Meet The 10 African Startups Competing For The 'Next Billion' EdTech Prize In Dubai

Mfonobong Nsehe Contributor ⓘ

I chronicle Africa's success stories and track its richest people

Actress Priyanka Chopra, right and on screen, speaks to Varkey Foundation CEO Vikas Pota during a panel discussion at the Global Education and Skills Forum in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Saturday, March 17, 2018. Student survivors of a Florida high school shooting took their message calling for greater gun safety measures abroad for the first time on Saturday, sharing with educational professionals from around the world their frightening experience. (AP Photo/Jon Gambrell)

10 African startups are among 30 finalists competing in this year's Next Billion EdTech Prize, which recognizes the most innovative uses of technology that have

the potential to radically impact education in low income and emerging economies.

The 30 finalists will compete in a pitch contest taking place at the Global Education and Skills Forum (GESF) 2019 on the 22-24 March in Dubai. The forum brings together over 1500 delegates from around the world to solve the most pressing issues in global education, culminating in the award of the Next Billion Edtech Prize and the US $1 million Global Teacher Prize.

While at the forum, the finalists will also have an opportunity to meet the most important players from the spheres of both education and technology – from venture capitalists to education ministers, foundations, academics and some of the world's best teachers. They will be able to draw on their expertise and support to build products that will work as well in the classroom as they do at a pitch competition.

The Next Billion Prize, which was founded in 2018 by Indian billionaire Sunny Varkey's Varkey Foundation, was named to remind the world of the billion young people – a number growing every day – that are being denied an education that allows them to make the most of their talents.

In a press statement, Vikas Pota, who is the chairman of the Varkey Foundation and Group CEO of Tmrw Digital, which runs the Next Billion Prize, said African entrepreneurs are leading the pack in innovating for education and it's time the world took notice.

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"I believe we're about to witness a huge surge in education innovation in Africa, not least in mobile learning. Although 30 million children on the continent miss out on even primary level education, 73% of Africans have access to mobiles phones and young Africans have proven themselves to be some of the world's most innovative smartphone users. Of course, every child deserves access to a great teacher, but the potential for educational horizons in Africa to be expanded through technology are huge. It's no surprise then that 10 of our 30 finalists are African, and our hope is that through competing for the Next Billion Prize, the

world will see the range of education innovation happening right now on the continent," Pota said.

Meet the 10 African startups that made it to the final 30:

Etudesk, Cote D' Ivoire

Etudesk aims to make online education more accessible to everyone in emerging markets. As a web platform helping organizations to build and easily manage their online training programs, it provides professional coaching for job seekers, including teachers, to help them find employment. They work with both the companies seeking employers as well as potential employees.

PraxiLabs, Egypt

Praxilabs provides virtual laboratories for schools and learning organisations in the Middle East and beyond. With 3D simulations of major experiments in biology, chemistry and physics, students can access these from their devices at any time. Additional multimedia files help students perform their scientific experiments and the whole process can be integrated within existing learning management systems of schools or education providers, giving learners worldwide tools to experiment and learn science.

[LangBot](#), Ethiopia

LangBot allows schools, teachers or publishers to easily create AI chatbots which act as personal language tutors that teach or prepare learners for tests using content they create on the platform. Tools are provided to content creators and teachers to develop their own lessons or plans and give personalized language teaching and testing to students. Technology, teaching and personalisation are carefully orchestrated by the teachers or content developers, underpinned by a technology solution which could prove a potential catalyst to scale language learning in multiple contexts.

[Eneza Education](#), Kenya

Eneza Education is a comprehensive virtual tutor providing universal access to affordable, quality, lifelong learning through mobile technology. The Mobile Learning Platform helps tackle Africa's problems of illiteracy, school dropouts, high textbook costs and lack of quality feedback for learners. It has evolved from access on any mobile phone through USSD & SMS, to multi-device- smartphone, tablet, or laptop. Learners access the platform via mobile web, desktop, Facebook Messenger, and Telegram and teachers and school administrators are empowered by being equipped with relevant content.

eLimu, Kenya

Tackling the literacy crisis in Africa by focusing on local languages, eLimu makes literacy apps with relatable content, in local languages, and with scientifically proven pedagogy. eLimu relies on storytelling traditions and technology to promote learning and attainment, motivation and retention with contextualized learning.

M-Shule, Kenya

M-Shule is an education platform bringing personalized, data-driven learning to every child through SMS. Its adaptive learning engine continuously analyzes each learner's ability in order to generate personalized learning tracks and build their skills. It provides an integrated solution - easily accessible through SMS for parents and teachers, with a web app for school directors.

ScholarX, Nigeria

ScholarX is a social impact startup focusing on education financing to help young Africans from low-income backgrounds access quality education through scholarships, crowdfunding and e-learning. After downloading the app from

Google Play store and iTunes, users create an account then search for a list of scholarships that match their qualifications.

[Zelda](#), South Africa

Zelda is a mobile platform providing free career guidance to high school students and methods to help them find funding for tertiary education. Based on a student's strengths, interests and passions, Zelda will make recommendations for the most appropriate bursaries and university opportunities. Focusing on aptitude as well as skillset, it allows students to make the most of their prospects in further education and the job market.

[Ubongo](#), Tanzania

Ubongo leverages the power of entertainment, the reach of mass media, and the connectivity of mobile devices, to deliver effective, localized learning to African families at low cost and massive scale. Its family-friendly content promotes literacy and education in resource-poor areas. Through learning at home and in the family through a variety of channels, from online to radio and TV - multi-channel players, cartoons are a central part of its story telling approach.

[Mtabe](#), Tanzania

Mtabe is an AI-powered platform providing personalized instant learning content and answers from a virtual tutor via SMS, using artificial intelligence to deliver this to students without internet access. As 70% of Africans have no internet access, this particularly impacts secondary school students in rural villages who also do not have access to textbooks (in Tanzania, the textbook-student ratio is 1:10 and teacher-student ratio is 1:55, with an average school having at least 1,500 students).

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I previously worked as a reporter for Business Daily, Kenya's largest business newspaper. Now I travel across Africa, helping FORBES track the richest people on the cont... **Read More**