



2018 Annual Report

Background

Imagine exists to demonstrate that children with personalized technology in their hands can become literate and numerate with little or no adult instruction. More than 264 million children and youth worldwide do not have access to school. And hundreds of millions more children go to school but never learn to read or do math. According to a report by the World Bank, 89% of second graders in Malawi and Zambia cannot read a single word¹. We can work with schools and communities to address these seemingly intractable problems.

Child-directed, technology-enabled learning holds great potential to support children's access to education in contexts where education is otherwise limited or non-existent. Without having to construct schools or train teachers, learners can have access to engaging, research-based software that delivers a comprehensive foundational literacy and numeracy curriculum on a touch-enabled device. Our current implementation model requires little to no adult instruction, operates with only solar power and mobile servers, and is competitive, at scale, with current educational expenditures. Early evidence regarding the efficacy of this model is promising; however, we believe that there is much more to learn about implementation and outcomes before this intervention can be scaled.

We are partnering with organizations across the globe to pilot promising learning solutions with children who are in-school, out-of-school, and living in refugee settlements. We will build an evidence base for what works, why, and under what conditions. We will use data to drive continuous improvement of content, approach, and implementation. Then we will provide tools, expertise, capital, and a network to enhance the possibilities for scale. We envision a world where all children have access to opportunity. This work, beginning in places with no alternatives, can pave the way for limitless possibilities for all children.



¹ World Development Report 2018: Learning to Realize Education's Promise. Washington, DC: World Bank.

2018 Program Review

After months of preparation, we are thrilled to have begun a critical phase of our work: building the evidence base for child-directed, technology-enabled learning. In partnership with expert organizations, we successfully launched our first site in Malawi where we are conducting a multi-phase, multi-year, randomized control trial with almost 800 children in two schools. We are grateful to be collaborating with three organizations that share our values and bring significant experience and expertise to the work. A UK and Nairobi-based nonprofit with years of experience working in Africa and Malawi, onebillion developed the *onecourse* software and hardware solution that is at the heart of the pilot. Together with onebillion, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) Malawi developed the Unlocking Talent program model that we are using in the pilot and is our critical implementation partner on the ground. Finally, our research partners at the University of Malawi, Chancellor College collaborate with us on the evaluation and lead the assessment and monitoring work.

While we are tremendously excited about our visible work on the ground, it is one element of our larger operational strategy. In this report, we describe our overarching strategy, goals, objectives, and progress during 2018 as well as our exciting plans for 2019.

2018 Goals and Objectives

As an organization, we established the following ambitious, yet achievable, goals and objectives for 2018:

Goals	Objectives
1) Build an evidence base for child-directed, technology-enabled learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and launch our multi-year, in-school pilot in Malawi • Design and prepare to launch our pilots in Dzaleka refugee camp in 2019
2) Expand our network and our understanding of the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish critical partnerships to launch our first pilots in Malawi • Conduct due diligence on new geographies and potential partners for future pilots
3) Set the stage for scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct early research on the priorities, challenges, and funding patterns of large-scale implementation organizations such as Ministries of Education, aid organizations, and global NGOs.
4) Operate and grow a sustainable organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assemble and convene a world-class group of experts for our Research Advisory Group • Build a robust Board of Directors to govern, advise and support the organization • Secure a total of \$5 million in philanthropic funds to support our early activities • Develop and manage a sustainable budget and team for our first year of fiscal independence

2018 Progress Reporting

In the following section, we will report on the progress of each goal and set of objectives:

Goal 1: Build an evidence base for child-directed, technology-enabled learning

Objective: Design and launch our multi-year, in-school pilot in Malawi

In close collaboration with our expert software, research, and implementation partners, we officially launched our multi-year pilot study in two schools in Malawi. In order to accomplish this, we developed a detailed research design and implementation plan with our partners. We identified two eligible schools -- one urban and one peri-urban -- and received approval from the local District Education Manager to conduct the study. We submitted and received approval for our study from the Institutional Review Board (IRB). We proceeded to construct two learning centers -- one at each school site -- and hire a local Project Manager in Malawi to oversee all aspects of the work.

Once the construction was complete and all related materials had been procured, we conducted EGRA (Early Grade Reading Assessment) and EGMA (Early Grade Math Assessment) with almost 800 learners in the two pilot schools in order to establish the baseline level of student performance. With this information, we established treatment and control groups for the randomized control trial. In collaboration with our implementation partners, we introduced the program to the local communities and garnered their full support while also training local teachers in the two schools to supervise and implement the program. In October 2018, we registered students and launched the program providing daily use of the tablet curriculum in the two schools that will participate in the research.

This first pilot will evaluate whether Standard 2 (2nd grade) children attain reading fluency with comprehension and comparable numeracy skills in their native language, Chichewa, with 40 minutes of daily use of the tablet-based onecourse curriculum for 1-2 school years. The learners have been assigned to one of three groups: reading curriculum, math curriculum, or control group (the latter continuing with normal instruction). With 60 iPads per pilot school and four scheduled sessions per day, all learners in the treatment groups will be able to use the tablets daily. The first phase of the intervention is from Oct 2018 - July 2019. Phase 2 will continue from October 2019 - July 2020.

To date, there have been a number of lessons learned, mainly related to the challenges of implementing a rigorous research study and attaining attendance goals in these schools and communities. Following the launch, our team engaged in a robust reflection and documentation process, which we will use to inform the planning process for upcoming and future pilots. In the refugee settlement, where there is less mobility, we expect these issues to be more manageable.

Objective: Design and prepare to launch our pilot in Dzaleka refugee camp in 2019

Leveraging the success of the in-school model, we are eager to explore supporting children in even more challenging learning conditions within Dzaleka refugee camp (Malawi). We have identified two high-quality implementation partners in the camp; the first is an informal school run by Integrity Church, which serves almost 800 children who do not have access to a formal school. The second partner is TakenoLab, which offers out-of-school computer and coding classes to children and youth in the community.

We plan to run two short-term implementation studies in Dzaleka in order to examine a few key research questions related to the learning and progress outcomes for children using the software in English as well as the transferability of the implementation model to less formal educational settings. We will expand this work after the implementation studies

At present, we have developed a detailed budget and implementation plan in collaboration with our partners at VSO Malawi. We are in the process of procuring all materials for the study as well as finalizing the plans with a contractor who will begin the installation of the solar panels and other modest equipment (we are using pre-existing structures, a church and a refugee-run coding school) for the project in Dzaleka in February 2019. We plan to conduct an initial implementation study during Q2 2019 that will inform our plans for a longer research study in the fall.

Goal 2: Expand our network and our understanding of the field

Objective: Establish critical partnerships to launch our first pilot in Malawi

As mentioned above, we are grateful to be working with three critical partners, all of whom have experience working in Africa and Malawi. By bringing together the skills, expertise and experiences of onebillion, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) Malawi, and the University of Malawi, we are creating a powerful collaboration that we believe will produce tremendous learning for the field. These partnerships have allowed us to get the work going quickly and effectively and have lowered the costs of our operations.

Objective: Conduct due diligence on new geographies and potential partners for future pilots

As we continue to develop our plans for future pilots, we have begun researching new geographies in order to understand more about the potential application of this intervention in new contexts. For example, we would like to understand more about existing government reforms, language of instruction, and location of out-of-school children among many other things. Through referrals from our network and general research, we have also identified some potential implementation partners and begun the process of learning more about the potential for collaboration for future pilots.

Goal 3: Set the stage for scale

Objective: Conduct early research on the priorities, challenges, and funding patterns of large-scale implementation organizations

In order to prepare ourselves for Phase 2 of our work, during which we will focus on taking successful implementation models to scale, we began our informal research of priorities, challenges and funding patterns of large-scale implementation organizations. During 2018, we focused on learning about West Africa, where we plan to conduct a future pilot or series of pilots as part of our research portfolio.

Our first step was to conduct interviews with leading operators, funders, aid organizations, and government officials. We learned about spending priorities and trends, current unit costs, criteria for large-scale spending, and other key information that will inform how we plan and structure our pilot studies. We will continue this work to ensure that we are properly prepared to structure our implementation model in ways that will lead to potential for scale given existing priorities, constraints and funding patterns.

Goal 4: Operate and grow a sustainable organization

Objective: Assemble a group of leading experts for our Research Advisory Group

In 2018, we formed a world-class Research Advisory Group, who serve as thought partners and provide critical review of – and and constructive guidance on – our research. Our Senior Director of Measurement and Evaluation, Dr. Karen Levesque, convenes the group.

- **Helen Abadzi**, Senior Education Specialist (retired), World Bank; Researcher, University of Texas, Arlington
- **Bidemi Caroll**, Senior Education Research Analyst, RTI International
- **John Pane**, Senior Scientist and former Distinguished Chair in Education Innovation, RAND
- **Dave Paunesku**, Executive Director, Project for Education Research that Scales (PERTS), Stanford University
- **Nicola Pitchford**, Professor, School of Psychology, University of Nottingham, UK
- **Mark Wilson**, Professor, Graduate School of Education, University of California, Berkeley

See Research Advisory Group bios [here](#).

Objective: Build a world-class Board of Directors

We are grateful to have assembled an impressive Board of Directors with an incredibly diverse set of experiences to support Imagine in its groundbreaking work.

- **Chinezi Chijioke**, CEO and Co-founder, Nova Pioneer Education Group
- **Susan Colby**, CEO and Co-founder, Imagine
- **Aishetu Dozie**, Former General Manager and Division Head, Investment Banking West Africa, Rand Merchant Bank Nigeria Limited
- **Michael Horn**, Chief Strategy Officer, Entangled Group; Senior Partner, Entangled Solutions
- **Amy Klement**, Partner, Omidyar Network
- **Rapelang Rabana**, Founder, Rekindle Learning
- **Rebecca Winthrop**, Senior Fellow and Director of the Center for Universal Education, Brookings Institution
- **Joe Wolf**, Chairman and Co-founder, Imagine

The Board of Directors' bios can be found [here](#).

Objective: Secure total of \$5 million in philanthropic funds to support our early pilot activities

We are thrilled to have received substantial, general operating support from leading foundations and philanthropists who believe in this innovative work. We received commitments of \$1M from four different organizations and individuals in addition to a number of other generous, start-up grants and gifts. We have met and are on track to meet all of the deliverables associated with our grant agreements as indicated in the table below.

Organizational Milestone	Status
Establish core partnerships for the first 2 pilots in Malawi	Completed
Finalize research design and implementation plans for the 1st pilot	Completed
Hire/contract with at least two local African staff members	Completed
Develop and convene an independent research advisory council	Completed
Develop learning outcomes and targets for the 1st pilot	Completed
Launch long-term, high-dosage pilot in Malawi	Completed
Define plans for Unlocking Talent network and data hub	In progress
Collect and analyze baseline usage and progress data from 1st pilot	Completed
Launch pilots in Dzaleka refugee camp	Final planning
Collect and analyze Year 1 data from UT long-term pilot	Q3 2019

Objective: Develop and manage a sustainable budget and team

	2018 BUDGET	2018 ACTUALS	2019 BUDGET
STAFF SALARIES AND BENEFITS	\$ 1,194,393	\$ 880,681	\$ 1,577,000
Leadership and Network	483,125	317,613	562,000
Pilots and Partnerships	412,267	377,411	480,000
M&E	299,001	185,656	535,000
CONSULTANTS AND PROFESSIONAL FEES	\$ 80,000	\$ 40,247	\$ 135,000
Legal	30,000	6,186	45,000
Consultants	50,000	34,061	75,000
Research Advisory Group	-	-	15,000
INVESTMENTS	\$ 100,000	\$ 32,831	\$ 250,000
Tech enhancement	100,000	32,831	250,000
OPERATIONS	\$ 314,800	\$ 149,439	\$ 389,000
Accounting and HR	31,800	27,622	35,000
Facilities, office expenses and computers	70,000	36,041	80,000
Website, branding and dissemination	75,000	3,858	75,000
Travel	90,000	78,447	135,000
Insurance	3,000	2,158	10,000
Statistical software and licenses	10,000	1,313	14,000
Staff development (training, conferences, etc.)	35,000	-	40,000
PILOTS	\$ 350,648	\$ 269,415	\$ 435,000
UT Malawi	266,652	269,415	170,000
Integrity	83,996	-	60,000
Pilot Development		-	-
Techno Lab		-	-
West Africa		-	205,000
CONTINGENCY (5%)	\$ 101,992	\$ -	\$ 139,300
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 2,141,833	\$ 1,372,614	\$ 2,925,300

The following are some highlights with regards to our 2018 financials and team.

- We have hired an extraordinary core team that includes strong leadership for our research agenda, as well as our strategic partnerships. The team is functioning at an extremely high level.
- We are ahead of plan on all deliverables.
- We were under budget by approximately 35% mainly due to the careful, but slower, growth of our team, which resulted in lower personnel and operational spending. We also did not need to make a significant tech enhancement investment last year (we made a small investment in onebillion to extend/improve their curriculum).
- We accomplished our most critical organizational goals related to launching our first pilot, while spending approximately 85% of the projected budget in that area. We can attribute the accurate cost projections and cost efficiency to our experienced partners.
- Our reserve funds from 2018 will provide a fiscal buffer for 2019, thereby allowing us to focus the majority of our energy on important work, such as launching two new pilots and seeking out new partnerships to prepare for scale.

Operating Plan for 2019

Based on our success in 2018, we have defined a set of ambitious objectives for 2019 in alignment with our organizational goals and consistent with our grant agreements:

Goals	Objectives
1) Build an evidence base for child-directed, technology-enabled learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor progress of our multi-year, in-school pilot in Malawi • Launch our pilots in Dzaleka refugee camp • Design and prepare to launch additional pilots in another country • Continue to develop and refine plans for our portfolio of pilots and learn from prior experience
2) Expand our network and understanding of the field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore potential new partnerships to support the work • Develop a deeper understanding of the technology landscape
3) Set the stage for scale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue research on the conditions for large-scale implementation • Codify learning from early pilot studies for later replication efforts
4) Operate and grow a sustainable organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand our team to strengthen our ability to execute the work • Continue to deliver on a sustainable budget and ensure healthy cash flow in accordance with our budget

Goal 1: Continue to build an evidence base for child-directed, technology-enabled learning

Objectives	Metrics of Success
Monitor progress of initial pilot (in Malawi)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct assessment during Q3 2019 • Evaluate Y1 results during Q3/Q4 2019 • Launch Y2 of pilot during Q4 2019
Launch sites in Dzaleka refugee camp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Launch Integrity Church study during Q2 2019 • Launch implementation pilot at TakenoLab during Q2 2019 • Launch follow-on studies in Q4 2019
Design and launch additional site	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and launch in another country by EOY 2019 or early 2020
Develop and refine plans for our portfolio of sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify 1-2 critical gaps in our research portfolio to be addressed during 2020 pilots

Goal 2: Expand our network and understanding of the field

Objectives	Metrics of Success
Explore potential new partnerships that expand our potential for impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop 2-3 relationships with relevant organizations (i.e. Central Square Foundation, IRC, etc.) to explore possible collaboration on evidence-building efforts that could lead to great scale opportunities
Develop our understanding of the technology landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct an updated landscape study of foundational literacy and numeracy products • Conduct deeper due diligence on at least one potential software partner

Goal 3: Set the stage for scale

Objectives	Metrics of Success
Continue research on the conditions for large-scale implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop/deepen 2-3 relationships with key stakeholders in governments or aid agencies to strengthen our understanding of conditions for scale • Refine our unit economics model and continue to push costs down to maximize potential in very low per pupil expenditure contexts
Codify learning from early pilot studies for later replication efforts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a toolkit that documents learning from our initial pilot study in Malawi



Goal 4: Operate and grow a sustainable organization

Objectives	Metrics of Success
Expand our team and capabilities to strengthen our ability to execute the work	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hire a staff member (based in Africa) to oversee and develop our projects on the Continent• Engage support to ensure that we have access to world-class marketing and communications capabilities• Hire a technology leader, or gain access to technology expertise, to help us better understand tech products, help us improve them, and ensure that we are prepared for scale
Continue to deliver on a sustainable budget and ensure healthy cash flow	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Manage expenditures in accordance with our board-approved budget• Cultivate new potential funders to ensure healthy cash flow in 2020 and beyond

Conclusion

We are proud of what we have accomplished in the very early stages of our organization, and we continue to be even more convinced about the power of child-directed, technology-enabled learning for children all over the world. We are deeply appreciative of your support to empower every child, everywhere to build the literacy and numeracy skills they need to achieve their full potential.

