitudes that pose hurdles for women.

- ◆ Immigration policies play a key role in attracting international students and future skilled immigrants. In keeping with other global student surveys, 40% of MPOWER students report that immigration and visa-related issues are a top hindrance, with students from the Global South – especially African countries – more likely to report this as a continuing barrier. Recent research<sup>26</sup> validates that students from Global South nations face disproportionate F-1 visa denials. The U.S. should increase staff and streamline processes in overloaded consular offices, like those across sub-Saharan Africa, to eliminate months-long waiting times for visa appointments. The U.S. Department of State

should additionally increase training and guidance for improved visa adjudication and work to remedy posts experiencing high visa decline rates.

- ◆ Canada's relatively friendlier immigration policies are designed to attract global talent, including allowing international students to work off-campus while in-school, providing three years of post-graduation work authorization and offering a clear path to permanent residency. In contrast, U.S. policies have not kept pace. In-school employment is restricted (which poses a financial barrier for international students); the ability of students to stay after an education remains uncertain; and the pathway to residency can take several years, even for top global talent. The U.S. should increase immigration pathways and visa quotas for skilled workers and prioritize those with in-demand STEM skills from American universities. The duration of OPT and CPT, programs that allow international students to temporarily



### Footnote:

<sup>26</sup> <https://shorelight.com/student-stories/shorelight-and-presidents-alliance-report-shows-disproportionate-f-1-visa/>



work in the U.S. in their field of study, should be extended. And international students with in-demand STEM degrees should be exempt from caps on green cards and H1-B visas.

### For the Private Sector

- ◆ Investing in student potential and enabling deserving students to access a global education helps build the global talent pool, grow and diversify industries and the workforce and spur innovation and entrepreneurship. This is critical, as both the U.S. and Canada face a demographic decline and a shrinking domestic workforce that will increasingly rely on global talent. According to one estimate, by 2030 there will be a global human talent shortage of more than 85 million people that could result in US\$8.5 trillion in unrealized annual revenues.<sup>27</sup> **This calls for a bold solution:** Investors should consider the asset class of international student loans as a way to earn healthy returns while making a social impact through environmental, social and governance criteria and diversifying their portfolio by issuing loans to students from 160+ countries.
- ◆ Companies with a global client base should actively pursue hiring international students, recognizing the value they bring in terms of diverse perspectives and cultural insights. By offering sponsorships for H1-B visas, these companies not only broaden their talent pool but also demonstrate a commitment to diversity and inclusion. This approach is vital for businesses looking to thrive in a global market, as it ensures that their internal workforce mirrors the diverse nature of their

clientele. Such practices not only enhance the company's cultural competence but also contribute to a more inclusive and dynamic workplace environment.


### For Donors and Philanthropists

- ◆ Additional scholarships and private philanthropic efforts focused on different groups of underrepresented students are needed to increase educational access and prevent “brain waste” or the loss of human capital. Displaced and refugee college students are particularly vulnerable: Only 5% can access a post-secondary education.<sup>28</sup>
- ◆ Scholarships are a vital tool to democratize access to education for DACA students, refugee students, and other underrepresented student populations. Organizations like the Global Citizens Fund, a 501(c)(3) organization and the nonprofit arm of MPOWER Financing, can play a role in administering, adjudicating, and disbursing scholarships on the the behalf of donors either as part of a general scholarship pool or a bespoke award for specific student communities.

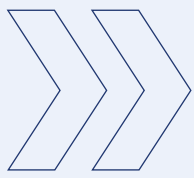
#### Footnote:

27 <https://www.kornferry.com/insights/this-week-in-leadership/talent-crunch-future-of-work>

28 <https://www.unhcr.org/en-us/tertiary-education.html>



International no-cosigner student loans can be a powerful tool for global socioeconomic mobility. The MPOWER model has been shown to produce strong outcomes for students, universities and the larger global community.



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This report was edited by Dr. Rajika Bhandari, an international higher education expert, former international student and the author of America

Calling: A Foreign Student in a Country of Possibility, both a deeply personal memoir of her journey from India to the U.S. as a student and immigrant and a call-to-action for countries to keep their doors open to international students.

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**For more information about the Global Citizens Fund, or how you can contribute to our scholarship fund, please email [inquiries@globalcitizensfund.org](mailto:inquiries@globalcitizensfund.org).**





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