The Moving Windmills Innovation Center

Inspiring Innovative Solutions for African Problems in Kasungu, Malawi
OVER THE LAST DECADE, MOVING WINDMILLS HAS TRANSFORMED THE LIVES OF RESIDENTS OF KASUNGU, MALAWI

In 2001, William Kamkwamba, a young man from Kasungu in Malawi, Africa, was forced to drop out of school due to a devastating famine. Turning to self-education, William saw a picture of a windmill in a library book. Using found scrapyard parts—a broken bicycle, tractor fan, plastic pipes, bamboo, wires—William built a series of windmills that would save his community, transform his life, and lead him to new opportunities. He was invited to matriculate at the first pan-African high school, African Leadership Academy, and further his education at Dartmouth College’s Geisel School of Engineering in the United States. His story has inspired books, a TED Talk, and a Netflix film. His vision, and that of Moving Windmills Project, is to provide the inspiration, mentorship, and tools for young innovators to dream and do.

To further that goal and in order to address the complex and unique needs of communities in Africa, Moving Windmills Project was founded and registered as a U.S. 501c-3 organization in 2007. We work with local leaders to determine, organize, and implement appropriate solutions that build community and solve pressing problems.

Moving Windmills’ current and recent projects range from a comprehensive plan to empower Malawians in Kasungu with access to solar powered electricity, to providing clean water from a simple tap, to building sustainably powered schools, to sponsoring a young men’s football (soccer) team. From saved pain and labor for individuals, to lower energy costs which means more funds for food and education, to a rise in community spirit, these projects have long-lasting and wide-ranging ripple effects.

Now, Moving Windmill Project is embarking on a period of evolution and growth and is poised to create a new home for creative problem-solving in Malawi, the Moving Windmills Innovation Center.
MALAWI IS A YOUNG COUNTRY - NEARLY HALF OF THE POPULATION IS UNDER THE AGE OF 15 YEARS OLD.

The population, expected to double in the next 20 years, will test an education system that is over-enrolled, under-resourced, and under-utilized. In 2018, 31% of eligible Malawian students completed primary school, 15% completed secondary school; this represents the lowest rates of access to education in East Africa.

For decades development specialists have promised Malawians that more education means better-paying jobs, but in a fragile economy based on small-scale agriculture, this is not true. Over 80% of Malawians are subsistence farmers, yet agriculture curriculum in schools is limited to multiple-choice test questions that are more likely to test a student’s English ability than improve their farming practices.

Our team at Moving Windmills has the skills and knowledge to help resilient farmers who can problem-solve through Malawi’s unique challenges and secure thriving futures for their families and communities. We have a track record for developing viable, low-cost solutions, practices, and tools: small-scale drip irrigation systems, simple machines that save time and energy, natural crop defenses against invading pests like Fall Armyworm, and locally processed fertilizers.

Moving Windmills strives to empower individuals to respond to growing environmental hazards and encourage creative problem-solvers. The challenges of the future require communities of enabled innovators, and that starts with experiences and mentorship that address Malawi’s reality. Our emphasis is on creating educational experiences that emphasize secure livelihoods through improved agricultural practices.
In collaboration with Project Navigator, Moving Windmills created a comprehensive plan to empower Malawians in Kasungu with access to solar electricity, dividing uses into four categories: water pumps, maize mills, irrigation systems, and Community Designated Solutions.

Accessing water is the key to daily activity in Malawi, and a burden experienced greatest by women and young girls. In 2010, Wimbe village had only three working water wells, forcing multiple time-consuming trips every day to cook, clean, and do laundry. In response, Moving Windmills Project installed and maintains wells that greatly reduce walking distances for the 200 women living nearby and countless others who come to fill containers free of charge.

Less than 25% of eligible land in Malawi is irrigated. Moving Windmills supports small-scale garden irrigation schemes using water pumps, water wheels, plastic bags, and PVC tubing in the Kasungu area. These ventures support multiple annual harvests, increased crop yields, and greater economic stability.

Moving Windmills occupies a small space in Wimbe where William designs projects with observing groups of youth. Recent designs include a soya seed planter, water wheel, solar panel support and security structure, rock breaking machine, automated drilling system, and increased-efficiency wood-burning stove. Hands-on learning and mentorship are exemplified in this tiny shop.

Since 2010, Moving Windmills has refined Percussion Drilling which greatly reduced the cost of water access in rural communities. Moving Windmills designed and manufactured a human-powered system that can be broken down and strapped to a motor bike or bicycle to access even the most remote areas.

where William attended, was initially constructed in 1950 for a total capacity of 450 students. In 2013, over 1,480 students were attending. Community members provided land, local materials, invaluable labor, and committed to sending girls and boys to a new campus in equal numbers. The result: a new Wimbe primary school featuring repaired classrooms, two additional classroom blocks, solar and wind power, after-hours lighting, and new laptops for student use.

Wimbe United Football Club draws students from five area villages and provides free access to organized recreational play for appropriate age levels that is safe, productive, competitive, and instills community values and mentoring relationships. Wimbe United team members and mentors encourage each other to continue their studies while providing a fun outlet and a break from daily concerns. Past Wimbe United players have gone on to college on full scholarships, a rarity in Malawi, where only 3% of the population attends universities. Some players have also gone to play in the Malawian professional league.
INSPIRING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR AFRICAN PROBLEMS.

The Innovation Center will be a hands-on, collaborative-learning center with thoughtful and compassionate spaces designed to inspire African innovators. Here, young people will find the mentorship, tools, skills, and agency to address the complex problems unique to their communities. Our team of mentors will guide them to ideate, co-create, and implement simple solutions that have the power to change lives and ease burdens.

Moving Windmills has partnered with MASS Design Group to design and build the new campus, located on a 30-acre (12 hectare) site in Kasungu, Malawi, Africa. The Innovation Center will:

- Gather hundreds of students, mentors, and community members per year together to create “African solutions to African Problems;”
- Create partnerships with area organizations and individuals that are mission-aligned;
- Drive economic prosperity in Malawi;
- Be a community hub for the region and the nation;
- Serve as a model for collaborative learning and human-centered design throughout Africa and the world;
- Provide administrative infrastructure and a home base for Moving Windmills to advance projects and further our mission.

MASS DESIGN GROUP

MASS Design Group is a non-profit organization with a mission to research, build, and advocate for architecture that promotes justice and human dignity. MASS does this through engaging with the communities in which they work to understand project opportunities, challenges, and inspiration in order to design systemic change.
A HOME BASE FOR CREATIVE SOLUTIONS
Currently the Moving Windmills Project is housed in the personal offices of staff and Board Members from around the world. The Innovation Center will bring our collective energy together and provide a home base for our team, our current activities, and all our future plans.

CORE PROGRAMS

STUDENT COHORTS & APPRENTICES
Cohorts of 10-15 secondary school aged students will attend the Innovation Center for six-week programs on creative problem solving using human centered design. These young innovators will then feed into smaller classes of annual Apprentices, who will live and learn at the center for 9-12 month periods, serving the Cohort Programs, working closely with the Mentors while building their teaching and administrative skills.

CENTER FOR AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION
With spacious fields and the capacity to grow crops year-round, the Moving Windmills innovation center will be a hub for local and international organizations to pilot new farming innovations and equipment with a captive audience of adaptees even through Malawi’s dry months.

COMMUNITY SPACE
As one of the few community spaces in Kasungu with consistent electricity and internet, the Innovation Center will become a hub for entrepreneurs, innovators, and local organizations working in education, agriculture, and innovation. At MWIC, young people will find the tools and mentorship to rethink seed selection, post-harvest processing for commercial markets, and skills for negotiating with local buyers.

EVENTS & CONFERENCE HUB
Hosting a training or conference at the Moving Windmills Innovation Center offers inspiring infrastructure and a chance for visitors to observe a model of education that values local knowledge and creative problem solving.
COMMUNITY GATHERING & EVENT SPACE
Multi-purpose indoor events and dining hall with two levels. This space will host conferences, events, and dining.

EDUCATION & TRAINING SPACES

MACHINE SHOP
Includes metal and wood work, with space for assembly, work benches, breakout rooms, offices, and shower and changing rooms.

COMMUNICATIONS STUDIO
Services include video and audio studios with recording and production areas.

FIELD SPACE (FARM)
Gathering and storage space for farming and field activities, including a barn, greenhouse, and support space for cleaning, packing and cooking produce.

LIBRARY & COWORKING SPACE
Includes a library for study, computer room for virtual classes, and small meeting rooms for tutoring sessions, meetings, and Skype calls.

CAMPUS HOUSING

STUDENT & APPRENTICE DORMITORY
Housing for 16 students in shared dorms and 16 apprentices in studio apartments with communal events, studying, cooking, and washing.

FELLOW & STAFF HOUSING
Includes two and three bedroom units with bath for families of visiting teachers and fellows.

MWIC INN
A 28-bed hotel for hosting tourists, visitors, and volunteers.
THE MOVING WINDMILLS PROJECT ENVISIONS A FUTURE WHERE TALENTED YOUTH DESIGN AND CO-CREATE SOLUTIONS THAT DIRECTLY RESPOND TO THE REAL-WORLD NEEDS OF THEIR COMMUNITIES

**LOCALLY FABRICATED**
The design highlights unique applications of locally available materials like timber and compressed stabilized earth blocks.

**SHADED EXTERIOR SPACE**
The public exterior is covered to encourage interactions between students and protect from the elements.

**WINDMILLS**
Continuing the legacy of Kamkwamba by constantly improving the design in providing water and power to the entire campus.

**SUSTAINABLE DESIGN**
Designed to collect rainwater, promote natural ventilation and reduce resource demands.

**ZONES OF GREENERY**
Increasing the vegetation creates natural shade and a micro-climate on the site.

**WELCOMING ENTRY**
Invite visitors to the multi-purpose hall for large gatherings.

**MAKERSPACE**
Innovation center of the campus teaching students local applicable skills.
IMPACT AIMS

OUR DREAM IS TO BUILD IN A NEW HUB OF TRAINING AND EDUCATION THAT WILL...

1. UNLOCK the latent potential in young innovators of Malawi
   - Cohorts of 10-15 secondary school aged students will attend the Innovation Center for six-week programs
   - An annual cohort of Apprentices will live and learn at the center for 9-12 months while building their teaching and administrative skills
   - The Cohort Students and Apprentices will be led by 16-20 Fellows with myriad skills who will either live full-time at the Innovation Center, or be brought in to lead specific programs and workshops.
   - Together, the Cohort Students, Apprentices, and Fellows will address the complex problems and pressing issues that face communities in Africa such as food security, energy-saving technology, and access to education

2. PROMOTE community revitalization
   - Provide improved access to technical training and fabrication space to increase access to clean water and power for local residents
   - Leverage the power of education and innovative mentorship to boost the financial, educational, and social wellbeing of families
   - Boost the local economy by offering job creation and training opportunities through the construction and operation of the Innovation Center
   - Build public awareness and interest in technological innovation through community engagement and public programming

3. INSPIRE broader systemic change
   - Serve as a sustainable model for high quality, community-oriented technical education in rural and peripheral areas of Malawi
   - Catalyze greater focus and investment in entrepreneurial opportunity in Africa
   - Reduce brain drain by inspiring young Malawian innovators to stay and start businesses in-country
   - Complement government initiatives through capacity building and partnership
   - Enhance the well-being of Malawi and Southern Africa through the Apprentice and Fellows programs to train a cadre of innovators to start additional Innovation Centers around the regions
THE BOARD

Tom Rielly
Tom is a co-founder of Moving Windmills Project and the West Coast Community Director for TED. Tom is passionate about climate change, design, and civil rights.

Blessings Chikakula
Blessings is pastor of Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Mtapo. Blessings Moving Windmills since 2008 as a translator, advisor, and community relations guru.

Michael Markiewicz
Michael is a CPA/CFA with over 35 years of experience in providing financial guidance. Michael has managed Moving Windmills finances since 2007.

Emeka Okafor
Emeka is a venture catalyst and entrepreneur interested in sustainable technologies and paradigm breaking in Africa.

Edith Sikelo
Edith is a librarian who has helped young Malawians access knowledge through books for decades.

ADVISORS

William Kamkwamba
William is an author and innovator interested in closing the gap between knowing and doing in Malawi and throughout Africa.

Olivia Scott Kamkwamba
Olivia is a Ph.D candidate and community development specialist interested in bringing people together for meaningful impact.

Gilbert Wimbe
Gilbert is a filmmaker, farmer, and entrepreneur passionate about his work with Amaowo Straws and Silverwheels Cinema.

Amanda Rafuse
A seasoned non-profit leader, educator, and theater artist, Amanda has a proven track record in philanthropy, strategy, creative communications, producing, team building, and leadership.

Eric Bunge
Eric is a creative thinker interested in developing social profit organizations focused on empowerment and mentorship.
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LEARN MORE
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