

# International ACAC Opportunity Grant Report – Open Dreams – December

## 2022 Introduction

Cameroon is one of the countries where University Counselling for International Education is very rare in the high school settings. Given the increasing success of [Open Dreams](#) in bridging this gap, many more students look up to the organization, which operates across the entire country. Open Dreams first received the Opportunity Grant [in 2019](#). Thus, 2022 is the second time we are recipients of the International ACAC Opportunity Grant, \$3000 in total.

## College Prep Program

On July 20th, 2022, after a three month-long application and interview period, the [Open Dreams Summer Academy](#) started off in Bamenda and Yaoundé – Cameroon, with an intake of 80 students with 45 of them girls. Over 30 Program Facilitators, 50 % of them former program participants (who are full Open Dreams Scholars) studying in institutions in several countries, and about 20% practitioners in specialized fields like ICT, Health, Entrepreneurship, Technology, Climate Action, Governance, Girl-Child Empowerment etc were on the ground to lead the pre-scholars in the learning processes in the two regions. From Design Thinking to Programming (ICT) to Research with [CORE Africa](#) to Academic Blogging to Entrepreneurial Leadership to Public Speaking to Networking to Literature & Writing, to Math to Civic Leadership & Social Justice to Diversity (Multiculturalism) & Inclusion to Community Engagement etc engulfing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the Pre-scholars for a period of one month, went through transformational and rewarding academic experiences during which they acquired global competencies, a global mindset, a higher sense of purpose to pursue their passion, engineer their future as they strive to attain their full potential for community development, and a whole lot more. With the gains our Program Facilitators have had over the years, the pre-scholars were treated to the best summer academy experience we have ever had. Their testimonies herein [this video](#), captured in Bamenda, where much hope had been dashed and our operations scaled down as a result of an active 6-year armed struggle which has [gravely affected many academic institutions](#). The Open Dreams program is one of the few opportunities which offer hope to students in challenging circumstances (humanitarian action), including Internally Displaced Persons (students).

In Yaoundé the capital city of Cameroon where there is security, relative peace and stability, a friendly atmosphere, regular power supply, broadband internet and a more supportive ecosystem, operations were optimum. This is [a link to a video](#) of the matriculation ceremony into the Open Dreams College Prep Program and [another link](#) to a video of the closing ceremony of the summer academy. The two videos summarize the Summer Academy experience. Additional pictures are attached to this report.

As the Summer Academy officially ended on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022, [we launched our online mentorship session, Project Moon](#), which continues to run to date, with regular Zoom sessions. Besides continuing with the online mentorship programs which also serves the interests of 100+ students who could not have a spot (in-person) at the Open Dreams Academy due to some limitations, the 80 students who attended the Summer Academy were then upgraded to Open Dreams Scholars. This grants them unfettered access to the Open Dreams Centers (nearly 24/7 to this day), where there are laptops and Internet access and Program Facilitators; an enabling environment. With several partner organizations

including [Innoventure](#) training our scholars on Coding, [Game Changers](#) leading with [Climate Action](#) etc, we continue to [run programs which empower the students](#), especially those spending a gap year at Open Dreams. With the HALI Access Network and International ACAC Leverages, over 15 University Admission Officers including members of the College Board & Duolingo have had interactions with Open Dreams Scholars from July 2022 – December 2022, as part of the empowerment in their journey to college. Many of our activities are captured here on our [Facebook Page](#).

The International ACAC grant in addition to our traditional shoe-string budget and a \$2,500 grant from [the Rise Program](#), enabled us to: (1) acquire more laptops, provide more Broadband Internet from different Internet Service Providers; (2) accommodate and support more students especially Female IDPs in our summer academy and [their return to school](#); (3) support more Open Dreams scholars to participate in community engagement and [leadership development programs](#) outside Open Dreams; (4) provide allowance to our Program Facilitators, (5) rent extra space for our summer program in Bamenda etc

### **Some Outcomes**

At the time of this report, for ED1 outcomes, Open Dreams Scholars have had admission into a couple of top universities among them Princeton University, Vanderbilt University, Northwestern University, University of Pennsylvania, Columbia University, University of West Virginia, Ashesi University, United States International University - Africa, The Kwame Nkrumah University of Science & Technology. The Scholarship grants so far secured are about \$500,000 USD in total, while we look forward to more opportunities as the 2023 admission session runs.

### **Sustainability**

- The electronic equipment acquired will continue to serve potential international students in Cameroon;
- The students, like [Sandy](#) who is heading to Vanderbilt University now, will add to our support network for community empowerment.

### **Background**

Open Dreams is a non-profit organization, founded in 2014 with the mission to equalize access to educational opportunities for community impact. The organization has a membership base of over 1500 in its mentorship program, from secondary school students to graduate students. Open Dreams is a member of the HALI Access Network. Counselors at Open Dreams (Program Facilitators) are regular participants in the activities of the International ACAC including webinars.

### **Conclusion**

The Open Dreams Community extends its gratitude to the International ACAC for being incredibly supportive over the years, helping members of the community to achieve magical outcomes in their journey to self-actualization.

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## Photos











