



Learning
without
barriers

2025 Impact Report

Beyond Borders: Scaling Foundational Learning Across Africa





Learning
without
barriers

AREAI 2025 Year at a glance

**Beyond Borders: Scaling
Foundational Learning
Across Africa**



Gideon Olanrewaju,
Founder & Global
Executive Director, AREAi

Greetings from AREAi,

In 2025, our work was defined by a commitment to transforming learning outcomes for children and young people in underserved communities through foundational learning, digital inclusion, teacher capacity strengthening, research, and systems change. Across the year, we expanded our reach, strengthened our evidence base, deepened our partnerships, and continued to position African-led innovation at the centre of education transformation.

Our work remained grounded in the core belief that every child deserves access to quality learning opportunities, regardless of geography, gender, income level, displacement status, or circumstance.

This commitment guided our programming across foundational literacy and numeracy, girls' education, digital skills, policy engagement, and teacher development.

Executive Summary

We expanded.

In 2025, we advanced implementation across Nigeria and extended the reach of our FastTrack+ model into the Democratic Republic of Congo. We strengthened collaboration with governments, local partners, multilateral institutions, and peer organisations to expand access to quality education in both formal and non-formal settings. We also deepened our engagement in Oyo State through gender-responsive education budgeting work and broadened digital skills access through new state-level implementation partnerships.

We innovated.

We launched and strengthened new initiatives that reflect the evolving needs of learners and systems. These included Women Techies Africa, FoundaMENTA, Project55, and CarbonTrac.AI. Each of these initiatives speaks to a broader strategic direction: combining innovation with inclusion to create practical, scalable pathways for learning, digital access, and sustainable development.

We strengthened.

Throughout the year, we invested in evidence, systems, and people. We supported education finance data capacity, advanced a Randomized Controlled Trial on FastTrack implementation in partnership with JPAL, produced policy contributions on AI in education, and reinforced team effectiveness through structured retreats and internal learning processes. These efforts strengthened both our institutional foundations and the quality of our external impact.

We influenced.

From convening community-based organizations to a national dialogue on AI and education to participating in and speaking at global platforms such as UNESCO International Mother Tongue in Paris, France, WISE Summit in Qatar, and the DeepTech Summit in Morocco, AREAi continued to elevate African perspectives in global education conversations. Our work demonstrated that solutions designed in and for African contexts can shape policy, influence practice, and contribute meaningfully to international discourse, particularly around foundational learning.

We prepared.

2025 was also a year of readiness. We closed the year with stronger partnerships, clearer systems, growing international recognition, and new pathways for scale. The momentum built across the year positions AREAi to deepen impact in 2026 through stronger implementation, sharper advocacy, and more intentional institutional growth.

Highlights at a Glance

01

12 data enumerators trained



to support education finance research across six Northern Nigerian states and the FCT

02

600 Enabled girls



across 20 secondary schools in Abuja to gain foundational digital literacy skills, building confidence, improving learning outcomes, and expanding future career possibilities

03

150⁺ educators trained



through the FoundaMENTA FLN Masterclass, with participation spanning 16 Nigerian states, the FCT, Kenya, and Ethiopia

04

102 students engaged



through the Getting Girls Equal inter-school activity in Oyo State

05

35⁺ community learners enrolled



on our English Access Programme in Nassarawa State, working with school teachers to improve language proficiency skills

06

50 community-based facilitators trained



to strengthen **FastTrack** delivery in Borno State.

08

+5

FastTrack+ expanded to the Democratic Republic of Congo



through a local implementation partnership with **PAWA Foundation**.



60

girls enabled with access to foundational digital skills

in Lagos State through a strategic partnership with SAIL Innovation Lab, under the Digital Skills Accelerator program FastTrack+ expanded to the Democratic Republic of Congo through a local implementation partnership with PAWA Foundation.

07

Key Impact Achievements in 2025

In 2025, AREAi recorded important milestones across research, program implementation, policy engagement, capacity building, and international partnerships.

Key Impact Achievements in 2025

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15



61 Female Community-based facilitators

were trained and engaged to strengthen the delivery of instruction for the Mobile Technical Literacy program.



300 Married adolescent girls

cross 2 LGAs (Sabon-gari and Zaria) in Kaduna State equipped with mobile technical literacy skills through our Digital Skills Accelerator program.

14

FastTrack was recognised as a WISE Prize finalist,

the only organisation from Africa, and therefore positioning AREAi among globally recognised education innovators

13

16



Launched the English Access Program

in partnership with the United State Embassy, empowered 30 students and 4 Teachers across the themes of the program.



Membership secured in the Global Schools Forum,

joining a network of 162 organisations across 64 countries supporting more than **122.9 million** children globally.

12



30,000 girls across 30 schools

in 3 districts in Oyo State were empowered through the Getting Girls Equal Program.

11



Validation of the foundational literacy and numeracy

assistive text-to-audio learning materials in 2 new languages (Swahili and French).



5+ Technical Reports and Policy briefs produced

with a significant piece on Nigeria's AI for Education roadmap following national consultation

10

09



In 2025, AREAi strengthened its commitment to evidence-driven programming and policy influence.

We continued to build systems that allow research, implementation, and reflection to inform one another more intentionally.



Research & Learning

The year began with a three-day training for 12 data enumerators, conducted in partnership with Genesis Analytics and UNICEF, as part of broader work on strengthening education finance systems for public basic education in Nigeria. The training equipped participants from Kano, Zamfara, Katsina, Sokoto, Borno, Jigawa, and the FCT with the knowledge and skills required for accurate and reliable data collection. This initiative reinforced the central role of data in effective education administration, planning, and policy development.

We also deepened our learning agenda through the continued evaluation of FastTrack using a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT). In Borno State, we conducted refresher training for 50 community-based facilitators as part of efforts to ensure quality delivery and strengthen the evidence base for accelerated foundational learning. Funded by JPAL through its Learning for All Initiative and led in collaboration with academic partners, including Professor Sharon Wolf and Associate Professor Kaja Jasinska, this work reflects AREAi's commitment to rigour, accountability, and scalable learning innovation.

On the policy side, AREAi's Centre for Digital Development and Innovation Research (CDDIR) convened a national consultation on the role of artificial intelligence in education. The resulting policy engagement contributed to the development of "Charting Nigeria's AI for Education Roadmap: A Strategic Policy Framework for Equitable, Ethical Implementation." This represented an important step in translating dialogue into systems-level recommendations.

Across these efforts, 2025 reinforced an important principle for AREAi: meaningful scale requires not just implementation, but evidence, reflection, and systems learning



Foundational literacy and numeracy remained central to AREAi's mission in 2025. Through FastTrack and its evolving adaptation, FastTrack+, we continued to strengthen accelerated learning opportunities for children in underserved, displacement-affected, and low-resource contexts.



In March, AREAi conducted refresher training for 50 community-based facilitators in Maiduguri, Borno State, reinforcing learner-centered teaching approaches and practical delivery strategies for foundational learning. This effort supported the quality of implementation in contexts where access to effective learning remains deeply uneven.

Education and Programs

Foundational Learning and FastTrack



We also extended our work into the Democratic Republic of Congo, conducting facilitator training for newly recruited teachers and community-based facilitators in Nyiragongo and Mugunga communities.

These sessions introduced the FastTrack+ model and its core teaching approaches, helping lay the foundation for effective implementation in a new context. Our implementation efforts, complemented by PAWA, a local organisation resulted in us reaching over 1,037 children across 4 refugee camps.

After 12 weeks of multilingual instruction, we recorded over 69% literacy and numeracy improvement. In addition to training 84 local community facilitators who are gainfully employed as our trainers, we validated our learning content in 2 new languages, i.e., Swahili and French.

FastTrack's visibility also grew internationally in 2025.

In 2025, AREAi welcomed the World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) team to document Project implementation in Nigeria and DRC, capturing learning in action at centres such as New Kuchingoro and Karonmajiji IDP schools.

Through this documentation, the global education community was able to witness how bilingual instruction, play based pedagogy, and offline assistive learning tools can work together to accelerate foundational learning outcomes for children with the greatest learning needs.



Education and Programs

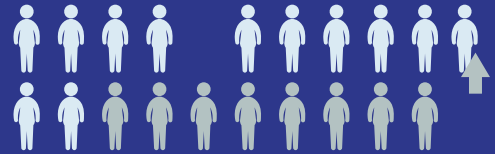


Pilot Results in DRC

Proof of Impact

1,037

children reached
in 4 refugee camps



60%

literacy attainment
after 12 weeks



50%

numeracy attainment
after 12 weeks



84

facilitators empowered,
trained and paid



2

new languages validated
Swahili, French



partnership with
PaWa



Local NGO with
regional govt and
camp leadership

Proven results: 69% literacy and numeracy improvement in just 12 weeks

Education and Programs

Digital Skills and Digital Equity

In 2025, AREAi continued to close digital access gaps for girls and young women through the Digital Skills Accelerator (DSA) and new complementary interventions.

One of the year's notable developments was the introduction of Women Techies Africa, a sub-program under DSA designed for adolescent girls, young women, and final-year female undergraduates between the ages of 16 and 30. The initiative was designed to equip participants with in-demand skills for the creative and digital economy, including cybersecurity, animation, illustration, product design, content development, motion graphics, VFX, digital marketing, and e-commerce. This marked an important evolution in AREAi's digital inclusion strategy by linking access not only to digital literacy but also to employability and creative industry participation.

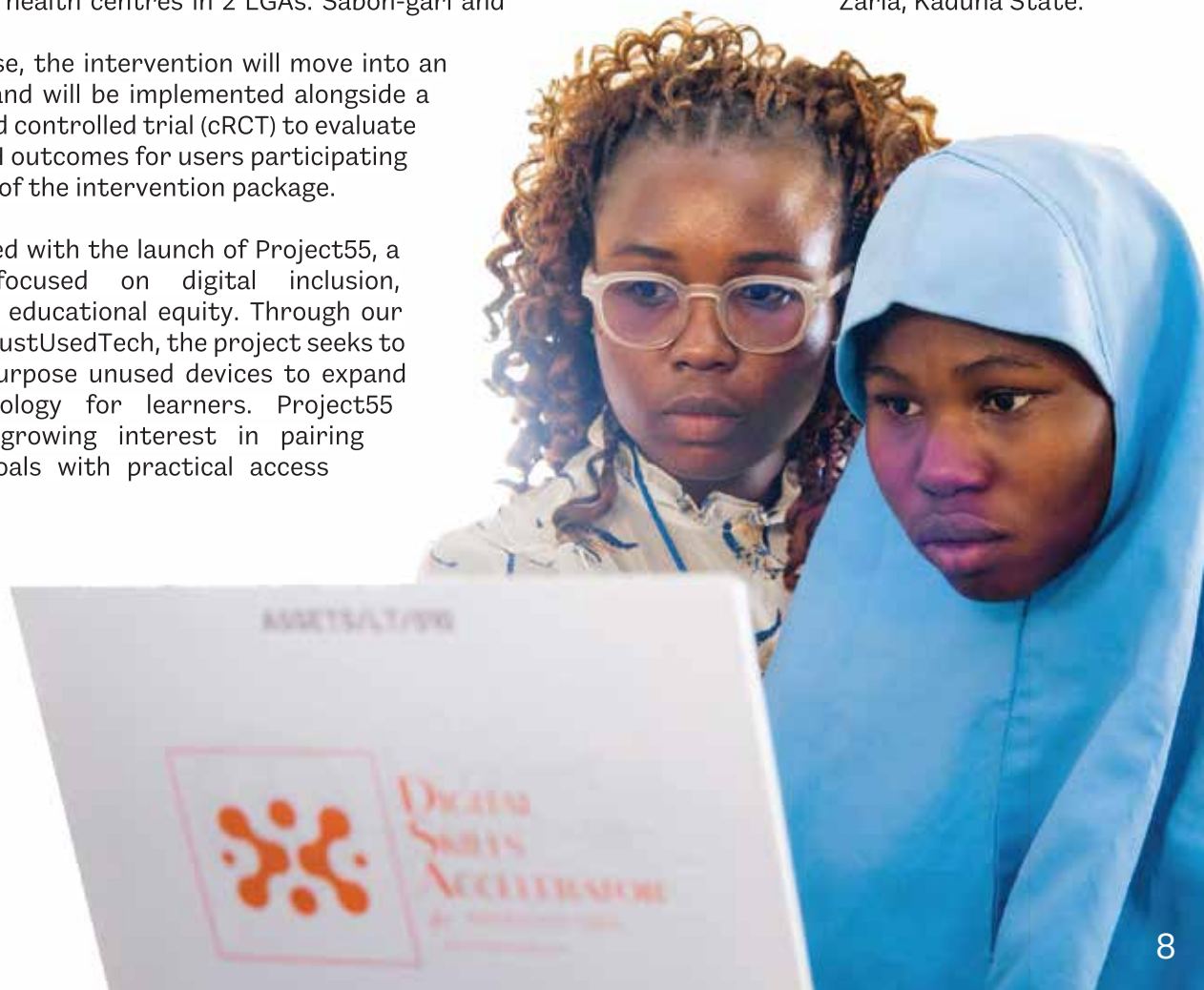
Across Abuja, 600 girls completed the Basic Digital Literacy program at the endline, implemented across 20 secondary schools. Participants who began with minimal exposure to digital tools demonstrated measurable growth in confidence, aspiration, and digital problem-solving. Their transformation underscored the role of digital access in shifting self-perception and opening pathways into STEM and the broader digital economy.

In October, AREAi expanded the DSA footprint through a new partnership with SAIL Innovation Lab in Lagos State. Supported by Global Changemakers and led locally by Wonderful Akanbi, the initiative was designed to provide 60 girls from two government secondary schools with foundational digital skills in a practical, technology-enabled setting. This partnership demonstrated AREAi's continued commitment to scaling digital access through collaboration and community-rooted implementation.

In November, AREAi embarked on a six-month adaptive pilot implementation of the Mobile Technical Literacy program (MTL) funded by Population Service International (PSI). The pilot phase reached, equipped and engaged 61 female community-based facilitators with the technical skills needed to strengthen the delivery of the MTL curriculum in Hausa and English, where necessary, to 300 married adolescent girls enrolled across 20 primary health centres in 2 LGAs: Sabon-gari and Zaria, Kaduna State.

In the second phase, the intervention will move into an evaluation phase and will be implemented alongside a cluster randomised controlled trial (cRCT) to evaluate the digital and SRH outcomes for users participating in various aspects of the intervention package.

The year also closed with the launch of Project55, a new initiative focused on digital inclusion, sustainability, and educational equity. Through our partnership with JustUsedTech, the project seeks to refurbish and repurpose unused devices to expand access to technology for learners. Project55 reflects AREAi's growing interest in pairing digital learning goals with practical access solutions and sustainable technology pathways.



600 girls

Across Abuja, 600 girls completed the Basic Digital Literacy program at the endline, implemented across 20 secondary schools.



DSA

footprint expansion

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61

female community-based facilitators

The pilot phase reached, equipped and engaged 61 female community-based facilitators with the technical skills needed to strengthen the delivery of the MTL curriculum in Hausa and English



Education and Programs

Girls' Education and Gender Equality

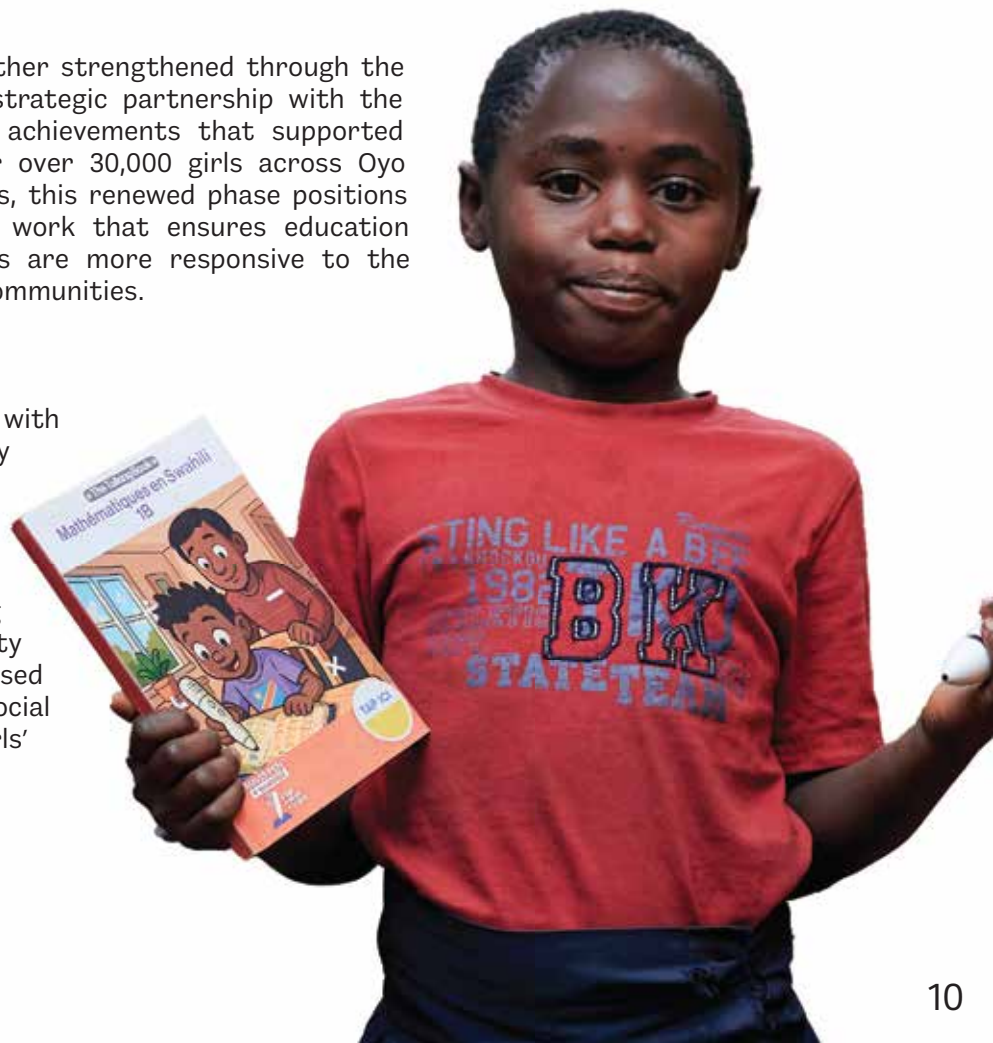
AREAi's commitment to girls' education remained strong throughout 2025, with programmatic and advocacy efforts focused on retention, empowerment, budgeting, and access.

In February, we hosted an inter-school engagement under the Getting Girls Equal (GGE) program, bringing together 102 students and teachers from Yejide Girls' Grammar School, People's Girls' Grammar School, and Community High School in Oyo State. Through interactive sessions, participants engaged in collaboration, academic planning, and self-reflection exercises that helped them better align their educational journeys with future aspirations.

The year also saw continued progress in gender-focused advocacy through our work on Gender Responsive Education Budgeting (GREB) in Oyo State. AREAi participated in the Joint Action Grant inception and review process, reflecting on Phase 1 achievements, including baseline studies, budget scorecards, and advocacy materials. This work contributed to stronger dialogue around education financing, accountability, and policy influence.

In November, this work was further strengthened through the renewal of AREAi's three-year strategic partnership with the Malala Fund. Building on prior achievements that supported access to quality education for over 30,000 girls across Oyo State's three senatorial districts, this renewed phase positions AREAi to deepen systems-level work that ensures education budgets and planning processes are more responsive to the realities of girls in underserved communities.

In May, AREAi also partnered with Purple Pact Initiative to launch My CyCoo, a comic book designed to make menstrual education more accessible and relatable for adolescents. By pairing educational storytelling with practical tools and community dialogue, this initiative addressed dignity, health literacy, and the social barriers that too often shape girls' educational participation.



Education and Programs

Girls' Education and Gender Equality

In 2025, AREAi invested more intentionally in the people who make learning possible: teachers, facilitators, fellows, and internal teams.

A major milestone was the launch of FoundaMENTA in July, AREAi's flagship teacher training program focused on foundational literacy and numeracy delivery through innovative, inclusive, and learner-centred methods. The program was designed for school teachers and community-based facilitators working in both formal and non-formal settings, especially those supporting marginalised, underserved, or out-of-school children. FoundaMENTA reflects AREAi's view that stronger learning outcomes begin with stronger educators, equipped not only with tools but with practical methods, mentorship, and an adaptive mindset.

Another key milestone under the FoundaMENTA initiative was the 5-day Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Masterclass, held from October 7th to 10th, 2025, which convened over 170 educators across Nigeria.

The Masterclass, themed "Fostering Fundamental Pedagogical Excellence for Foundational Learning Instruction," brought together educators from a diverse range of contexts, including Borno, Yobe, Zamfara, Katsina, Kano, Bauchi, Plateau, and Nasarawa States Abuja (FCT), Lagos, Rivers, Imo, Edo, Ogun, Kwara, and Oyo States, Nairobi County, Meru (Kenya), and Ethiopia.

This geographic diversity enriched the learning experience, enabling cross-context exchange of ideas, challenges, and practical solutions for improving foundational learning outcomes. The masterclass was led by global education experts, including Olubunmi Adefisayo Ramesh Chandra, Aishwarya Kaple, Sarah Koko, Professor Angeline Mbogo Barrett. The sessions focused on Curriculum delivery and instructional design, inclusive, learner-centred teaching approaches, assessment-driven instruction and multilingual pedagogy.

The Masterclass served as an entry point into AREAi's Community of Practice, a growing network of teachers across Nigeria with a total number of 75 educators. We also continued to invest in youth and early-career capacity through the Program and Impact Fellowship (PIF). In 2025, seven program and impact fellows received practical learning, mentorship, and exposure to real-world development work. In May, fellows received additional training on sustainable brand positioning, helping them strengthen employability and professional readiness through lessons drawn from branding, communication, and digital adaptation. At the institutional level, AREAi reinforced internal capacity through two retreats during the year. The February retreat focused on reflection, team bonding, and alignment. The December year-end retreat went further, providing structured sessions on grant strategy, communication, leadership, digital project management, and systems change. Together, these retreats strengthened team cohesion, strategic clarity, and organisational readiness for scale

Milestone

✓ JULY

The launch of FoundaMENTA AREAi's flagship teacher training program focused on foundational literacy and numeracy delivery through innovative, inclusive, and learner-centred methods.

✓ OCTOBER

under the FoundaMENTA initiative was the 5-day Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Masterclass, held from October 7th to 10th, 2025, which convened over 170 educators across Nigeria.

✓ DECEMBER

A year-end retreat providing structured sessions on grant strategy, communication, leadership, digital project management, and systems change.

Welcome to the
Official Launch of the

ENGLISH ACCESS PROGRAM

U.S. Department of State
English Access
Program

Education and Programs

English Access Scholarship Program (Access)

In 2024, October 18th, the English Access Scholarship Program was launched, with continuous teaching and learning sessions still ongoing with 30 students enrolled and 4 Instructional and 4 Administrative staff empowered to deliver lessons across the themes of the program - US Culture and Values, Science and Nature Studies, 21st Century Skills, Digital and Media Literacy skills, and English Language and provide administrative support respectively for the smooth running of the program



ACCESS

English Access
Scholarship Program
(Access)



Growth, Scale and Expansion

2025 was a year of meaningful growth for AREAi, not only in program reach but also in the depth and quality of our partnerships.

In May, AREAi participated in the DeepTech Summit in Morocco as part of the WISE Prize ecosystem, sharing the progress of FastTrack+ and learning alongside other education innovators. This international exposure supported peer exchange, refinement of our model, and wider visibility for African-led solutions to learning poverty.

In August, AREAi became a member of the Global Schools Forum (GSF), joining a global network of 162 education organisations across 64 countries supporting more than 122.9 million children worldwide. This membership provides opportunities for peer learning, strategic partnership, and alignment with global best practices in education delivery and systems strengthening.

That same month, AREAi participated in technical and policy processes in Oyo State related to reforms for out-of-school children. These engagements strengthened our role in shaping education dialogue at the state level, while also reinforcing our commitment to collaborative problem-solving with governments, civil society actors, and technical partners.

In November, AREAi was represented at the World Innovation Summit for Education by our Founder and Global Executive Director, Gideon Olanrewaju and Country Director, Edidiong Simeon. AREAi's participation in WISE 12 in Doha, Qatar, marked an important moment of global recognition. FastTrack's selection as a WISE Prize finalist positioned the model among the world's most promising and scalable education innovations and underscored the relevance of African-designed accelerated learning approaches in low-income, conflict-affected, and displacement contexts.

Across these efforts, 2025 reinforced an important principle for AREAi: meaningful scale requires not just implementation, but evidence, reflection, and systems learning



Across these milestones, AREAi's growth in 2025 was characterized by strategic partnerships, stronger visibility and global credibility



Policy, Sustainability and Systems Influence

AREAI's work in 2025 also reflected a strong emphasis on systems change and cross-sector influence.

The Centre for Digital Development and Innovation Research (CDDIR) played an active role in national conversations on AI and education, convening diverse stakeholders around questions of ethics, accessibility, curriculum integration, teacher development, and child safety. These contributions helped shape a more grounded national conversation around the future of AI in Nigerian education, leading to the production of a policy brief titled: "Charting Nigeria's AI for Education Roadmap: A strategic Policy Framework for Equitable, Ethical Implementation"

We also advanced work at the intersection of digital innovation and environmental sustainability. In March, AREAI hosted a high-level technical workshop under the SCALE initiative, launching CarbonTrac. AI and bringing together policymakers, experts, and partners to explore collaborative approaches to digital sustainability in Nigeria.

Later that month, we participated in a youth engagement forum on digital and environmental sustainability for a green economy, helping elevate young voices and practical ideas for climate-conscious development.

In May, CDDIR presented at the West African Internet Governance Forum, contributing research and policy insights on technology-led greenhouse gas emissions and the need for more sustainable digital infrastructure in West Africa. This work reflects AREAI's broader belief that education and innovation must not be disconnected from the social and environmental systems in which they operate.



CDDIR

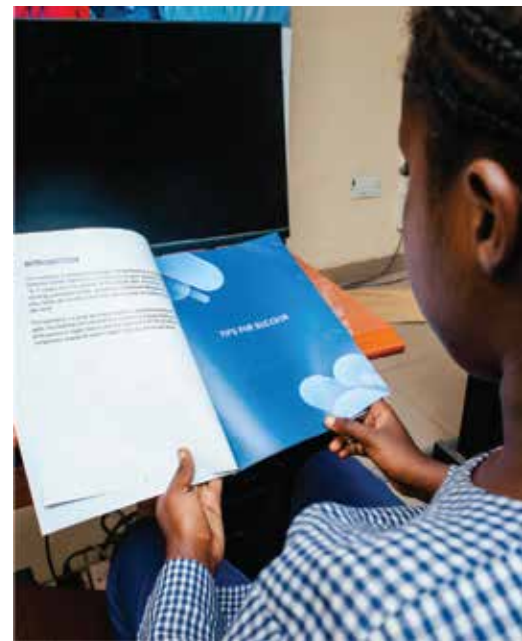
played an active role in national conversations on AI and education, convening diverse stakeholders around questions of ethics, accessibility, curriculum integration, teacher development, and child safety.

Diversity & Inclusion

Across all our work in 2025, AREAi remained committed to building learning systems that are inclusive by design.

Our programs continued to prioritise children and young people in underserved, low-income, rural, displacement-affected, and conflict-impacted communities. Whether through FastTrack in IDP settings, DSA for girls, GREB advocacy for public accountability, or teacher support through FoundaMENTA, our interventions were rooted in the principle that equity requires deliberate design and targeted action.

This commitment was also visible in our advocacy and partnerships. At the IDP Conference in Abuja hosted by the SWAG initiative, AREAi contributed to conversations that elevated the voices of displaced communities and highlighted the urgent need for education access for girls in those contexts. Our participation in World Refugee Day and International Day of the African Child further reinforced our public commitment to children whose learning has been interrupted by crisis, conflict, and systemic inequality.



Organizational Recognition

The year-end staff retreat in December reflected this clearly. Over four days, team members engaged in rigorous sessions on grant competitiveness, communication, leadership, digital project management, and systems change. Facilitated by both internal and external experts, the retreat provided time for strategic reflection, capability strengthening, and preparation for the demands of 2026. The retreat concluded with a recognition and awards night, honouring staff contributions and celebrating the people behind the organisation's impact



Local and Global Representation



WISE X MOROCCO
Pivots and Learning



AREAi X SWAG
IDP CONFERENCE



WISE
PRE- SUMMIT QATAR



IEEE EMEA
X CDDIR



WISE X MOROCCO
Pivots and Learning



AREAi
X JAN SET4LYF



Fastrack+ DRC
Facis training



UNESCO
FRANCE

Behind AREAi's external work in 2025 was continued investment in internal systems, culture, and people.



WISE
QATAR



WISE X MOROCCO



WAIGF



Fastrack+ DRC
Facis training

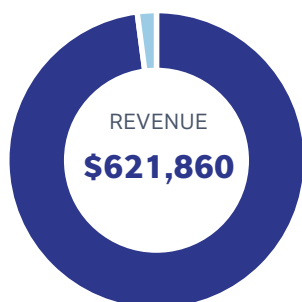
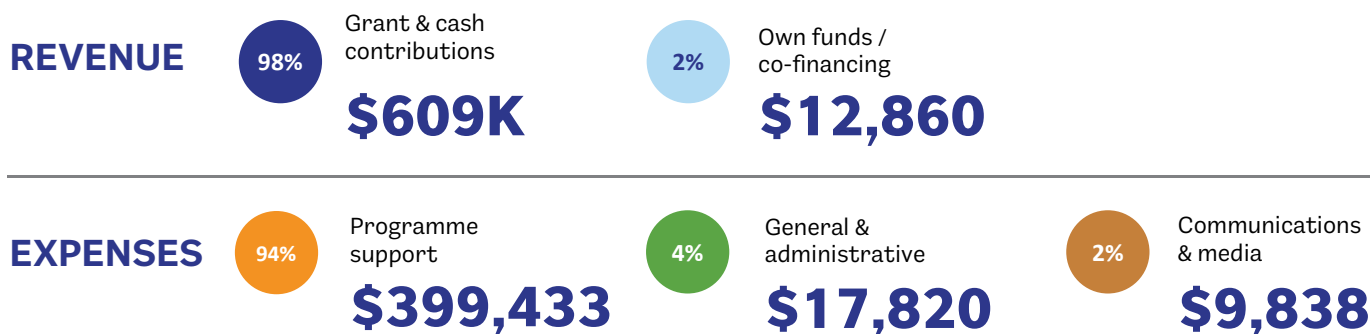


WISE LEARNING LABS
QATAR

Financials

Statement of Activities

The figures below represent unaudited financials for 2025. Full audited financial statements will be shared on AREAI's website when available.



Statement of Financial Position

REVENUE & EXPENDITURE

Total income / revenue (received)	\$621,860
Total expenditure	\$427,091
Net surplus	\$194,769

BUDGET vs ACTUAL VARIANCE

Budgeted income 2025	\$667,860
Income variance	(\$46,000)
Budgeted expenditure 2025	\$445,374
Expenditure variance (favourable)	(\$18,283)

CURRENCY EXPOSURE

Income in USD equivalent	\$621,860
Income in NGN equivalent (₦1,400 / \$1)	₦870,604,000
Operating geography	Nigeria · DRC

Partners & Sponsors



Humans of AREAi



Prince Gideon Olanrewaju
Global/Executive Director



Edidiong Simeon Anthony
Country Director



Funmilola Ahmadu Bamidele
Director of Programmes & Innovation



Elizabeth Abikoye
Director of Digital Media & Advocacy



Omoniyi Lawson
Managing Partner, CDDIR



Maureen London
Programmes & Innovation Manager



Ifeoluwa Adewole
Programmes & Innovation Manager



Daniel Oguntona
Programmes & Innovation Manager



Lucky Owoicho
Programmes & Innovation Manager



Iveren Ayede
Research, Learning & Evidence Officer



Ayomikun Dada
Visual Communications Designer



Iveren Saraphina Abiem
People & Culture Officer



Tolulope Ayantayo
Impact Development Officer



Anave Mary Abdulsalam
Communications, Digital Media & Advocacy Officer



Tomiwa Olanrewaju
Communications, Digital Media & Advocacy Officer



Juliana Olayide
Communications, Digital Media & Advocacy Associate



Praise Adebisi
Research Practise Lead, CDDIR



Prosper Omachonu
Lead Ai Engineer, CDDIR



Learning
without
barriers

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