

## DREAMS for Refugees from Village Enterprise and Mercy Corps Wins Fast Company's World Changing Ideas Award

**SAN CARLOS, Calif., May 2, 2023** — DREAMS for Refugees, an innovative new model for supporting refugees and alleviating poverty from Village Enterprise in partnership with Mercy Corps, is the recipient of [Fast Company's 2023 World Changing Ideas Award for Europe, the Middle East, and Africa](#).

**DREAMS** (Delivering Resilient Enterprises and Market Systems) merges Village Enterprise's poverty graduation program with Mercy Corps' expertise in market systems development in order to equip refugees with the skills, resources, and markets to start sustainable businesses and graduate from extreme poverty.

"What makes DREAMS so special is the unique partnership between Village Enterprise and Mercy Corps that drives innovation as we take on two of the biggest challenges facing the world today—forced displacement and poverty," said Liz Corbishley, Chief Strategy and Partnerships Officer at Village Enterprise. "DREAMS started as a project focused on providing sustainable support to refugees, and it has grown into a new model for ending extreme poverty—equipping the most vulnerable households with the skills, resources, and markets to become self-reliant."

The first-of-its-kind model is already transforming the lives of refugees living in the Bidi Bidi Refugee Settlement in Uganda, and DREAMS is about to launch in Dollo Ado Refugee Camp in Ethiopia. In total, DREAMS will reach more than 33,000 households across the two countries and impact more than 200,000 lives.

The model will be studied in a randomized controlled trial conducted by IDinsight, providing valuable evidence and insights that can be used by the international development and humanitarian aid sectors to better serve refugees and others living in extreme poverty in the future. This comes at a crucial moment, as the refugee crisis continues to grow in the world and climate change, conflict, and other shocks threaten to push hundreds of millions of people into extreme poverty.

"Self-sustaining solutions like DREAMS have never been more essential," said Allison Huggins, Mercy Corps Deputy Regional Director for Africa. "As we look for solutions to address multiple forces—from climate change to the rise of violent extremist movements and globalization—rising global inequality will continue to play out in ways that profoundly impact the ability of poor households to sustainably escape from poverty."

DREAMS for Refugees was a 2021 winner of the Larsen Lam ICONIQ Impact Award for Refugees managed by Lever for Change. DREAMS is funded by Conrad N. Hilton Foundation, ICONIQ Impact, IKEA Foundation, Sea Grape Foundation, and The Patchwork Collective.

"Having to flee, leaving behind your home, belongings, and sometimes your family members is incomprehensible for most of us," said Annemieke de Jong, Head of Programmes, Refugee Livelihoods at the IKEA Foundation. "We firmly believe we can effectively invest in healing and building livelihoods through DREAMS so families can get back on their feet, doing what families should do best—be a loving and thriving place to be."

"We are thrilled to see DREAMS recognized by *Fast Company's* World Changing Ideas," said Dianne Calvi, Chief Executive Officer of Village Enterprise. "In partnership with Mercy Corps, we're looking for more foundations and individuals to join us so that DREAMS can reach even more vulnerable families and communities across Africa."



**About Village Enterprise**

Village Enterprise's mission is to end extreme poverty in rural Africa through entrepreneurship, innovation, and collective action. We work with vulnerable women, refugees, and youth who are most impacted by climate change, conflict, and displacement, and equip them with skills and resources to launch climate-smart businesses, build savings, and put themselves and their families onto a sustainable path out of extreme poverty. Village Enterprise has started over 74,000 businesses, trained over 264,000 first-time entrepreneurs, and positively transformed the lives of over 1,565,000 people in Uganda, Kenya, Rwanda, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Congo-Brazzaville, Mozambique, and Tanzania.

**About Mercy Corps**

Mercy Corps is a global team of nearly 6,000 humanitarians working to create a world where everyone can prosper. In more than 40 countries affected by crisis, disaster, poverty, and climate change we work alongside communities, local governments, forward-thinking corporations, and social entrepreneurs to meet urgent needs and develop long-term solutions to make lasting change possible. Mercy Corps has a total operating budget of over \$550M and in 2022 reached over 38 million people.

