

# See Yourself In The Digital Economy



## **William Kamkwamba** **Inventor**

William Kamkwamba was born August 5, 1987 in rural Malawi. After completing 8<sup>th</sup> grade and part of his first year of secondary school, William was forced to leave school for five years because his family lacked funds for school fees. Rather than accept his fate, Kamkwamba borrowed an energy textbook whose cover depicted a wind turbine. He decided to build a windmill to power his family's home and obviate the need for kerosene, which provided only smoky, flickering, distant and expensive light. First he built a prototype, then his first five-meter windmill out of a broken bicycle, tractor fan blade, shock absorber, and blue gum trees. He was able to power four light bulbs and two radios.

The windmill drew many visitors, including Dr. Hartford Mchazime, Ph.D., who would become his mentor. Mchazime brought The Malawi Daily Times, who wrote a long story. Soyapi Mumba and Mike McKay blogged about the article and news of William's inventions reached Emeka Okafor, program director for TEDGlobal a prestigious gathering of thinkers and innovators, who invited him to the conference.

In June 2008 he completed his first full year back in school at African Bible College Christian Academy, a private prep school in the capital city of Lilongwe. In September 2008, William started at the African Leadership Academy, a new pan-African prep school based outside of Johannesburg, South Africa. William is the subject of a documentary short film *Moving Windmills*, which won the North American Filmmaker's Award at Pangea Day, a worldwide film event that took place in six worldwide cities on May 10, 2008. The film is being expanded into a full-length documentary for a 2010 release. Meanwhile, Kamkwamba, along with co-author Bryan Mealer, is writing his autobiography for William Morrow, an imprint of Harper Collins, to be published worldwide in 2010.

Kamkwamba is one of a dozen innovators featured in a new exhibit Driving Force: Visionaries Redefining our World, which opened September 3, 2008, at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago ([msichicago.org](http://msichicago.org)). The exhibit will feature the documentary, photos, and actual hand made electro-mechanical devices from William's home. Kamkwamba was profiled on the front page of *The Wall Street Journal* December 8, 2007, as well in major articles in *The Sydney Morning Herald*, and *La Repubblica*. Find William's blog at <http://www.williamkamkwamba.com>, or contact Tom Rielly, [tom@movingwindmills.org](mailto:tom@movingwindmills.org).



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