

| *2023 Annual Report*

IMAGINE WORLDWIDE





Reflections

Rapelang Rabana
Co-CEO

Joe Wolf
Co-CEO and Co-Founder

Susan Colby
Co-Founder and Board Member

DEAR FRIENDS

Imagine Worldwide's goal is to solve the literacy and numeracy crisis for millions of children across Sub-Saharan Africa. We made huge strides in 2023 and we are proud to share with you the details of our impact, lessons learned, and aspirations in this annual report.

One highlight of the year comes from **Malawi**, the African nation that we have had the honor of working with for several years, and that has successfully launched a nationwide expansion of our tablet-based learning program. Malawi is transforming its primary education system and setting a path for other low-income countries to follow. Year 1 of the program is on time and on budget, serving 300,000 students, and the program will eventually serve **3.8 million** primary school stu-

dents per year at scale. Our work is resonating strongly with communities, governments, philanthropists, and global aid funders. They recognize that our model is massively scalable and uniquely designed to reach the most vulnerable children. We are on track to **serve over one million students per year by 2025**. All of our value drivers are headed in the right direction:

- *Accessibility:* Our solutions are getting easier and easier to implement in all environments as we develop and improve our scale systems
- *Affordability:* Cost/child (both upfront and recurring) continues to decline due to the deflationary nature of technology and economies of scale
- *Efficacy:* Each incremental study is showing better results — the continuous improvement cycle is working
- *Sustainability:* We believe that systemic change in education must be driven by governments to have lasting impact — we strive to ensure that our learning solutions are operationally, financially, and environmentally sustainable for long-term government ownership and impact

“I have always believed in the power of technology to deliver solutions to real challenges in Africa at scale, and in that way redistribute opportunity. I was compelled and delighted to join as Co-CEO because Imagine’s work is uniquely placed to have a generational impact.”

Rapelang Rabana, Co-CEO



We could not have achieved any of this without our remarkable team and the commitment of our exceptional Board of Directors. This past year was also momentous for us as we embarked on **co-leadership** of Imagine Worldwide. The Co-CEOs’ complementary skills and experiences have created a powerful partnership for advancing Imagine’s mission.

It is a profound privilege to do this work and we are deeply grateful for the support of our partners, funders, and the communities we serve. The journey has just begun and the potential for positive change is boundless.

Thank you!

Imagine Worldwide believes that every child deserves the basic right to literacy and numeracy



What We Do

The Global Learning Challenge

Talent is universal, opportunity is not

Hundreds of millions of children in Africa are illiterate and innumerate.

9 out of 10 children in Sub-Saharan Africa are unable to read and understand a simple text by the age of 10

[World Bank, The State of Global Learning Poverty: 2022 Update](#)

450 million children will be born in Africa in 2020s and 42% of global youth will be African by 2030

[UN Population Projections World Economic Forum](#)

Existing systems may be faced with:

- Large class sizes, often 100+ children per teacher
- Insufficient teacher training and instructional materials
- Lack of power and internet connectivity

99% of edtech products are unsuitable for the hundreds of millions of children that most need innovative solutions

The scope of the problem requires a radically innovative and scalable solution.



Our Solution

We envision a world where all children have access to literacy and numeracy

Imagine Worldwide and our partners provide children across Sub-Saharan Africa with access to foundational learning. Literacy and numeracy skills are the basis for a better life and the positive benefits to health, wealth, and social outcomes are multi-generational.

Our model is massively scalable, is designed to overcome systemic barriers, and serves children in the most difficult environments.

Where We Work

Imagine's current focus is on Sub-Saharan Africa as this continent has the most widespread and persistent deficits in foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

Burkina Faso

Senegal

Ghana

Sierra Leone

Liberia

Tanzania

Malawi



ACCESSIBLE

Learners use tablets that work in any setting (school, community, or home), do not require internet connectivity, and can be charged via solar power.



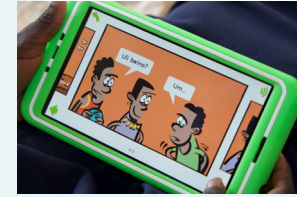
AFFORDABLE

Annual cost is \$7 per child and declining, including solar power, hardware, software, accessories, charging/security cages, and implementation management and support.



AUTONOMOUS

Tablet sessions supplement teacher-led instruction with children learning at their own pace.



EFFECTIVE

Adaptive software includes a full, culturally appropriate literacy/numeracy curriculum created by our software partner onebillion, backed by 9+ Randomized Controlled Trials.



CATALYZING

Projects provide community infrastructure, solar power, and training that will benefit future tech initiatives and provide (often the first source of) renewable energy.



OPTIMIZED

Each child engages 1:1 with a tablet for 30–60 minutes daily — each tablet is used by up to 5 students per day.

Our Role

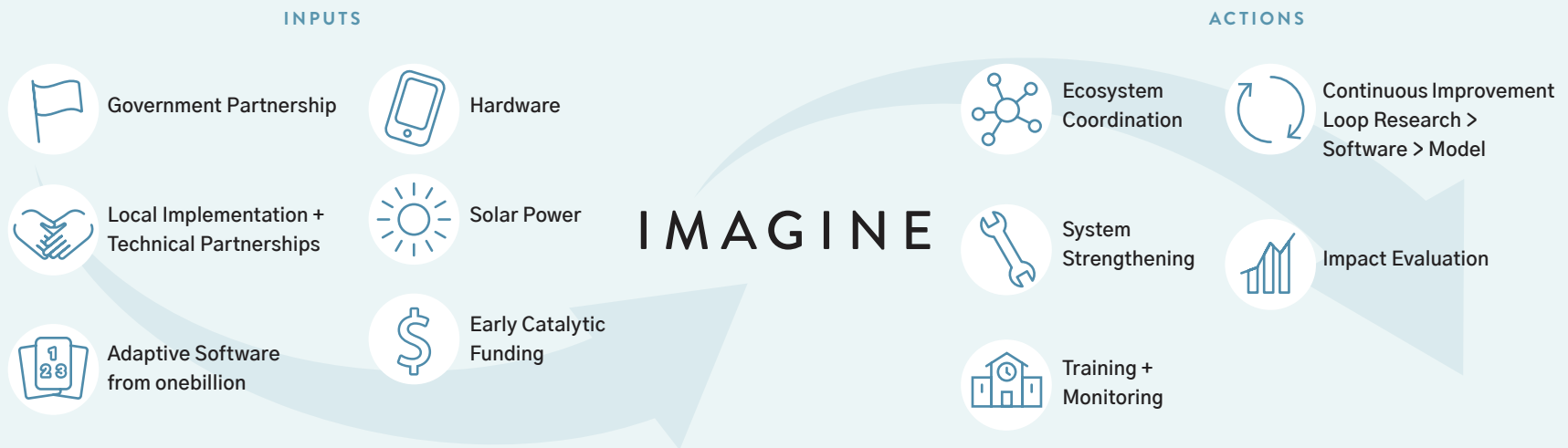
The commitment to accelerate foundational learning is strong in Sub-Saharan Africa — however, the necessary elements for scale are not well-coordinated nor leveraging the most effective tools and processes. This is the gap that Imagine Worldwide fills.

As we work towards broad system change, we are committed to being relevant to the context of the countries we serve, fostering meaningful connections between people, and collaboratively addressing issues of power so that stakeholders have full agency to determine their futures. We are an ‘ecosystem coordinator’ that pulls together the most critical elements to support governments that are ready to scale impactful edtech.

1. We implement proven, effective learning solutions and we conduct research and incorporate community feedback for a continuous improvement loop
2. We leverage local talent to train and support program implementations in schools
3. We source the most affordable and robust tablets and solar systems that will perform in challenging conditions
4. We partner with bold philanthropic funders to finance early stages of the program to close infrastructure and capacity gaps and reduce recurring costs, after which we exit

Imagine’s operating model is unique and comprehensive

Imagine brings together all of the necessary inputs to create a holistic solution that enables scale



“I like the tablet because when I make a mistake it does not move on to the next student, it tells me to try again and when I try, I get the answer.”

Student, Malawi



2023 KEY PROGRAMS

Big Leaps in Scale

Imagine Worldwide significantly expanded our work with our partners across seven Sub-Saharan African countries in 2023, serving nearly 50x the number of students from the previous year.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

- **Malawi** launching Year 1 of the nationwide expansion of the tablet program (called BEFIT), serving nearly 300,000 students, training nearly 4,000 educators, providing solar power to 500 schools — all on time and on budget
- Signing a formal Service Level Agreement with the Ministry of Education in **Sierra Leone** to serve 60,000 students across 300 schools between now and the end of 2026
- Conducting a co-creation workshop with the Ministry of Education in **Tanzania** to begin the planning to serve an initial 60,000 children in 200 schools beginning in 2025
- Significantly expanding the tablet program to 190 schools across **Liberia, Ghana, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Burkina Faso**, reaching a total of 23,770 students and training nearly 1,000 teachers
- Providing **solar power** to 565 schools across five countries and **80,000+ tablets** for countries throughout our portfolio
- Enhancing **monitoring and data management** tools including updates to our powerful digital dashboard that enables live reporting on key implementation metrics
- Launching **implementation research** to better understand the barriers to and enablers of successful implementation at scale
- Expanding our tablet learning programs in refugee settings in Malawi and pledging, along with our software partner onebillion, to increase our impact to reach **5,000 new refugee learners** by the end of 2024

2023 KEY PROGRAMS

Implementations by Country

Learn more about our work in each country [on our website](#).

SENEGAL

1,033 students served, 55 schools electrified with solar power

Partners: Counterpart International, onebillion, USDA McGovern Dole Food for Education

BURKINA FASO

3,049 students served, 16 schools electrified with solar power

Partners: Catholic Relief Services, onebillion, USDA McGovern Dole Food for Education Program

GHANA

3,260 students served

Partners: Afrikids, onebillion, Rising Academy Network

LIBERIA

4,592 students served, 22 schools electrified with solar power

Partners: onebillion, Rising Academy Network

TANZANIA

650 students served

Partners: Enuma, International Rescue Committee, onebillion

SIERRA LEONE

11,836 students served, 19 schools electrified with solar power

Partners: Ministry of Education, EducAid, Mayor of Freetown, onebillion, Rising Academy Network, West Africa Blue

MALAWI

300,000 students served, 503 schools electrified with solar power

Partners: Malawi Ministry of Education, CRECCOM, onebillion, OSSEDI, Rays of Hope, Ulalo, VSO, YONECO



“I have seen an improvement in attendance from 50% to over 90% and enrollment has increased 33% since the program began.”

Teacher, Liberia

Building Education Foundations through Innovation and Technology (BEFIT)



MALAWI

Year 1 of BEFIT launched in 2023 and is currently serving 300,000 students across 18 districts. The initial rollout included installing solar charging systems to over 500 schools, providing 76,000 tablets, and training nearly 4,000 teachers and education officers, as well as building community awareness and support of the program. Beyond enhancing foundational learning, this initiative has triggered a surge in school enrollment and attendance.

Malawi is poised to transform its primary education system, setting a path for other low-income countries to follow.

At full scale, BEFIT will serve 3.8 million children per year across all 6,000 public primary schools in Malawi. Several converging factors have made this extraordinary initiative possible. The bold commitment of the Malawian government to reduce learning poverty, supported by robust evidence from numerous RCTs, and the efficient coordination of the ecosystem by Imagine Worldwide LTD, our local NGO run by a team of Malawians, have been pivotal. The NGO is dedicated solely to the BEFIT rollout and works alongside the Ministry of Education's Program Implementation Management

Unit to strengthen local systems and ensure a smooth transition to sustainable government ownership. Additionally, the generous donation of learning software by **onebillion**, and \$20 million in catalytic funding from **JBJ Foundation**, **UBS Optimus**, **Founders Pledge**, **Rippleworks**, and others have been instrumental.

We are actively working with philanthropists and **the World Bank and the Global Partnership for Education (GPE)** to secure funding for the second year of BEFIT, serving an additional 500 schools and additional 300,000 students. The government of Malawi has allocated **\$16 million** of its GPE multiplier funds to BEFIT and philanthropic donations will be matched by GPE for this critical early stage of expansion.

SEE BEFIT IN ACTION

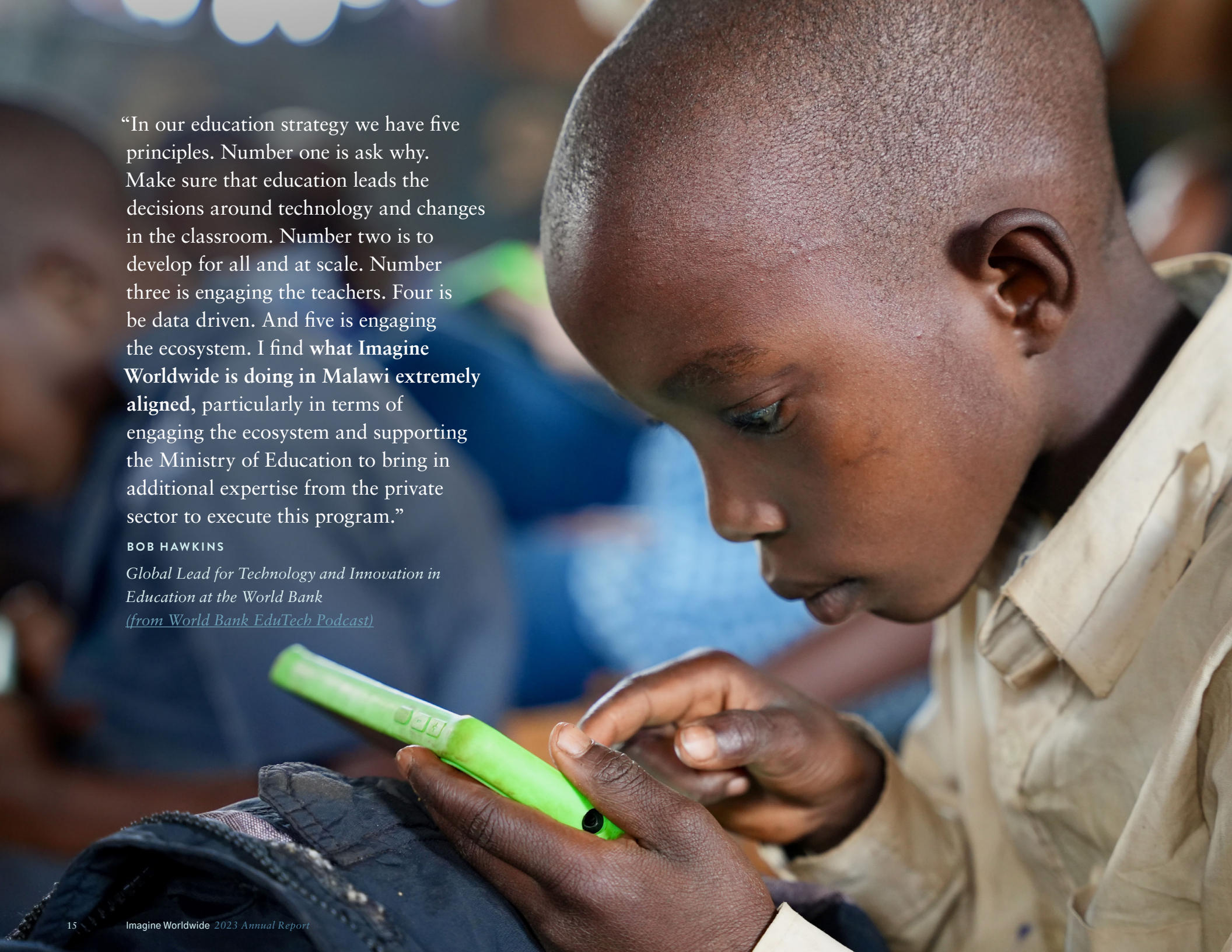


“We distributed about 68,000 tablets to 498 primary schools and trained 689 officers and 2,600 teachers through the BEFIT Programme, because our kids deserve to be given digital literacy.”

State of the Nation Address, SONA 2024

*His Excellency Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera
President of the Republic of Malawi*



A close-up photograph of a young boy with short-cropped hair, wearing a light-colored school uniform shirt. He is looking down intently at a bright green mobile phone held in his hands. The background is blurred, showing other people in a classroom or school setting.

“In our education strategy we have five principles. Number one is ask why. Make sure that education leads the decisions around technology and changes in the classroom. Number two is to develop for all and at scale. Number three is engaging the teachers. Four is be data driven. And five is engaging the ecosystem. I find what Imagine Worldwide is doing in Malawi extremely aligned, particularly in terms of engaging the ecosystem and supporting the Ministry of Education to bring in additional expertise from the private sector to execute this program.”

BOB HAWKINS

*Global Lead for Technology and Innovation in Education at the World Bank
(from World Bank EduTech Podcast)*

2023 KEY PROGRAMS

Research



Efficacy Research

Having concluded our initial efficacy research phase, in 2023 we synthesized findings from our five randomized controlled trials (RCTs) of software partner onebillion's software, extracting lessons for ongoing implementation and research. This rigorous research consistently demonstrated positive impacts on learning across different countries, languages, and settings. Further, learning gains increased with greater time-on-task and with each iteration of the software. Our longest RCT produced **effect sizes of 0.37 in literacy and 0.54 in math**, translating to 4.2 months and 3.6 months of additional learning, respectively, after 13 months of intervention. (Learn more in this [research summary](#).)

Community Share-Outs

As part of our ongoing commitment to engage directly with the communities we serve, Imagine's research partners and staff held a series of school and community visits in **Tanzania** in April 2023 and in **Malawi** in February and October 2023 to share research results, collect feedback, and express gratitude to the students, educators, families, and communities for their support of our research efforts.

Implementation Research

In preparation for the national rollout of BEFIT, Imagine and the University of Malawi launched an initial phase of implementation research during the first half of 2023. We are focusing on understanding the **barriers to and enablers of quality implementation at scale** and providing real-time feedback to implementation teams to address any issues that are uncovered. These qualitative data also inform modifications to training materials and implementation practices in each subsequent school year.

Continuation of Research on Non-Progress in Reading

Imagine's research team completed our initial study of non-progress in reading in 2022 and published the findings in the peer-reviewed journal, *Frontiers*, in February 2023 ([see the article](#)). We shared our findings about working memory as a key factor in predicting reading progress, along with recommended instructional strategies to support



working memory deficits, with onebillion, who incorporated improvements into the software version that will be rolled out to BEFIT Cohort 1 in Malawi in 2024.

During 2023, we also began a follow-up study to develop a suite of **digital assessments** — in collaboration with RTI International — that test known predictors of early literacy. We will pilot these assessments with several hundred children in 2024 and the results will be used to: (1) inform future research on factors influencing non-progress in reading in Malawi and other countries; (2) determine the feasibility and utility of a suite of assessments to identify children who are at risk for non-progress in reading and; (3) contribute to continuous improvement of onebillion’s software during the BEFIT program.

Open-Source e-Assessments

Imagine collaborated with RTI International to develop **digital EGRA/EGMA assessments** in English and Chichewa that enable cost-effective monitoring and evaluation of learning outcomes at scale. The e-assessments are being used by Imagine to track learning gains as the tablet program expands in Malawi and other countries and the e-assessments have been offered for **free to the field**. Future languages are being considered.



SUCCESS STORY

Salama Africa: Bridging the Gap for Out-of-School Children in Dzaleka Refugee Camp

(adapted from Imagine's ["Stories from the Field"](#))

Dzaleka is a loud and chaotic place. Originally designed to accommodate just 5,000 refugees, the camp now hosts more than 55,000 people, mostly from the DRC, South Sudan, and Burundi. Located next to the camp's bustling market, the Salama Africa youth center is remarkably peaceful.

With each child absorbed in their digital lessons, the center becomes a haven of quiet determination, offering respite, empowerment, and a glimmer of hope amidst the challenging reality of displacement.

"Half of our community's kids should be in school but lack a spot — that is totally unacceptable. With the tablets, these kids can keep up with an education while they wait for a seat in school," explained Toussaint Farini, the Director of Salama Africa, a youth organization that provides creative learning opportunities to out-of-school children in Malawi's Dzaleka Refugee Camp.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION

In Dzaleka, over half of the 25,000 school-aged children in the camp are unable to obtain an education. Despite the concerted efforts of UNHCR and partner NGOs to increase educational opportunities, funding constraints perpetuate extensive waitlists for schools. In 2023, Imagine Worldwide partnered with Salama Africa to equip the youth center with 200 tablets outfitted with award-winning literacy and numeracy software from onebillion.

While the program's 1,000 learners vary in age, language, and previous education levels, the software's adaptive features ensure that every child learns at their own level in their preferred language (Swahili, English, French, or Chichewa), fostering personalized and inclusive education. The tablets provide a valuable foundational education resource, allowing the children to engage in interactive learning experiences and gain essential skills, even in the absence of a formal school setting. [\(Read more\)](#)



“The tablet program has been a game-changer, opening up a world of possibilities in my daughter’s education.”

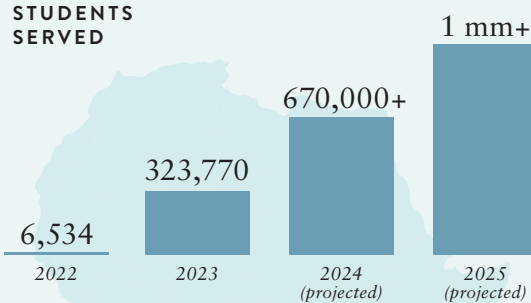
Parent, Dzaleka Refugee Camp, Malawi

Our Impact

Imagine focuses its work around four pillars of scale: Accessibility, Affordability, Efficacy, and Sustainability. In 2023 we saw significant and positive trends in all four areas:

Accessibility

STUDENTS SERVED



565 schools received solar power in 2023

80,000+ tablets delivered in 2023

Sustainability

Operational: Our ‘system-strengthening’ approach helps governments build the capacity and expertise to operate the program independently for the long-term

Financial: Our cost/child continues to decline and governments commit to fund recurring program costs (estimated at \$5/child/year)

Environmental: We are creating a circular economy around our programs, which includes a technician repair network and partnerships for e-waste management and environmental sustainability

Affordability

Less than \$7 per child/per year

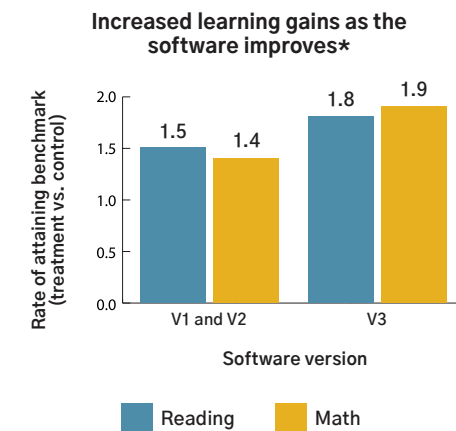
Costs have decreased by 75% in the past 5 years and continue to decline due to economies of scale and the deflationary nature of technology

Efficacy

LEARNING OUTCOMES

A synthesis of our RCTs of onebillion’s software conducted between 2018 and 2022 showed:

- Consistent positive impacts on literacy and numeracy (see [Summary Report](#) for effect sizes)
- Similarly positive impacts for girls and boys — **gender parity**
- Larger learning impacts with greater time-on-task and with each iteration of the software



*The graph shows the rate of advancement to emergent or fluent status in literacy and numeracy between baseline and endline assessments for the treatment groups compared with the control groups in three Imagine RCTs using onebillion’s software in government primary schools in Malawi and Tanzania. For example, using software v1, 50% more treatment group participants than control group participants attained emergent or fluent reading status by the end of the study. Emergent or fluent status is based on country-specific benchmarks for oral reading fluency (literacy) and pattern completion (math) in the early grades.

What We Learned

Ecosystems need a dedicated coordinator. Imagine is playing a critical and missing role in country-wide rollouts. We are the **ecosystem coordinator** and solely focused on strengthening local systems (local NGOs, service providers, and the government), developing critical initial infrastructure, building technical capacity, and generating the evidence necessary to successfully scale our learning solution. We are proving the value of this role in Malawi, where Year 1 of the BEFIT program was delivered on time and on budget.

Philanthropy is critical to bridge the gap between innovation and scale. Imagine mobilizes early catalytic philanthropy to build the initial infrastructure, capacity, and evidence necessary to **leverage larger capital sources** like development aid funding, which in turn bridges to government-sustained scale. We've learned that 'Big Aid' is looking for evidence-based and affordable learning programs that can scale. The model for leveraging early philanthropy to attract World bank/GPE funding in Malawi is now gaining traction in Sierra Leone and Tanzania.

Building "Innovation Readiness" is a game-changer. While improving literacy and numeracy are our primary goals, we've learned that our stakeholders are also highly motivated by how our work impacts their ability to adopt future innovations. As we electrify schools, provide ICT training throughout the education system, and stimulate a robust local ecosystem of support services, we are catalyzing communities' readi-



ness for **nextgen edtech tools** as well as bridging a crucial gap between **community awareness and adoption of renewable energy**.

We're increasingly becoming a supply chain, logistics, and data aggregation organization. It has become clear that to manage our programs at scale we will require a robust **site and device management platform**. We've started developing an "Open Learning Architecture" to provide: operational management and visibility for thousands of schools, hundreds of thousands of pieces of equipment, and millions of learners to enable data collection and individual learner identification even in contexts with intermittent internet and power. This will be a game-changer for a system that suffers from data paucity on key metrics — enrollment, attendance, and learning progress.

FINANCIALS & OPERATIONS

A huge growth year

OUR FINANCIALS

We are thrilled to have ended 2023 by raising our highest levels of funding ever — a nearly 3x increase from 2022.

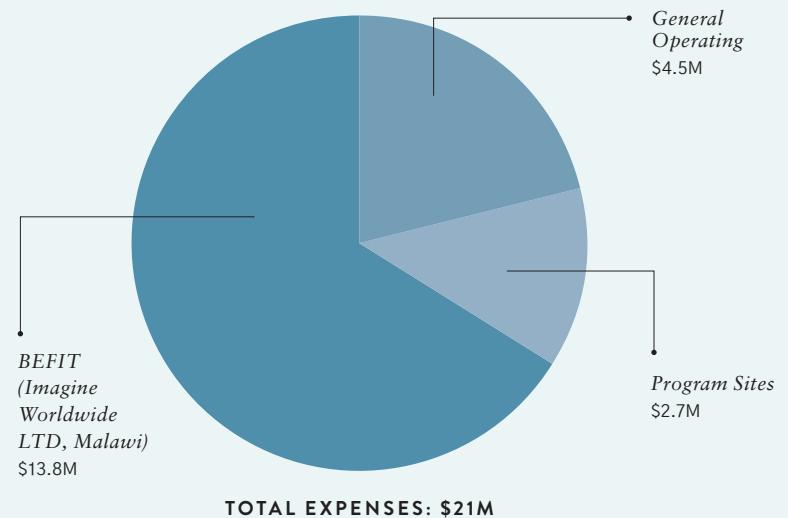
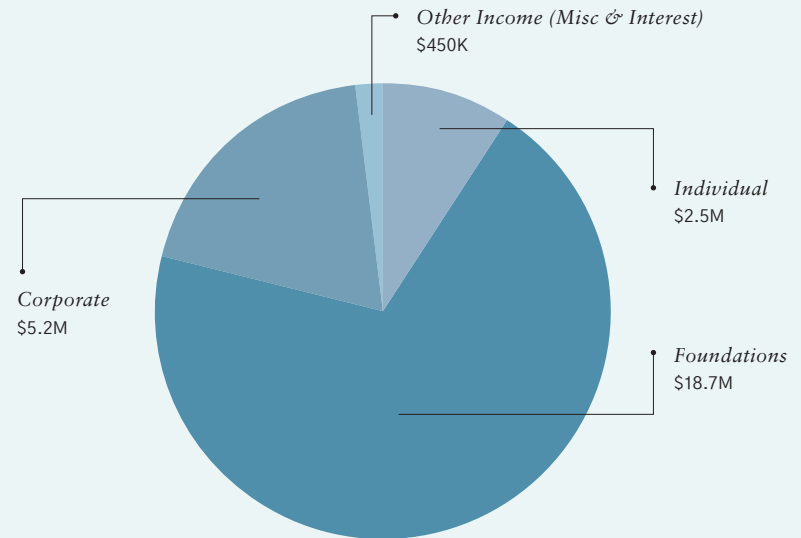
OUR TEAM

As the Imagine team grows we continue to shift the organizational leadership to Africa. In addition to welcoming South Africa-based Rapelang Rabana as our new Co-CEO, we brought on a new Program Director for Sierra Leone, Director of Supply Chain, and a Director of Refugee Programs. Our Malawi-based NGO, Imagine Worldwide LTD, has staffed up to eight full-time employees working to implement BEFIT and has established a five-member board of directors. [\(Learn more about our team on our website\)](#)

60%
of staff is African

70%
of staff are people of color

Imagine Worldwide’s board of directors is also majority African.



With Gratitude

We are profoundly grateful to the children, families, educators, communities, partners, and governments who make our mission possible. Thank you to our growing network of funders for their generous support.



Anonymous
Bert Family
Taryn & Dan Braun Fund
David and Rachel Carlson
James Casbel
Serena Dugan
Scott Ellis
Laura & John Fisher
Robin & Andrew Friedman
Kevin Gibbs & Paige Rockwell

Leesa Gidaro
Cathy Greenwold
David Hersh
Paul Hodge
Michael Horn
Miles Lasater
The Learning Accelerator
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Kent & Emily McGaughy

Amy & Drew McKnight
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Satoko Furuta Design
Marcy Glazer
Jonas Nelle
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Charles & Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation

Herta Silva
Craig & Dorothy Stapleton
Bart Stephens
Tahoe Blue Foundation
Modi & Kate Wiczyk
Wilbur Family
Ted Williams
Wolf Charitable Fund
Marilyn Wycoff

With Gratitude

A special thanks to the local partners who bring their expertise and enthusiasm to implementing the tablet program across our portfolio of countries. Thank you!





Credits

Contact

For any questions or to get in touch, please contact us via email at info@imagineworldwide.org

Photo credits

Thank you to C. Lopez, Jjumba Martin, EducAid, onebillion, Salama Africa, Sun King, and YONECO

Additional information

For more information about our work, head to our website at www.imagineworldwide.org

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