

Providing funding for development

The Australian Government awarded over AUD 30,000 from the Small Grants Scheme to fund five projects that will be implemented by African alumni from Liberia, Nigeria, Kenya, Malawi and Uganda. This was the first round of grant Awards in 2013, with three other rounds expected during the course of the year.

The Australian Awards Small Grants Scheme was established in 2011 to support alumni as they become involved in development activities in their home country. Three of the eligible areas of funding under the grant are seed-funding for the establishment of Alumni Associations, support for small-scale projects with a clear development benefit to African countries, and support for one-off professional development activities for individual alumni.

The awarded projects fall in key sectors in Africa's development efforts, including education and agriculture. In a visit to Liberia and speaking at an Australia Awards reception, H.E. Joanna Adamson, Australian Ambassador, officially announced and awarded a grant in the amount of AUD 5,000 to Liberian Alumnus Charles Gaye to implement a project on *Upgrading teachers' skills in the use of the Internet*.

"Internet use has become a challenge in our country where Information and Telecommunications Technology is placing new demands on teachers for upgraded ways of teaching and learning. The project I am leading aims to address this pressing need," Charles explained. He also was not short of words to thank the Australian Government for contributing to the development of Liberia through the work of alumni.

Speaking at the same event, Jamie Isbister, Minister Counsellor for Development (Africa) at the Australian Agency for International Development, announced and awarded a grant in the amount of AUD 8,314 for Nigerian Alumna Eni Ayeni from Community Action Against Injustice, a Nigerian-based non-governmental organisation. The grant will fund the implementation of a project aimed at *Enhancing independent living and self-reliance of community women through economic empowerment for sustainable development in Osun State, Nigeria*.

Table 1: Snapshot of 2013 First Round Grants

Grants to Organizations

Community Action Against Injustice (CAAI) is a Nigerian non-governmental organisation providing human rights and socio-economic support to women, children and persons with disabilities. CAAI received a grant in the amount of AUD 8,314 to strengthen the capacity of community women to generate income and contribute to the welfare of their families in Osun State, Nigeria. The project will provide vocational/entrepreneurial skills training and micro credit to 10 selected community women from three sub-urban communities within the state to establish viable income generating businesses for self-reliance and independent living. Eni Ayeni, founder and Programme Coordinator for CAAI, received a Short Course Award to study Organisational and Employee Development in 2012 at University of Queensland.

Established in 1964 by a faith-based organisation, **Montfort Special Needs Education College** provides education to students with learning difficulties, hearing and visual impairment. The college seeks to provide accessible, equitable and relevant education to all learners with special educational needs in Malawi and is currently implementing a project whereby teachers from nearby schools are being trained in inclusive education. Through the Australia Awards grant of AUD 9,332, the college will roll out the inclusive education project to the entire district of Chiradzulu. The project will provide specialised materials and train mainstream primary school teachers on basic knowledge in inclusive education to develop their skills in managing and teaching learners with special education needs. Alumna Betty Chipiliro works at the College and is the material production Project Manager for this project; she studied a Masters of Special Education at University of Newcastle completing her studies in 2010.

Grants to Individual Alumni

Ugandan Alumna, Harriet Muyinza received a grant in the amount of AUD 3,500 to implement a project that seeks to promote an integrated pest management package for maize in two Ugandan districts in order to reduce postharvest losses and increase household food security and incomes. Through the project, farmers will gain knowledge on grain storage technologies and use the technologies to store their maize for longer periods without loss in stored grain quality. An estimated 200 maize farmer families are expected to benefit directly from the project. Harriet received a Short Course Award to study Post-harvest Management of Maize, Rice and Legumes at Sydney University in 2012.

Liberian Alumnus, Charles Gaye, Training Officer at the Ministry of Education, received a grant in the amount of AUD 5,000 to improve the knowledge and skills of TVET teachers in basic Internet/computer literacy. TVET teachers will be trained on how to integrate Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in teaching and learning and to use ICT to support student-centred, inquiry-driven teaching and learning activities. Charles was awarded a Short Course Award in 2012 to study TVET Teachers Skills Upgrade at Chisholm Institute.

Kenyan Alumnus, Josphert Kimatu, a lecturer at South Eastern University College, was awarded a grant in the amount of AUD 4,650 to conduct research that will identify the most *Aflatoxin* resistant local maize varieties and be able to advise farmers as to the best maize varieties. Maize *Aflatoxin* defense is crucial in the overall goal of food security in the South Eastern region of Kenya where over 200 people died of *Aflatoxin* contamination in 2004. The research will be conducted in collaboration with the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI) and it is expected to contribute toward food security and safety. Josphert received a Short Course Award in 2012 to study Postharvest Management of Maize, Rice and Legume at the Sydney University.
