

Ann Cotton

Born 1950.

Available online at www.livesretold.co.uk



Contents

1. Profile
2. Camfed
3. Diary 2008
4. Wise Prize
5. Tribute by Sarah Brown
6. Looking Back 2015

1. Profile

The following Wikipedia profile of Ann Cotton was archived here, with acknowledgement and thanks, in January 2021.

Ann Lesley Cotton OBE (born 1950) is a Welsh entrepreneur and philanthropist who was awarded an Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2006 Queen's New Year Honours List. The honour was in recognition of her services to education of young women in rural Africa as the founder of Camfed.

Camfed's goal is to replace the existing cycle of poverty and inequality with a new cycle of empowerment and opportunity. The organisation's unique approach is to not only support girls and young women through school, but also on to new lives as entrepreneurs and community leaders. To complete the "virtuous cycle", graduating students become CAMA alumnae, many of whom return to school to train and mentor new generations of students. Camfed started out by supporting 32 girls through school in Zimbabwe in 1993. Since then it has expanded its success across 2,295 communities in five sub-Saharan countries. Over the past 17 years, 1,065,710 young people directly benefited from Camfed's programmes in Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe. More than 3 million children have already benefited from Camfed's programmes in a network of 5,085 partner school.

Camfed won the International Aid and Development Charity of the Year award in 2003. In 2014, Camfed was recognised by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) for best practice in taking development innovation to scale.

Background

Cotton was born in Cardiff, Wales, and was educated at Howell's School, Llandaff. For more than three decades, Ann Cotton has been focused on improving opportunity for children at the margins of education. She began her career in a London school by establishing one of the first centres for girls excluded from mainstream education. Cotton's commitment to girls' education in Africa began in 1991, when she went on a research trip to Zimbabwe to investigate why girls' school enrolment in rural areas was so low. Contrary to the common assumption that families weren't sending girls to school for cultural reasons, Cotton discovered that poverty was the main roadblock. Families could not afford to buy books or pay school fees for all their children. Instead, they had to choose which children would receive an education. Since boys had a better chance of getting a paid job after graduation, daughters were rarely selected.

Cotton knew that educated girls were less likely to contract HIV/AIDS, would marry later, have fewer and healthier children, and would support the next generation to go to school. She understood that poverty and exclusion affects girls both psychologically and economically, and that if girls could be educated, supported by their communities, and empowered to shape their own destinies, they could change their communities and nations forever. In 1993, after grassroots fundraising that supported the first 32 girls through school in Zimbabwe, Cotton founded Camfed. The reach of the organisation's innovative education programmes

has grown ever since. In 2013 alone, Camfed directly supported more than 434,000 children to go to school.

One of the most effective and innovative results of Camfed's work is CAMA, a unique, 24,436-member-strong pan-African network of Camfed graduates. CAMA alumnae use their experience and expertise to design and deliver extended programs to students and communities, including health and financial literacy training. Each CAMA member supports the education of another two to three children outside of her own family, multiplying the benefits of her education, and testifying to the programs' effectiveness and sustainability. Over Camfed's two decades, this approach has been proven to work both within rural communities and at a larger scale across countries.

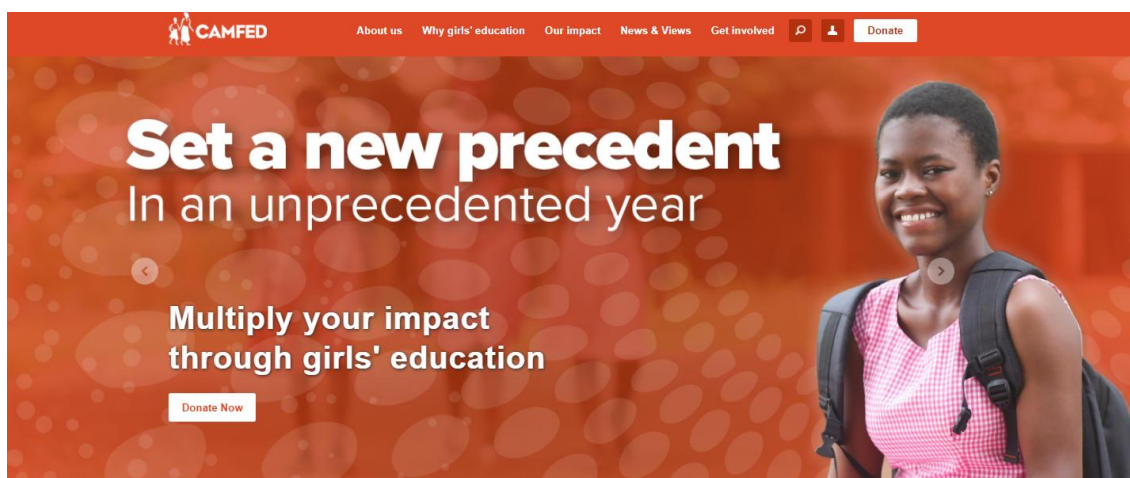
Residencies, platforms and awards

Ann Cotton is an Honorary Fellow at Homerton College, Cambridge, and Social Entrepreneur in Residence at the Cambridge University Judge Business School. She is a noted speaker on international platforms, including the World Economic Forum, the Clinton Global Initiative and the Skoll World Forum. In 2014 she addressed the US-Africa Summit hosted by The White House, George W. Bush Institute and US State Department.

Cotton has won numerous awards for her work, including an Honorary Doctorate in Law from Cambridge University; an OBE in 2006 in honour of her advocacy of girls' education in Africa; the Skoll Award for Social Entrepreneurship; Woman of the Year in the UK; and UK Social Entrepreneur of the Year. In November 2014, Ann was awarded the WISE Prize for Education, becoming the fourth WISE laureate alongside Vicky Colbert, founder of Escuela Nueva in Colombia, Dr Madhav Chavan, co-founder of Pratham in India, and Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, founder of BRAC in Bangladesh.

2. Camfed

The following is the About Us section from the Camfed website at www.camfed.org. It was archived here, with acknowledgement and thanks, in 2021.



Front page of the Camfed website, 1.1.2021.

About Us

We catalyze the power of the most vulnerable girls and young women to create the future they imagine — for themselves, for their communities, and for Africa.

CAMFED is a pan-African movement, revolutionizing how girls' education is delivered. Through a gold-standard system of accountability to the young people and communities we serve, we have created a model that radically improves girls' prospects of becoming independent, influential women.

Our impact increases exponentially through the Association of young women educated with CAMFED's support. Together, we multiply the number of girls in school, and accelerate their transition to livelihoods and leadership.

Through the CAMFED Association, women are leading action on the big challenges their countries face - from child marriage, and girls' exclusion from education, to climate change. This unique pan-African network of lawyers, doctors, educators, and entrepreneurs is growing exponentially as more girls complete school and join them.

Our collective efforts have already supported more than 4.1 million children to go to school across Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe, and more than 7 million students have benefited from an improved educational environment.

Our operational model

CAMFED is made up of three interworking and interdependent parts. Through the synergy of these three parts, CAMFED is able to deliver a resilient, highly efficient and ultimately sustainable program that truly serves the needs of our clients, and multiplies the impact of donor investment:

The CAMFED Association

The network of women leaders founded by former CAMFED clients, who organize and act on behalf of girls and young women

CAMFED Champions

Members of the communities we work with who actively champion and support the advancement of girls and young women

CAMFED Operations

The fundamental operations of CAMFED, including program design, support systems, partnerships and governance

Girls' education has been described as the "silver bullet" in terms of what it can achieve to address child and maternal mortality, raise families out of poverty, accelerate economic development, and help communities deal with climate change. CAMFED's model sees girls' education as the starting point for social change. It shows that partnering with communities to unlock the leadership potential of groups of girls and women at the margins of society creates a multiplier effect like no other, delivering the only sustainable and scalable way of addressing the world's problems with the urgency required.

Our Vision and Mission

CAMFED envisions a world in which every child is educated, protected, respected and valued, and grows up to turn the tide of poverty.

As the most effective strategy to tackle poverty and inequality, CAMFED multiplies educational opportunities for girls and empowers young women to become leaders of change. Our focus is on girls and young women in rural areas of sub-Saharan Africa. This is where girls face acute disadvantage and where their empowerment will have a transformative impact.

3. Diary 2008

The following article by Ann Cotton was published in the Financial Times on November 15th 2008. It was archived here, with acknowledgement and thanks, in 2021.



Tuesday November 4 2008 was a noteworthy day not just in the United States but in the Cambridge offices of Camfed, where we spent most of the day on a lengthy Skype-call to the charity's directors in Ghana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania. We reviewed a year's worth of data from the field on the effects of Camfed's work for girls' education and women's empowerment.

The collection of the information has been a huge exercise for our teams in Africa, involving hundreds of community workers trained to use PDAs to record more than 2,000 in-depth interviews in each country – and the findings include a rich set of facts and figures about schooling, businesses and communities. Analysis of the results will help us effect more of the positive change Camfed strives for. As we reviewed our own data, we realised that the night's other results – from the US, and rather more quickly analysed – were also going to be worth staying up for. Despite the long day, we decided to have dinner and watch the election coverage together.

The following morning the messages started to come in from our African colleagues. I have never seen so many exclamation marks as in those delighted e-mails. Some quoted Martin Luther King: "The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends towards justice." I don't know the original source of the next thought but it was shared time and again as the e-mails flew across continents: "Rosa sat, so Martin could walk, so Barack could run, so our children could fly." I am going to Africa later this month, and I know I will find this thought neatly written on many classroom walls.

As I reflect on these upcoming trips and the results of our survey, I realise how much we have benefited from the Financial Times' two Christmas reader appeals in 2006 and 2007. The money raised, an incredibly generous total of £2.3m, has already supported 7,520 vulnerable girls in Africa, and some of those funds are

being used to support our programme expansion into a new country for Camfed – Malawi. I will be working with local staff to put in place a programme to help girls move from primary into secondary school, as this is when the majority of girls from poor backgrounds drop out. We will also develop a peer network and mentoring programme for girls moving on from school to higher education, training or business. It's the model we've rolled out in Ghana, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Tanzania, where, last year, we reached 408,485 schoolchildren.

The young women we have supported have, without exception, come from the poorest of backgrounds. Many are orphans who have been brought up by grandmothers, prematurely aged themselves, and for whom just a dollar a day would be wealth. These girls and women understand the psychological and social battles that need to be overcome in a life of poverty. And they understand the transformative power of education. Our alumni network of young women is now more than 10,000-strong, and they in turn support the education of a further 47,369 children. It's a huge, growing, and inspiring network of connected people.

I travel a lot for Camfed – and not only to Africa. Last week I was in Dubai, at a meeting of the Councils of the World Economic Forum where 1,000 delegates participated in what was billed as the “biggest brainstorm ever”. At the closing plenary we called for the billions of marginalised people to be engaged in the debate to find solutions to the huge challenges the world faces. Between conference sessions, I caught a news report that the power-sharing talks between Robert Mugabe's Zanu PF and Morgan Tsvangirai's MDC had broken down. The situation in Zimbabwe is now so bad that people in the villages have to get up in the pre-dawn to forage for wild fruits before the baboons, whose food source they are. It is almost unbelievable to think that people are competing with baboons for nourishment. Such desperate conditions notwithstanding, we still receive inspirational information from Zimbabwe. In the villages where Camfed works, many of the schoolteachers aren't local, and have no family to support them – but the communities are now providing for their teachers, bringing food to school from their own meagre provisions.

It is impossible not to be hugely inspired by the girls and young women whom we meet through Camfed. Cindy, who featured in an article on women and development in the FT magazine of September 27, is typical. Cindy wants to be Zambia's chief justice. When I first met her she told me about a film she had seen on TV as a small child. She shared every detail of the story of a murder trial, and her own excitement at the final verdict when the judge banged his “hammer” and pronounced “guilty”. So, she explained, “I want to work for justice.”

“Justice for whom?” I asked, to which I got a quizzical look and the firm reply, “Justice for all.” Cindy is an orphan who, after the death of first her father and then her mother, even subsequently lost her adoptive aunt, but I know she will make it: she has a fine brain and a heart to match.

I was thinking of women like Cindy when I spoke at the Woman of the Year lunch at London's Guildhall last month. The lunch – an annual event celebrating women's achievements – was founded in 1955 and brings together women from almost every

sphere of life. Guests at the Guildhall included Olympians, businesswomen, social campaigners and famous faces from the media.

I was there to accept the Window to the World Award, given to “a woman who has brought attention to a neglected international issue”. I had started Camfed in 1991 as the Campaign for Female Education after being shocked by the lack of educational opportunities for girls in rural Zimbabwe – and now, 17 years later, I was receiving an award from Sarah Brown, the prime minister’s wife.

Guests at lunch were described as “ordinary women doing extraordinary things”. Dare I suggest that we banish the use of that word “ordinary”? We need to have a new starting point for human relations, that of recognising and nurturing the extraordinary potential of each individual. With such a starting point we have the opportunity to harness each person’s remarkable potential and work together to solve the global challenges we face. Thank you again for all you have enabled Camfed and these extraordinary women to achieve.

4. Wise Prize 2014



Doha, Qatar, November 5, 2014 - Ms Ann Cotton, OBE, Founder and President of Camfed, the Campaign for Female Education, has been named the 2014 WISE Prize for Education Laureate. Ms Cotton spearheaded an internationally acclaimed model for girls' education, which has placed education at the heart of development in Africa.

The WISE Prize for Education was presented by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, at the Opening Plenary Session of the sixth World Innovation Summit for Education in Doha, Qatar, before more than 1,500 experts from diverse fields and over 100 countries.

For more than two decades, Ann Cotton has focused on improving opportunities for children at the margins of education. Cotton's commitment to girls' education in sub-Saharan Africa began in 1991, when she realized that poverty, rather than cultural barriers, was the main reason for girls' low school enrolment in rural areas. Cotton understood that if girls could be educated with the support of their communities, they could be empowered to shape their own destinies and help lift their communities out of poverty.

In 1993, Cotton founded Camfed to provide financial, social and structural support to girls from primary through secondary school, college and beyond, as well as ICT, health and business training to young women. The organization's unique, holistic approach breaks the vicious cycle of poverty, child marriage, high birth rates and high rates of HIV/AIDS by working in close partnership with all the constituencies that have power over a girl's education and life choices.

One of the most effective and innovative results of Camfed's work is Cama, a unique 24,436-member strong pan-African network of Camfed graduates, many of whom in turn train and mentor new generations of students. Camfed's innovative education programs have already benefitted over 3 million children in Zimbabwe, Zambia, Ghana, Tanzania, and Malawi and are implemented across 5,085 partner schools in 115 rural districts.

The WISE Prize for Education was established in 2011 to raise the status of education by giving it similar prestige to other areas for which international prizes exist, such as literature, peace, and economics. The Laureate receives an award of \$500,000 (US) and a specially minted gold medal.

5. Tribute by Sarah Brown

Sarah Brown, Chair of Theirworld, wrote the following about Ann Cotton on the www.theirworld.org website in November 2014. It was archived here, with acknowledgement and thanks, in January 2021.

The WISE Prize, established by Her Highness Sheikha Moza bint Nasser, Chairperson of Qatar Foundation, can rightly claim, after just a few short years, to be the premier award for global education.

Over the last three years, the WISE Prize has recognised great champions of education dedicated to providing the most vulnerable children with access, quality of learning and equity.



This year I am so delighted to see my fellow Brit and the founder of Camfed (Campaign for Female Education), Ann Cotton OBE, honoured as the 2014 WISE Prize winner. Ann - one of the most humble and self-effacing high achievers I have ever met - has forged a determined path over 30 years to enable girls and young women to have the opportunity of an education.

When I first met Ann in the mid-1990s, she had just established Camfed to support school places for girls in Africa and was meeting everyone she could to expand her vision to remove the barriers of poverty and injustice that prevented marginalised girls from going to school.

She was very convincing in making the case for the positive social impact and economic importance of investing in girls.



Since then our paths have, unsurprisingly, crossed numerous times over the years, often on a stage when I would present Ann with another accolade - whether Woman of the Year in the UK or during the United Nations' annual meetings in New York.

Today her personal view is very much the accepted common wisdom embraced by governments, businesses and communities - but there is still a way to go to reach 33 million girls who miss out on school around the world.

Camfed itself - with a loyal team led by CEO Lucy Lake - has grown from its early beginnings to today's programmes that benefit more than three million children and a vibrant alumnae programme, CAMA, with over 25,000 graduates across Ghana, Tanzania, Malawi, Zimbabwe and Zambia.

6. Looking Back 2015

The following interview with Ann Cotton was published on the Euractive website in 2015. It was archived here, with acknowledgement and thanks, in 2021.



For someone who gave up teaching two decades ago, Ann Cotton educates an awful lot of children. Since she began her Campaign for Female Education (Camfed) in 1993, she has supported 3 million children in five countries to stay in school and will support another million over the next five years.

“Changemakers don’t come from the elites, from the rich,” she says, but from the poor. Which is why she invests in them.

And she says that poverty isn’t something that just happens to people who are not like us.

At a time when headlines are full of stories of schools being burned down in Pakistan and Afghanistan, closed down over swaths of Nigeria and targeted by extremists in Indonesia, Cotton is seeing success, as things come full circle. She is seeing how many of those children are now in turn supporting the education of the next generation – and that really thrills her.

Last year she picked up the Wise prize at an education summit in Qatar and was recognised by OECD for best practice in development innovation. The model, she says, is to create sustainability in part through Cama – a 25,000-member pan-African network of Camfed graduates who are now rural businesswomen, and economically-independent role models. Almost 5,000 have become teachers.

Cotton says: “We only recruit inside Africa for our staff. We don’t send in outsiders to tell them what to do. And accountability is first and foremost to the child, not the donor. We aren’t swinging with every fashion, every shift in donor or government interests. You can’t raise the aspirations of a child and then leave them hanging, poverty can’t be solved by a project. Its solved by a relationship, collaboration, not

coming in and making a new structure and putting our name over it and moving on.”

Born in Cardiff to parents from mining communities in Aberdare, Cotton won a scholarship to a private girls’ school where teachers promptly began the process of anglicising and gentrifying the young Welsh girl as effectively as they could.

She says: “It was different times, with antiquated methods, but it was a sharp lesson in feeling like an outsider, of loneliness.” The exclusion she felt drew her towards her first job, a teacher at a challenging state comprehensive in south London. In 1991, on a trip to Zimbabwe, she ended up among the Tonga and Kore Kore people, who had been displaced by the colonial-era Kariba dam in the late 1950s and whose lives have been utterly devastated as a result. It resonated.

Cotton says: “They had unwittingly colluded with their own downfall. They were promised everything – schools, clinics, homes – and of course they got nothing, less than nothing. The more I learned the more I saw parallels between what had happened in Wales with the miners, the powerlessness, the fact that the only thing you have is your labour and the only thing you can withdraw is your labour and if you do that for too long then you won’t survive. Even with enormous community cohesion, it isn’t possible to win. It was a metaphor for the poor everywhere.

“In Zimbabwe what struck me was that I felt I hadn’t understood colonisation in all its magnitude. The more I learned the angrier I got.”

But when Cotton returned to the UK and started looking at what was being done to help, her sense of injustice only grew. She says: “I was patronised by the aid agencies. I was told ‘Oh, those people are just telling you what they think you want to hear’.

“The prevailing view was that girls weren’t going to school because of family resistance. But when I was in poor and traditional villages people were talking about making clear economic decisions. It wasn’t about culture. Boys in the wider world had the best levels of paid work so it made sense to invest in a boy to go to school. It was a socioeconomic issue. There is this sense that the poor are not like ‘us’. They are this amorphous mass of people who are not individuals but a collection of people who have things done to them by people who know better.

“I hear ‘but why do poor people make such bad decisions’. But actually their decision-making can be far more complex than that of the better-off in many ways. They’re not financially illiterate, they’re constantly weighing up choices based on the reality of poverty. Somehow the international development community has resisted accepting this.”

“There’s a history of NGOs going into areas and saying ‘let’s do this’. Poverty diminishes confidence, so if someone offers you a grain store, even if you really need a plough, you take what is offered to you.”

Cotton insists Camfed supports without imposing. “That’s why things like Madonna’s school didn’t work,” she says. “You can’t just go in and throw up a school and expect it all to work.”

Cotton is no household name, but she is a much-decorated speaker on the international stage, her speech as the present laureate of the Wise prize for education was televised internationally. She has gained supporters with her unassuming style, and easy smile, combined with a schoolteacher firmness and keen sense of injustice. Sarah Brown is a fan, as is Cherie Blair, and the Queen awarded her an OBE.

But no daughter of Welsh mining stock is over-impressed with power. “Power lies with white middle-class men,” she says. “There are other elites of course but that is the one with the most power. That gene pool is not of its nature excellent.

“We have a world with considerable problems and we are casting aside so many. We cannot ignore this lot of people and expect to make global progress.

“All countries have poor people. Yet it’s a very rare country which understands the indignities of poverty, while education systems maintain the status quo. The children of the elite go to the best schools and get the best jobs, not because they are the best. We’re not taking advantage of the intellectual power on this planet, whether in Malawi or Britain. We are casting so much of it aside.”
