

2025



IMPACT REPORT

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Expanding opportunity for last-mile learners

In Uganda, where **nearly 75% of the population is under 30**, millions of young people lack reliable internet, smartphones, access to formal schooling, or even electricity. Yiya exists to reach them, and 2025 proved that **our model is ready for scale!**

This year we hit a big milestone: more than **40,000 young people have taken a Yiya AirLearning course**, with over 70% completing. To put that in context: global completion rates for online platforms like Coursera and edX hover between 10–15%. And demand continues to far outpace supply: **over 10,000 young people applied to AirLearning in 2025** alone for roughly 2,000 available course spots.

2025 also brought an important breakthrough: we proved that **AirLearning works with external partners**. We hosted a financial literacy course from Wezesha Impact, a local Ugandan livelihoods organization, on our AirLearning platform. This course **almost doubled Wezesha's reach** in 2025 by delivering their content to 2,000 additional young people!

We also rolled out **AirVoice, our offline voice-based AI learning companion**, to all 2025 AirLearning learners. This is a meaningful step toward personalized learning on basic phones! This work builds on rigorous independent evaluation from Carnegie Mellon University's Human-Computer Interaction Institute.

CMU's research confirms that Yiya's radio-based instruction, multilingual design, & low-infrastructure AI tools produce meaningful learning gains for last-mile youth.



We were honored to be named the **Top EdTech for Emerging Markets** at the Global EdTech Startup Awards at BETT London, and to be featured in Uganda's leading newspaper **New Vision**. But what matters most is that the model is working and young people are applying what they've learned to **break cycles of poverty** and **increase personal agency**.

Most excitingly, **our mission just got bigger**. Now that Yiya is expanding beyond our own STEM courses to help other organizations reach more learners through AirLearning, our team and Board updated Yiya's mission to reflect this next chapter. *Turn the page to see it!*

In 2026, we'll expand into a new region, onboard two more content partners, and bring AirVoice to thousands more learners. None of it happens without you: our partners, funders, and community. **Thank you so much for believing in our mission** to reimagine edtech to expand access to last-mile communities across Africa.

With gratitude,
Samson & Erin



40,000+ learners reached!

Africa's greatest resource is the limitless potential of its youth.

100 million

children in Sub-Saharan Africa are out of school

70% of youth

in rural Uganda don't go to secondary school

4.2 million

Ugandan youth (15-30) Not in Education, Employment to Training



More than 2 billion people still live offline

Africa is home to nearly half of them
Most EdTech never reaches them.



BRAND NEW

Our Mission 

Yiya is reimagining EdTech to expand access to last-mile communities!

Our Vision 

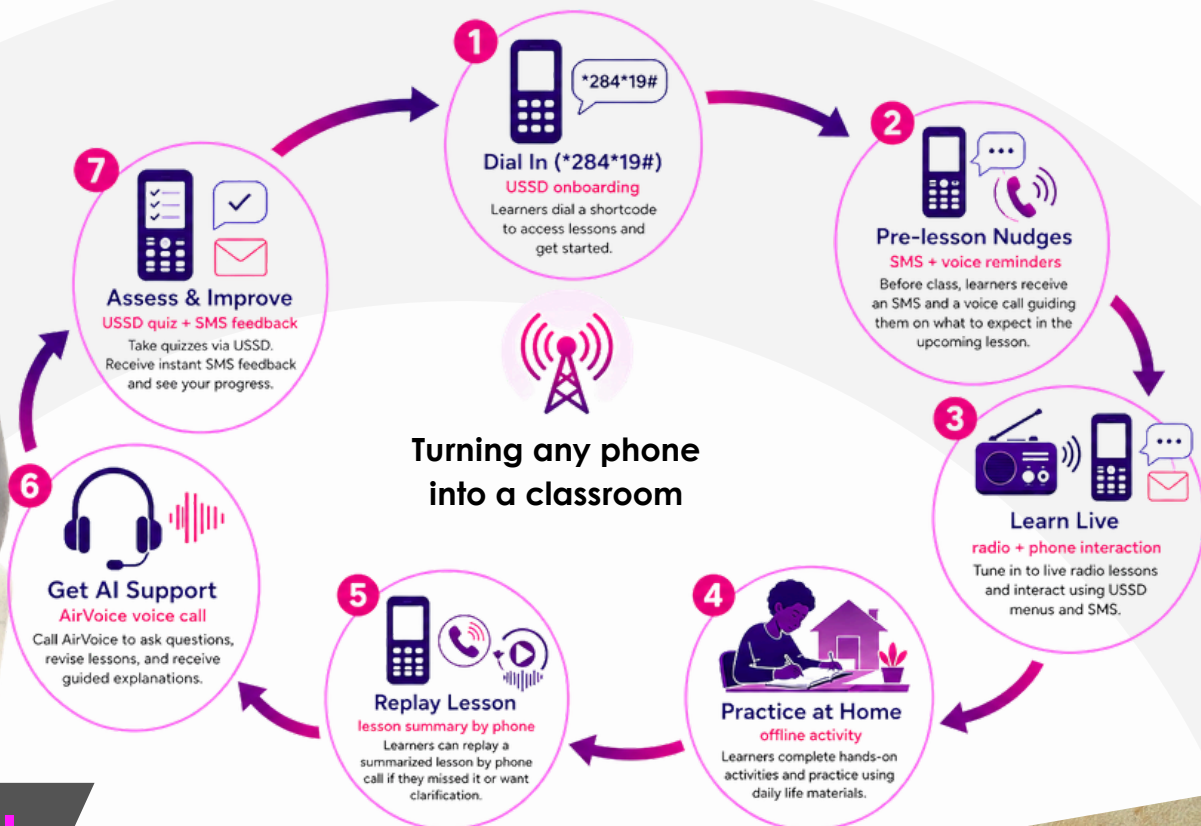
We envision a world where the 1.3 billion people living in Africa have a seat at the table in innovative fields globally, where African perspectives, knowledge, and skills help create new solutions to the world's biggest challenges. We envision a future where African technologies drive a powerful African economy that provides productive, fulfilling livelihoods for all its inhabitants.

An accessible learning platform for the next billion learners



Interactive, personalized, AI-supported learning.
No internet. No smartphone. No app.

Yiya AirLearning is a telecom-native learning platform that combines radio, USSD, SMS, voice, & AI to **deliver an interactive learning experience on basic phones**, bringing high-quality learning to communities beyond the reach of smartphones and internet. What began as Yiya's internal solution to the digital divide is **evolving into a shared platform** that enables partners to deliver their own content at scale through low-tech channels that underserved communities use everyday.



AirVoice AI

Bringing conversational AI to basic phones

AirVoice transforms any phone into a **personalized AI-powered learning companion**. Through a simple phone call, learners can revisit lessons, ask questions, and receive tailored guidance to complement their learning.

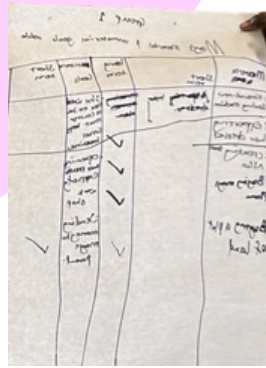


A decade of innovation in the Field

Yiya didn't start as a platform.

It started as a question:

What happens when you bring interactive, high-quality education to communities that formal schooling has left behind?



The pivot

COVID hits, schools close, all in-person programs stop, but the need remains. So we ask our team a hard question: how do you reach a learner **with no classroom, no movement, no deliveries, and no internet?** The answer becomes the first iteration of our platform: **Yiya AirScience.**

Where it started

Yiya runs hands-on, after-school STEM programs in rural communities near Lira, Northern Uganda. Learners are capable, curious, and hungry for opportunity. It's clear the barrier isn't ability or drive: **it's access.**

Proving the model

Over the next 3 years, Yiya combines learning science with rapid iteration, data collection, and independent evaluation from Carnegie Mellon University. We test the integration of radio, USSD polling, SMS reminders, and phone calls. The evidence **shows rigorous, interactive learning can happen remotely without internet**, and achieve outcomes comparable to connected environments.

2021-2023



2016-2019



2020



Learning in your home language changes everything.

Deepening impact

Yiya and CMU run a local language RCT that produces a clear result: learners taught in their home language outperform English-language peers, and the program reaches learners who had been excluded before.

2024 

The platform era

AirScience evolves into AirLearning. Yiya hosts partner-created content. We enroll 2,022 learners in Wezesha Impact's financial literacy course. 77% complete the course and 28% demonstrate measurable behavior change. We deploy AirVoice, which provides **offline AI support via phone call**. The AirLearning platform is ready for scale!

2025 

What comes next

Our first partner renews for a second year and we add two new partners to the platform. We build towards our 2028 goal of **150k concurrent learners on the platform** with 15 content partners.

2026+ 



In January 2026, Yiya represents Africa at BETT London, and wins the Global Edtech Startup Award: Best Solution for Emerging Markets

AirVoice



*AI for learners
beyond the internet!*

61%

repeat usage
within 30 days

75%

call completion

>90%

want to use
AirVoice again

2 sec

latency

0MB

data usage for
the learner

*Early results from AirVoice pilots,
evaluated by Carnegie Mellon University*

In 2025, Yiya developed an **AI voice tutor for basic phones** called AirVoice. Learners call a local number to get answers to their questions, continuing their learning from the radio lessons, without needing a smartphone or internet. AirVoice speaks with an East African accent and is trained to understand local accents and limited English.



Yiya's AirVoice AI phone tutor is successful because it is designed to **fit into learners' existing behavior patterns**. Learners already know how to buy airtime or voice bundles and place phone calls. AirVoice turns these familiar actions into learning interactions.

Carnegie Mellon University's research found that AirVoice learners demonstrated "**offline cognitive preparation**." Learners described budgeting their airtime to call AirVoice, preparing questions in advance, and prioritizing which questions were the most important to spend time on. They also **valued its privacy**, reporting that they asked questions they feared would draw ridicule in a classroom.



AirVoice is **not just ChatGPT on a phone**. Each interaction has learning science embedded into it and is integrated into a larger ecosystem of radio lessons, USSD responses, learner tracking, teacher dashboards, and content revision loops.



Content delivery → AirVoice support → learner tracking → human intervention → iteration.

Yiya AirLearning

IMPACT METRICS

Unlike many edtech interventions that risk widening inequality by primarily benefiting already-advantaged learners, a CHI 2024 study of Yiya's radio-and-phone course found the model was most successful among learner groups that typically experience fewer educational opportunities: showing promise for **closing opportunity gaps!**



64% of learners demonstrate high content mastery

Reach



40,770

learners have taken an AirLearning course



47,087

course enrollments
(learners return for more courses!)



10,000+

applications for ~2,000
course spots in 2025



User demographics

52%

women

67%

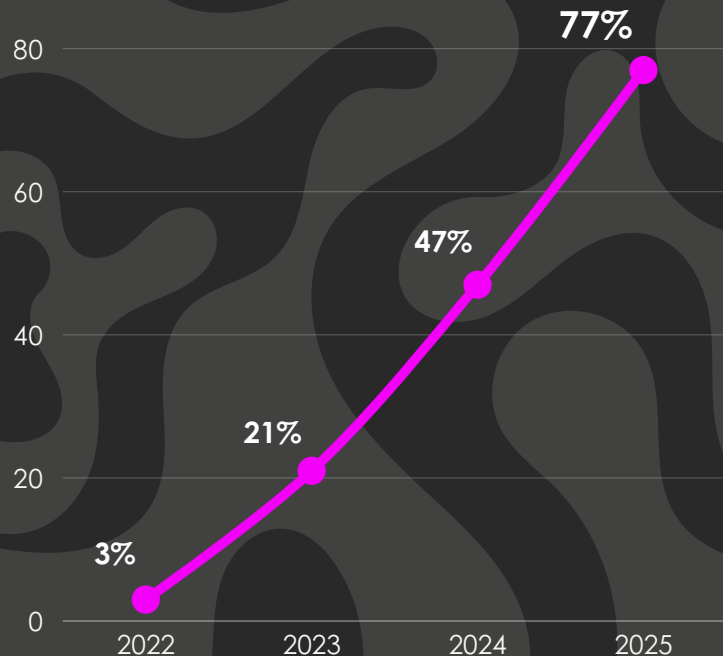
rural

38%

parents



Course Completion Improves
even as standards become
more rigorous



99%
of learners would
recommend
AirLearning

9

Partnering with Wezesha Impact to build financial literacy in 2025!



Our first partner collaboration reached 2,022 learners in Lira

In 2025, Yiya delivered a partner's curriculum for the first time: Wezesha Impact's financial literacy course. Among the 1,486 learners measured at both baseline and endline, we found that savings behavior shifted measurably over this 3-month course!

84% of learners who were saving informally at the baseline moved to a bank, mobile money, or a savings group by the end of the course

2×

bank use doubled by the end of the course

3 in 4

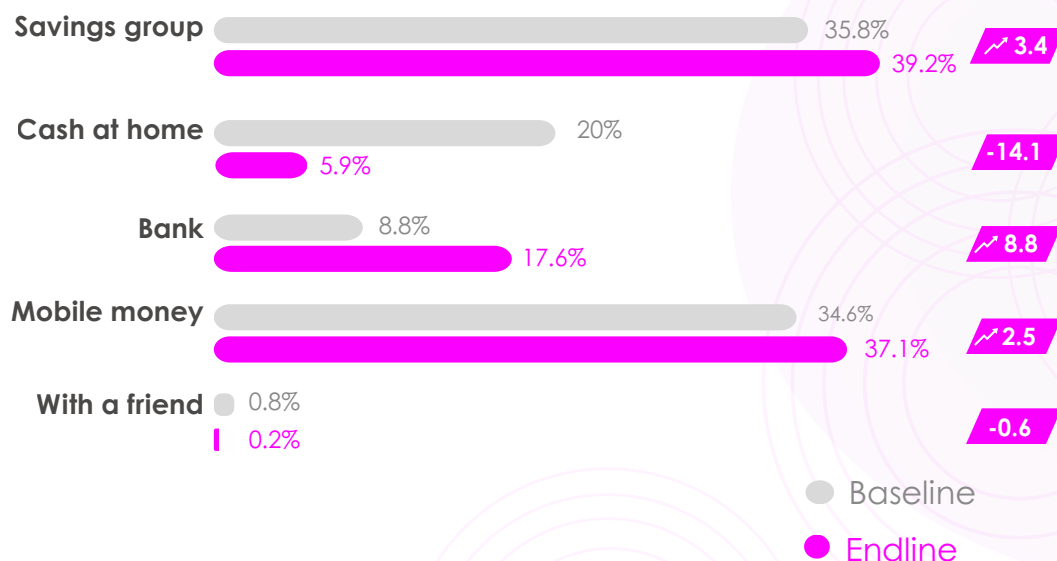
learners maintained or grew their savings

567

learners started using a savings plan or budget



Where learners keep their savings



First of all, it was free, it did not need any money to register, secondly the training was free, just listen to the radio and have those reading materials.



Matched baseline–endline sample, $n = 1,486$ of 2,022 enrolled learners; savings behavior self-reported via USSD survey. Changes are baseline-to-endline comparisons, not a controlled experiment.

Scaling Through Partnership



Results from our 2025 partnership!

Leveraging a model built to scale.

FIRST PAYING CONTENT PARTNER: RENEWED FOR 2026

In 2025, Wezesha Impact was Yiya's **first content partner**, using the AirLearning platform to bring practical financial literacy to youth they cannot reach with their in-person program. **The partnership renewed for 2026.**



AirLearning helped us reach youth we could not reach through in-person training alone. The engagement showed us how ready young people are for practical skills they can apply immediately.

James Katumba,
Managing Director, Wezesha Impact



10,500

Registration requests
for ~2,000 available
slots



2,022

Learners enrolled
in one 3-month
course



69%

Learners from villages
54% female



65%

**Achieved high
proficiency**
on the final exam



How the partnership worked

Wezesha contributed an ILO-based financial literacy curriculum & **ongoing subject-matter expertise**. Yiya adapted 34 lessons for radio, USSD, SMS & voice, then **managed enrollment, delivery, learner support and assessment**.



What this partnership proved

AirLearning added 2,022 learners to the 4,227 young people that Wezesha reached through in-person programs in 2025, **expanding their reach by 48%**. Learners shifted savings away from cash kept at home and **toward savings groups, mobile money, and bank accounts**.

Wezesha's Reach with AirLearning

4,227 + 2,022 = 6,249



Wezesha
alone



learners added
via AirLearning



total 2025
reach

+48% reach

What comes next

Wezesha's 2026 renewal **validates a repeatable model for scale**: partners pay to extend their impact through infrastructure Yiya has already built, helping Yiya expand its course offering while keeping learning free for young people.



Sharon stopped waiting

For most of her life, Sharon believed her future depended on one big break; she says she was waiting for the day a big pile of money would arrive and change everything. When she enrolled in the Yiya course in 2025, Sharon was 23 years old, she had been out of school since Senior 2 (9th grade); she was raising her child solo, and she was still waiting.

Sharon studied financial literacy in Yiya's first ever partner content course. The lessons on saving and responsible borrowing struck her the hardest. Week by week, a new idea took hold: she didn't need to wait for a lot of money to arrive all at once. She realized she could save small amounts consistently and build the future she wanted. She could start right now.

Today Sharon belongs to a savings group whose members contribute weekly and support one another with manageable loans when emergencies strike. She plans her purchases around what she can afford rather than spending on impulse. And she is saving towards a goal she is excited about: training as a tailor and building an independent income.

Sharon is no longer waiting, she has started her journey to financial success.



Sharon Apio

AirLearner

“

After the course, I may not yet have started earning income, but something important has already changed: how I think and how I act around money.

”

OUR LEARNERS

Ready when it mattered

Emmanuel once lived without a clear financial plan. He earned his living through casual work (brick moulding, construction, hard labor) and, what he earned, he spent quickly. When sickness hit his family, there was never money set aside, and every emergency became a crisis.

That changed after he joined Yiya's financial literacy course. The lesson that stuck with him was simple but new: saving is possible even on small, irregular earnings. He began setting aside part of his income through a village savings group every week.

His daughter fell seriously ill and needed intensive medical treatment. For many young parents in northern Uganda, a moment like this forces an impossible choice: take on crushing debt, or watch a loved one go without care. Emmanuel faced neither. He paid for his daughter's treatment from his own savings, without borrowing a shilling.

His savings were spent, but they had done exactly what savings are for. And Emmanuel knew how to build them up again. Today he is saving and budgeting once more, and investing in goats and sheep, with plans to expand into piggery and poultry to grow his family's income.



After joining the course through the radio lessons and mobile phone questions, I started changing the way I think about money and my future.



Creating impact no one organisation can do alone.

Kia Joyce, 24, lives with her husband and two children in Adang Anii Village, deep in Alebtong district, the kind of place that educational programs rarely reach. But radio does. When her husband heard about a Yiya course on air in 2024, they both enrolled.

In that first Yiya AirLearning course, Joyce learned to build a solar food dryer, and began preserving tomatoes and vegetables from her garden after harvest. She had new skills and something to sell. But turning that into a better life raised a question Yiya's STEM content couldn't answer: how do you manage the money?

So in 2025, when Yiya delivered Wezesha Impact's financial literacy course over the same radio-and-phone channels, Joyce enrolled again. She learned that saving works even in small, consistent amounts...and that simple shift grew into a concrete plan: buy land, and build her family's home.

Today Joyce earns income through farm work and small tailoring jobs, and she saves every week through her Village Savings and Loan Association. Even when one of her business ventures failed for lack of capital, she kept working and kept saving.

Joyce's story is what the AirLearning platform makes possible: she is utilizing income-generating skills from one Yiya course, and combining it with financial skills from another partner's course. Yiya's new partnership model creates impact that no single organization can do alone.

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a blue and white patterned dress, is sitting outdoors. She is smiling while talking on a blue mobile phone held to her right ear. In her left hand, she holds a white pen and is writing in a small white notebook. The background is slightly blurred, showing some greenery and a wooden structure.

“ I now earn income and consistently save through the Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA). I also take on small tailoring jobs, using available resources to generate extra income. ”

Our path to scale

The infrastructure already exists.

Radio towers and basic phones already reach the communities the internet doesn't. Scaling AirLearning just means adding partners and content, not building anything new. Twelve prospective partners are already in our pipeline, from organizations in Uganda, Botswana, South Africa, Kenya, and Sierra Leone.



We build the platform

We integrate radio, SMS, USSD, IVR, and AI voice into one internet-free platform for interactive learning on basic phones.



Content plugs in

Partners bring their content. We design our own STEM content in-house. We adapt, deliver, and evaluate both.



Costs fall as we grow

One platform serves more courses, partners, and learners, reducing the marginal cost of each enrollment.

Just as **mobile money unlocked financial inclusion without banks**, AirLearning is becoming the distribution layer for **education in last-mile communities** across Africa.

Where we are 2025

- »» Telecom partnership covering 10+ countries
- »» AirVoice deployed to every learner
- »» First paying partner
- »» Global EdTech Awards: Emerging Markets Winner

Where we're going 2026 and beyond

- »» New region of Uganda
- »» Two new content partners
- »» First partner renewal
- »» AirVoice capacity for 10,000 concurrent users
- »» Telecom deals to reduce costs



Carnegie Mellon research validates Yiya's low-infrastructure learning model

CMU researchers found that Yiya's AirLearning model shows promise for expanding access, improving engagement, and supporting equitable learning outcomes in low-connectivity communities.

Across multiple studies, CMU researchers found that **Yiya's model can expand access to high-quality learning** in low and zero-connectivity communities. The research shows that AirLearning reaches **learners who are often excluded** from conventional EdTech, including rural learners, learners without reliable internet or smartphones, and learners with lower formal schooling.

Multilingual design that offered learners language choice was especially important: local-language instruction reached disadvantaged learners in rural areas and those with less formal education, while **supporting faster learning and greater engagement**.



Although local languages seem an obvious choice, they face hurdles. Local languages can be perceived as less credible for formal learning, science and technical terms don't always translate cleanly, and many learners aren't literate in their home language.

Notably, the majority of learners chose hybrid English/Leb-Lango instruction, highlighting learners' **preference for flexible language use** rather than defaulting to one. Emerging work on AirVoice also points to new opportunities for AI-powered support through basic phones.



Reaches the last mile

Radio and basic phones **can deliver interactive learning** in places where internet, smartphones, and academic materials **are often limited**.



Expands accessibility

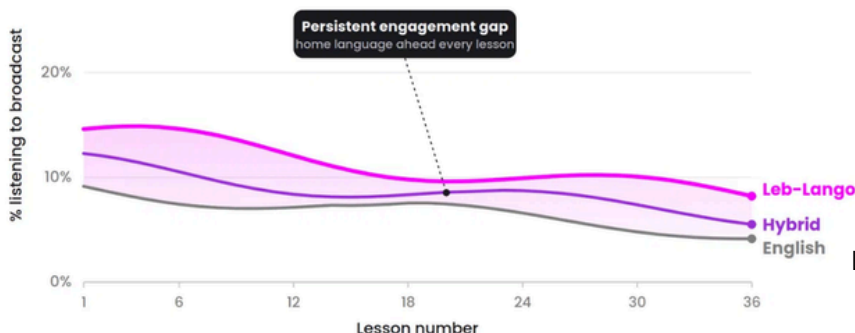
Local language instruction **expanded participation** for learners who were: rural, had less formal education, or had lower prior knowledge.



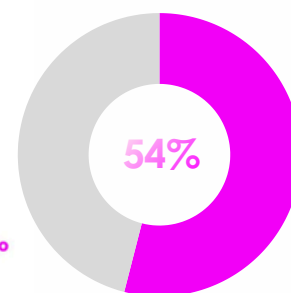
Evens the playing field

Leb-Lango learners started with lower performance but showed **faster improvement over time!**

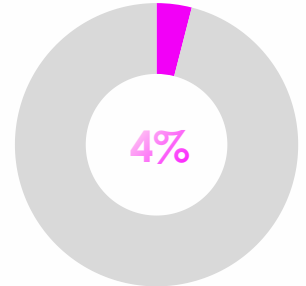
Local language learners stayed more engaged, lesson after lesson



Local language reached learners with less formal education



Learners who left school in primary (**grades 1-7**) and chose Leb-Lango



Learners who reached upper secondary (**12th grade**) and chose Leb-Lango

In a randomized controlled trial, learners taught in Leb Lango outperformed those taught in English on practice activities. They learned faster and completed more practice.

Built to Amplify Impact



Reach learners others can't reach

- 87% of Ugandans have access to radio
- Over 90% of Africans live within reach of mobile network infrastructure, yet only 38% use the internet.



Keep learners engaged

- Tailored for learners' realities using human-centered design
- Applies learning science and continuous testing to sustain participation.



Leverage collective impact

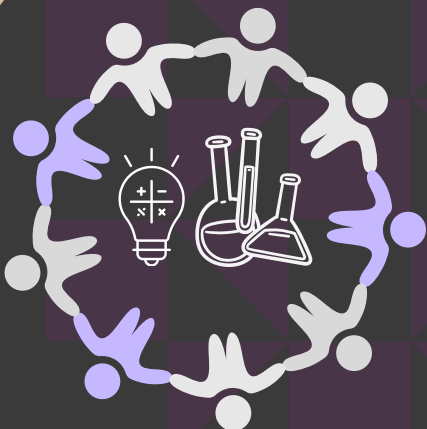
- Partners bring content and expertise
- Yiya provides AirLearning delivery infrastructure
- Shared systems reduce costs and expand reach across organizations.



Partners

AirLearning Platform

Learners



AirLearning
*284*19#



AirLearning: An award-winning platform with repeated independent validation



Awards & recognition

- Global Edtech Startup Awards Winner 2025: Emerging Markets
- Learning Engineering Tools Competition Winner 2024
- HundrED 2023 Global Collection
- African Union Innovating Education in Africa 2021 Winner
- Jacobs Foundation Grand Prize for Innovation 2021
- MIT Solve 2020 Solver (Learning for Girls & Women)
- Featured by CNN Inside Africa
- Featured by New Vision
- Profiled by Global Partnership for Education
- Featured by The Observer
- Team4Tech case study on Yiya
- Profiled by African Development Bank Group

Published papers

EdTech for Last Mile Learners in the Global South (C. Kwon)



Inclusive Mobile Learning: How Technology-Enabled Language Choice Supports Multilingual Students (P. Moletsane)



Investigating Demographics and Motivation in Engineering Education Using Radio and Phone-Based Educational Technologies (C. Kwon)



Language Preferences and Practices in Multilingual EdTech: Flexible Primary Language Use with Secondary Language Support (C. Kwon & P. Moletsane)



Research partner: Carnegie Mellon University (HCII)

Can Multilingual Environments Promote Scalable EdTech? Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial (P. Moletsane)



Validating a New Approach for Measuring Student Engagement in Remote, Low-Infrastructure Learning Environments (M. Asher)



Learning Analytics for Last Mile Students in Africa (C. Kwon)



Learning Beyond the Screen: Designing a Voice-based Conversational AI Teacher for Low-Infrastructure Contexts (C. Kwon)



Navigating Local versus Colonial Languages of Instruction in Out-of-School Contexts: Insights from a Randomized Controlled Trial in Uganda (C. Kwon)





Now I have very many choices. Because now I don't have to rely on someone. When I have my small business like this, I can also help my siblings and my parents.

Adong Rita, Yiya AirLearner 2025

Financial Report



\$456,183

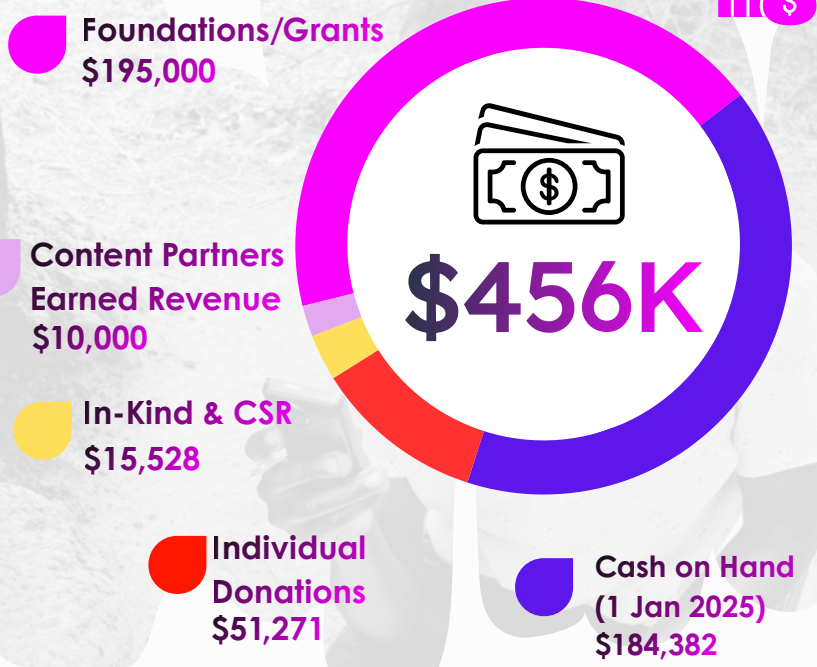
2025 Revenue



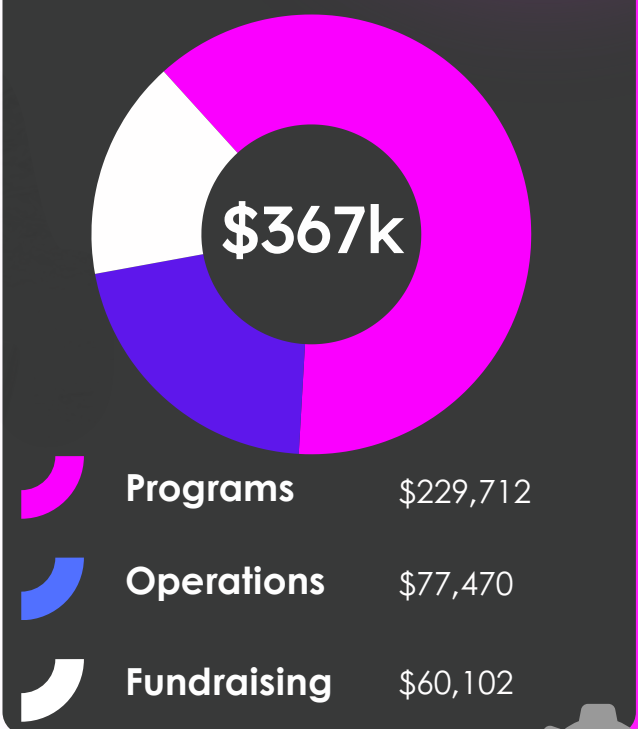
\$367,285

2025 Expenses

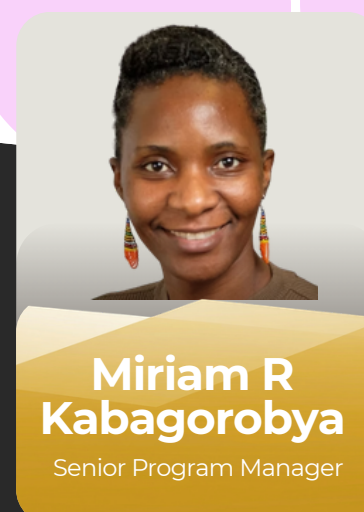
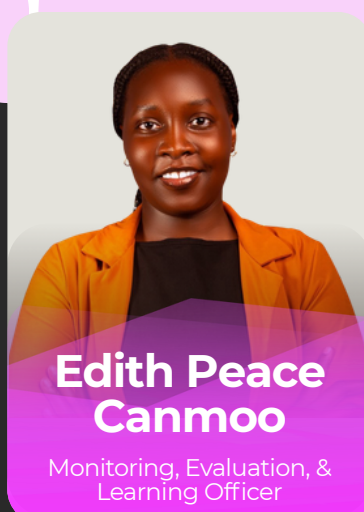
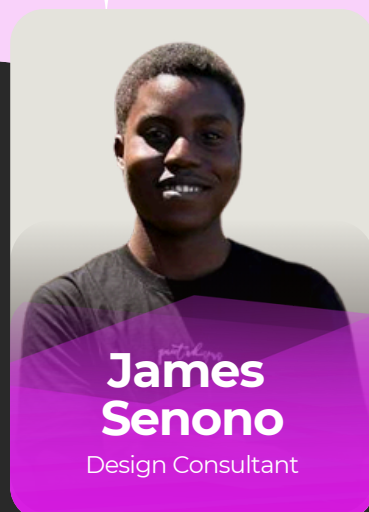
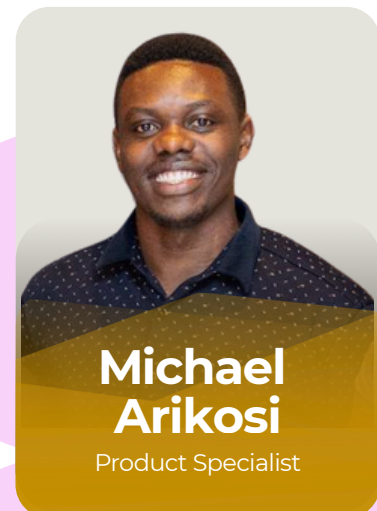
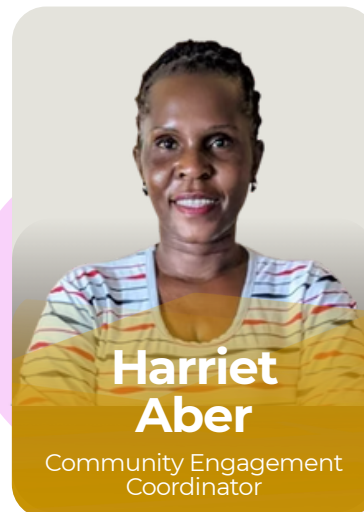
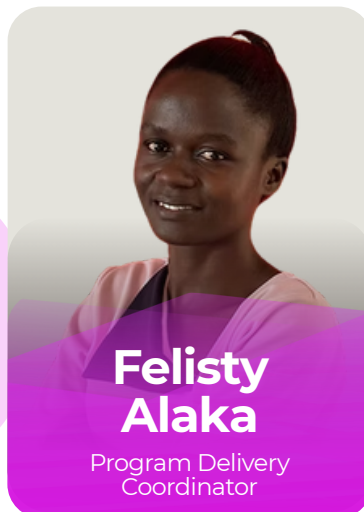
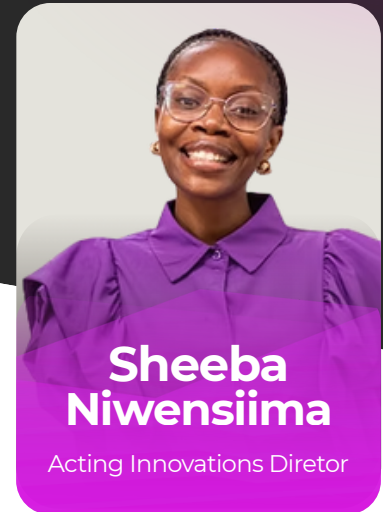
REVENUE Breakdown



EXPENSE Breakdown



MEET OUR TEAM



Meet the Board



**CAROLINE
LOWENTHAL**

Board Chairperson



**MERCY KATAIKE
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**JOSEPH KAIZZI
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**ALAN
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**PATRICIA
DAILEY**

Yiya is reimagining EdTech to expand access
to last-mile communities!



Our Donors

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- Natembea Foundation
- Libra Philanthropies
- Rick Sestile
- Caroline Lowenthal & Sam Ribnick
- AWS - Education Equity Initiative
- Segal Family Foundation
- Kathryn M Schumacher
- Africa's Talking
- Mike & Diane Christian
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| Matt Lowenthal | OpenAI |

Our Partnership Ecosystem



**Carnegie
Mellon
University**

**SOMEONE
ELSE'S
CHILD**



**NATEMBEA
FOUNDATION**



team4tech



What “Yiya”
means...

Oku’Yiya

To solve an old
problem in a new way

You can support Yiya’s
work by Donating today.



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