Africa Growth Pilot phase II:

The "Big Funnel" approach to outreach

Self-paced core content policies course

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What is this?

- This is an <u>experiment</u>.

- It aims to try **a new approach to recruiting editors**, not to evolve and refine existing outreach practice.

- We believe it can transform **editor retention** in sub-Saharan Africa (and potentially elsewhere).

- We are **testing** this hypothesis (through 2025)

- If successful, we look forward to seeing it **adopted** by other communities and **translated** (and **adapted**) into other languages.

- We welcome your feedback.

Africa Growth Project

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What we know

Africa has the youngest[1] population demographic in the world, whose access to the internet is increasing at a fast pace[3]. It is estimated that by 2030, Africa's online penetration rate will be similar to global trends[3].

Despite interest and past investments by the Foundation, it is worrisome that the share of pageviews, unique editors and active editors in the region has hovered around less than 2%[5] of global totals.
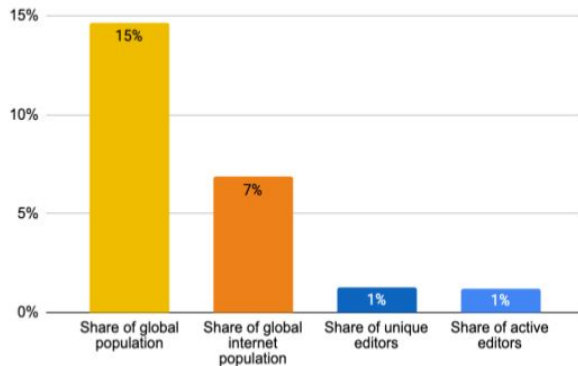
Regional baselines

15K Total unique editors

1% of global total

2K Unique *Active Editors**

1% of global total

Editor Shares vs. Potential Equity Targets

Pageview Share in the SSA region

Regional baselines:

<1% of global total annual CY2021 pageviews across all projects (**56 million**)

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We also know

Too much programmatic outreach work in the region is ineffectively carried out by volunteers who have insufficient familiarity with:

The **platform**
- Language Markup
- Visual editor
- Translation tool

The **policies**
- Copyright / free licenses
- Neutral Point of View
- Verifiability
- Notability

The **culture**
- Core values
- Discussion as collaboration
- Warnings and sanctions

Which leads to frustrated organizers and newbies alike and to **low retention** rates.

"While Let's Connect participants gave positive feedback on learning sessions, some felt **more basic training (for instance on-wiki skills)** and further learning materials would be useful." -- Let's Connect Learning Report

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The Goal

"5000 Active editors in SSA by 2030, through a structured series of training and support."

Current active editor base size in SSA: ~2000.

What we observe [1/2]

The **lack of high-quality and up-to-date audiovisual training materials** on English Wikipedia core policies and core organizing skills is especially **limiting self-paced learning** in SSA.

- Platform knowledge (tech, wiki norms) **plateaus early** among many SSA contributors; number of wiki-veteran leaders in SSA extremely small. **Zero** English Wikipedia admins on the continent as far as we know.

- Status quo is that **materials** are any of:

  - Nonexistent
  - Out of date
  - Poor quality / actively misleading
  - Overwhelming / pedagogically poor (e.g. no exercises, comprehension questions)
  - Unintegrated -- single disconnected modules not offering a complete course

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What we observe [2/2]

Historically:

- Our eagerness to see more programmatic work in SSA has resulted in funding of projects with **moderate to low** effectiveness, sometimes even repeatedly.

- We have been **investing in those who showed up**, sometimes without **intrinsic** motivation. We suggest we should have instead been:

  - seeking out <u>self-motivated</u> contributors and **investing** further resources **only in them**.

  - **Verifying** organizers **possess the skills to <u>effectively</u> deliver** their programs (edit counts and time-since-first-edit are <u>insufficient</u> indicators)

- If proven effective, our proposed approach would **increase the pool of skilled contributors** and potential **leaders and organizers**, thereby **increasing programmatic funding opportunities**.

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Introducing...

The

Big Funnel

approach

The Big Funnel approach

A "big funnel(s)" program(s) -- significant investment in creating a well-resourced induction funnel for editors from SSA, with efficient selection mechanisms focusing effort only on promising volunteers in each successive step/stage of the funnel. Once set up, drive a large number of potential volunteers to the low-investment entry point for the funnel via PR/awareness campaigns.

Input

The funnel welcomes *everyone*.

Experience shows that people with a culture of reading & writing and with at least some interest in digital spaces or a passion for a field of knowledge are likeliest to retain an interest in editing Wikipedia.

The funnel aims to also drive people to other modes of contribution if they choose.

Stage 1:

Public invitations and Wiki Campaigns

Zero-cost after one-off investment

Stage 2:

General Structured online learning

Unsupervised

Full, high quality training courses rich in A/V.

- General Introduction
- Core curricula: WP, Commons, Wikidata, Wikisource

Stage 3:

Advanced Structured online learning

Supervised + Human mentorship

Resourcing for in-person training and convenings

- Intermediate curriculum
- Advanced curriculum
- Option to be connected to local wikimedians

Stage 4:

Leadership online learning tracks

Supervised + Human + Network mentorship

Each track has modules cultivating one type of leadership

- On-wiki adminship
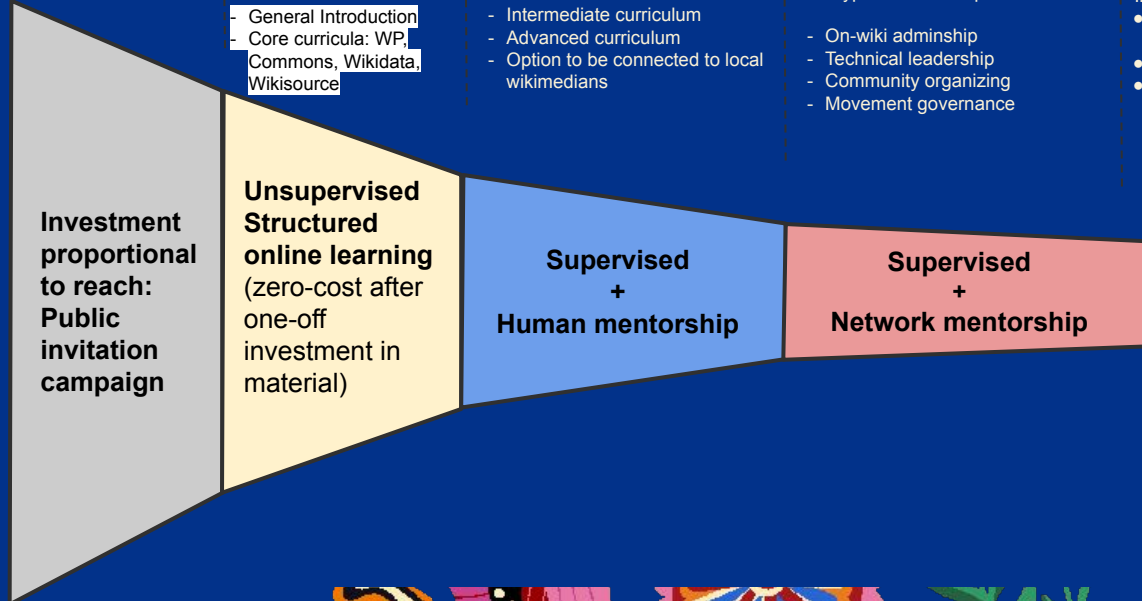- Technical leadership
- Community organizing
- Movement governance

Output

Main goal:

5000 Active editors

Additional goals:
Increased likelihood of:
- Deep and versatile skill base in SSA
- Leaders from SSA
- Increased retention rate per cohort

Investment proportional to reach: Public invitation campaign

Unsupervised Structured online learning (zero-cost after one-off investment in material)

Supervised + Human mentorship

Supervised + Network mentorship

The Big Funnel approach

Stage 1:

Public invitations and Wiki campaigns

Investment proportional to reach

The Big Funnel approach

Stage 2:

General Structured online learning (using **WikiLearn**)
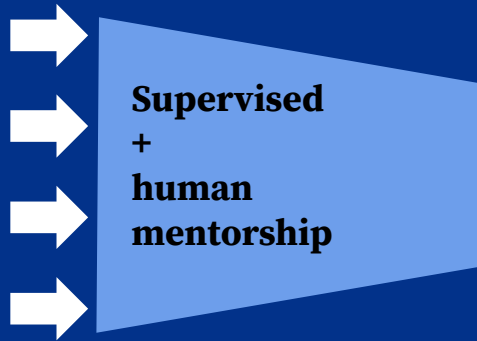
Unsupervised, self-paced learning
Zero-cost after one-off investment

Full, high quality training courses rich in Audio/Video.

General Introduction; Diversity of ways to contribute;
Core curricula: Wikipedia, Commons, Wikidata,
Wikisource

**Unsupervised
Structured
online
learning**
(zero-cost
after one-off
investment in
material)

The Big Funnel approach

Stage 3:

Supervised + human mentorship

- Advanced structured online learning

- Supervised + **Human mentorship**

- Resourcing ($$$) for **in-person training** and convenings; data costs; merchandise giveaways

- Intermediate curriculum (watchlists, templates, categories, tools, patrolling, WikiProjects)

- Advanced curriculum (modules, dispute resolution, API, automation)

- Optionally, connection to local wikimedians

The Big Funnel approach
Stage 4:

Supervised + human + network mentorship

- **Leadership** online learning tracks
- Supervised + Human + **Network** mentorship
- Each track has modules cultivating one type of leadership:
  - On-wiki **adminship**
  - **Technical** leadership
  - Community **organizing**
  - Movement **governance**
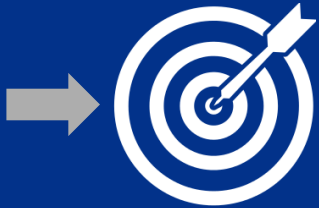
The Big Funnel approach

Our destination:

Main goal:

- **5000 active editors in sub-Saharan Africa**

Additional goals – Increased likelihood of:

- Deep and **versatile skill base** in SSA

- **Leaders** and **admins** from SSA

- Increased **retention rate** per cohort

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Pilot phase 1 curriculum

Phase 1 consisted of **two introductory modules for everyone**, and then **two modules on core policies of Wikipedia**, <u>for those who express interest in contributing to Wikipedia</u>. (It was expected that following module 2, some would self-select themselves out of Wikipedia training and pursue contribution on Commons, Wikisource, etc.)

The modules were:

1. **Preparing to participate in Wikimedia projects** (<u>outline</u>)

2. **101 Ways to Contribute to Wikimedia** (<u>outline</u>)

3. **The Voice of Wikipedia: Neutral Point of View** (<u>outline</u>)

4. **Sourcing knowledge: Verifiability on Wikipedia** (<u>outline</u>)

Phase 1 of the pilot

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Pilot phase 1 results

To establish the relevance and expected efficacy of **high-quality audio-visual tutorials** we piloted four modules with a cohort of interested **existing** SSA volunteer contributors.

- **150** enrolled; **78** attended all five live lessons (~10 hours total)

- 6 months after the trainings' end, graduates were **~38% less likely** to have their edits **reverted**, i.e. **edit quality has increased significantly**.

- Learners consistently expressed satisfaction with the lessons and repeatedly stated they were **learning new things** -- or **only understanding them for the first time now** -- **despite months or years of experience editing Wikipedia**. This and the above result <u>validate</u> our hypothesis that **high-quality teaching has not been sufficiently available to African newbies**.

- And yet: Despite very high stated satisfaction with module 3 (NPOV), **only 37%** of participants who completed **a paragraph re-writing assignment testing policy comprehension** after the NPOV module displayed a **good applied grasp of NPOV** of the English Wikipedia.

Phase 1 of the pilot

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Pilot phase 2 plan

- Testing Hypothesis in Phase 2: (red highlights difference from phase I)

   *"Providing **high-quality short-segment audiovisual self-paced training** on Wikipedia core policies **can triple retention rates of NEW active editors** in sub-Saharan Africa, and surface (identify) promising editors for further investment of movement resources."*

- We measure the following **metrics**:

   - attrition/**completion rate** of funnel (for stage 2)
   - **retained editors** on-wiki 3 months after completion stage 2 of funnel, versus newbie average
   - **edit quality** against personal baseline (existing editors), or versus newbie average baseline
   - post-module and post-funnel surveys (measuring **satisfaction**, identifying curriculum weaknesses)
   - measure edit quality and editor retention specifically for those editors referred from the wiki itself (e.g. by **Growth** features). Compared to learners not referred from the wiki.
   - rate of acceptance of funnel stage 3 (post-funnel cultivation) offers of engagement (measuring **effectiveness of offering to self-motivated volunteers**)

What is next?

- Scripts for some modules are already <u>available for public review and improvement on Meta</u>. Once we perfect them and add exercises, we will put them up on WikiLearn.

- New modules are being written, on:

  - **Introduction to Wikimedia: Collaborating on free knowledge**

  - **Notability: What belongs in the encyclopedia?**

  - **Copyright and free licenses: Enabling frictionless re-use**

  - **Dealing with Feedback: Resilience and Respect**

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Thank you

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