

Program Summary

Pathways Project Summary

Initiative: Scaling Education for Out-of-School Girls in Africa through AI (Funke AI, +)

Date: August 10th, 2025

Status: Phase 2 [Fundraising](#) (Ending Dec 12th 2025)



[3min Video Summary](#)

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Executive Summary

The United Nations International School has created the Pathways Project, an initiative dedicated to providing a second chance at education for young women in Africa who have been left behind by traditional systems. Our mission is to empower these out of school women and create pathways for a high school-level education, higher education and economic independence.

We do this through a blended model of on-site academic support, social and emotional support and laptops. AI tools are used to help scale the education portion of the program. Our recently concluded 100 girl pilot in Osun State, Nigeria, resulted in a **96% completion rate**. Before this program many of these girls had stopped their education after middle school and most had never opened a laptop. Now 96 of 100 of the original students have the equivalent of a high school education positioning them to apply for college and employment.

Building on the success of the pilot, we are now **raising \$1 million in funding to:**

- Scale Pathways to 200 more secondary aged girls who have experienced similar barriers to education
- Expand the campus in Nigeria to include a tech hub
- Grow Pathway grads opportunities secure jobs and/or University scholarships
- Evolve the integration of the AI driven self-guided learning portion of the program via Funke, NotebookLM, and other AI tools.
- Build the team and product framework to scale this to every child in need of an education.

Problem & Opportunity

Globally, millions of school aged children are denied an education. The challenge is particularly acute in sub-Saharan Africa, where an estimated **34 million secondary**

school-aged girls are not attending high school. These brilliant, ambitious young women often excluded due to early motherhood, poverty, or geographic isolation lack access to a safe, flexible, and supportive environment to continue their learning journey. The opportunity is twofold: first, to leverage technology not just as a tool, but as a personal guide, mentor, and teacher that can meet each student exactly where they are. Second, to leverage AI tools to give staff and teachers more time to focus on the crucial social, emotional, and health support the girls need.

Current Solution: The Pilot

In partnership with our local NGO partner, Value Re-Orientation for Community Enhancement (VARCE.org), the Pathways Project provides a combined solution that brings together a physical space with scalable technology:

- **The Campus:** A safe and resource rich physical environment where girls have access to laptops, internet, health support, meals, and childcare. It is the hub where students prepare for and pass the **West African Secondary School Certificate**.
- **AI-Assisted Education:** AI that empowers both students and teachers. By leveraging the best available tools, like NotebookLM, and building our custom layer, Funke AI, on top, we are creating a unique learning ecosystem ([See Funke Product Brief](#)). This approach allows students to move at their own pace and learn *how* to learn in a judgment-free environment. It also will alleviate teachers from tasks like grading, freeing them to focus on what matters most: providing the one-on-one mentorship and crucial social-emotional support our students need to thrive.
- **INSERT BIT ABOUT PWC VALIDATING EXPENSES AND DOING AUDITS?**

It's important to note that in this pilot phase the girls only got access to laptops + wifi for the 2nd half.

Outcome

We have successfully validated our model with a pilot program that produced results exceeding all expectations.

- **Recruitment & Resources:** We recruited 100 young women (aged 15-20) in Osun State, Nigeria, and established a fully functional campus, providing 100 MacBooks and installing satellite internet systems to ensure connectivity.

- **Exceptional Outcome:** 96 of the original 100 students completed the program, achieving their high school education. This 96% success rate validates the efficacy of our model and the incredible determination of our students.
- **MVP Validation:** The pilot also included the deployment of a Funke AI MVP with Notebook LM, which proved that an AI can be a powerful educational accelerator for this demographic. The MVP is functional but scrappy; the next phase will be used to iterate on the MVP and integrate it more into the curriculum from the beginning of the new cohort of girls.

Long Term Vision: A Scalable Model for Global Impact

Pathways in Nigeria is more than a program; it's an incubator for a future global solution. To be transparent: we do not yet know the final form of a globally scalable, sustainable product. Phase II is explicitly designed to answer this question. If this was a startup we would be in the MVP phase. As we build and integrate our AI solutions into the curriculum for the next cohort of students, we will conduct frequent user experience research (UXR) to begin the blueprint for a product that can empower millions of children who lack access to education worldwide. Based on the fast success of the Pilot, we believe this is possible now more than ever with students taking so quickly to AI empowered learning.

Phasing

| Phase | Status | Funds | Goals / Outcomes |
|---|-------------|-------|---|
| Pilot Program "Building the Foundation" | Complete | 250K | Successfully validated our core model. We established a critical partnership with VARCE, secured and equipped a campus, and confirmed the students' readiness for technology. This phase proved our thesis: a hybrid model of on-the-ground support and technology can create extraordinary educational outcomes. |
| Phase II "Integrated AI Learning" | Fundraising | 1M | This is our incubator phase. We will scale our cohort to 200 students and integrate Notebook LM + Funke AI extension into the curriculum from day one. Our primary objective is to move beyond a service model and discover a truly scalable product. Through UXR, we will iterate on the AI platforms to find the blueprint for a global self-learning tool. |
| Phase III "Beyond Osun State" | ~ | ~ | Armed with a full year of learnings from Phase II, we will begin expansion beyond Osun State. This involves replicating success in new regions across Nigeria and forming partnerships with other NGOs to scale the technology and operational playbook developed in Phase II. |

Why \$1M?

Q: If the pilot was \$250K, why the jump to \$1M goal for the next phase?

A: The Pilot Phase was our successful "proof of concept." Phase II is about building the engine for scale. The \$1M investment moves us from a manual pilot to a technology driven platform. It allows us to double our next cohort while building the systems (like the Funke AI platform and a new tech facility) that will significantly reduce our cost-per-student in the future. This is the crucial investment needed to turn our proven success into a more scalable model. Here's how the funds will be allocated for Phase II:

1. Student & Campus Expansion:

- a. Scale Student Body: Grow from our pilot cohort to 200 more girls.
- b. Provide Essential Tools: Equip every new student with a laptop and necessary learning materials.
- c. Expand Physical Infrastructure: Create a dedicated tech facility on our campus to support the expanded program.

2. Product Development (Funke AI+):

- a. Full Curriculum Integration: Evolve Funke AI from a general tool to a platform deeply integrated with a specific, accredited high school curriculum.
- b. Agent for Self-Learning: Develop Funke into a true agent that can personalize learning paths, track progress, and proactively support students.
- c. Increase frequency of coding classes utilizing the power of AI support and accelerant
- d. Hire a CPO role to dedicate time to own the product cycles and scaling of the AI layer on top of the education. They will stay in constant communication with the students and teachers on a daily basis as product feature requests have already begun to roll in.

3. Post-Graduation Success Program:

- a. Dedicated Support: Allocate resources to support our 100 graduated students.
- b. Career & College Placement: Actively assist graduates in securing jobs or gaining admission to higher education institutions.

The Team

Everyone, outside of the VARCE staff, is working on this in their **spare time**. We are seeking 1 CPO role.

| Name | Day Job | Contact |
|------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Dan Brenner, PhD | Executive Director, UNIS | Dbrenner@unis.org |
| Ademola Adebisi | Executive Director, VARCE.org | ademola@varce.org |
| Adam Archer | Director of Technology, UNIS | aarcher@unis.org |
| Nancy Macharia | Director of Teaching and Learning, UNIS | nmacharia@unis.org |
| Allan Holmes | 2x Founder, Currently at Google | allanholmes@google.com |
| PWC POC? | | |
| X VARCE Team | Various Roles | |

How can you help?

If you feel inspired to help this project continue, there are several ways to get involved:

Share the Story

- **Social & IRL:** Simply sharing our [3-minute video](#) with friends, family, and your social networks is the easiest and a powerful way to help the girls.
- **Content Creators:** If you know how to tell a compelling story and would like to help, please email us at allanholmes@google.com.

Donate

- **Individual Donations:** Every dollar makes a difference. You can contribute via [UNIS Venmo](#) or directly at unis.org/giving.
- **Organizational Sponsorship:** If you are part of a larger organization and would like to become a sponsor, please contact Dbrenner@unis.org.
- **Equipment:** We are always in need of technology (laptops, Starlinks, etc.) and other educational equipment.

Participate & Connect

- **Contribute Your Skills:** If you have a skillset (e.g., developer, designer, product manager, impact investor outreach) that you believe could advance this program, please reach out.
- **Make an Introduction:** If you know someone who might want to invest, partner, or help in any capacity, please send them our way.