

# 100 Million Learners

Francis and Dionne Najafi Global Initiative



## OVERVIEW

The Francis and Dionne Najafi 100 Million Learners Global Initiative offers online, global education in 40 different languages, at absolutely no cost to the learner. The Global Initiative is led by Thunderbird School of Global Management, prominent with its distinguished faculty and reputation as the vanguard in global leadership and management education (No. 1 in the world in international trade as ranked by QS International Trade Rankings 2023), and Arizona State University, ranked No. 1 for innovation in the United States for eight consecutive years (U.S. News & World Report).

## THE NEED

The demand for higher education is projected to grow from approximately 222 million anticipated learners in 2020 to more than 470 million in 2035. In order to meet that demand, the world would have to build eight universities that each serve 40,000 students every week for the next 15 years. In addition, 90% of the world's university students do not have access to the resources or recognition of top-ranked universities. In addition, the demand for skillsets needed to succeed in the new economy from members at the base of the economic pyramid, such as women entrepreneurs, is projected to exceed another 2-3 billion people.

In the new global economy, where technology has displaced so many workers, obtaining a future-ready skillset is a necessity for both personal and professional opportunities. Yet too many of the world's learners lack access to quality education and 21st-century skill sets, a problem that will only be exacerbated in the coming years.

Thunderbird School of Global Management's **Francis and Dionne Najafi 100 Million Learners Global Initiative** will help address this worldwide challenge by providing accessible world-class entrepreneurship and innovation education with accreditation in 40 languages at no cost to the world's underserved communities, with an emphasis on women and young women.

## OUR SOLUTION

In January, 2022, Thunderbird at ASU launched the **Najafi 100 Million Learners Global Initiative**. It is the boldest and most ambitious global education initiative in higher education history.

Through the Global Initiative, Thunderbird will offer three global entrepreneurship and innovation certificates digitally in 40 different languages to learners across the world. Women and young women will account for 70% of the 100 million learners the program will reach worldwide. The certificate will be covered by full scholarships and, thus, no cost to learners because of the philanthropic support undergirding the initiative.

Once learners complete the certificate courses, they will have an almost limitless number of lifelong learning options and alternative educational pathways through Thunderbird and ASU or the academic institution of their choice. Based on the skillsets learners have acquired through this initiative, they will be ready to improve their lives by accessing better jobs and launching new enterprises.

The 100 Million Learners Global Initiative will further advance Thunderbird's mission to empower and influence global leaders and managers who maximize the benefits of the Fourth Industrial Revolution to advance equitable and sustainable prosperity worldwide. The Fourth Industrial Revolution refers to the current era characterized by a fusion of technologies that is blurring the lines between the physical, digital, and biological spheres. The Global Initiative fundamentally advances Goal 4 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, far exceeding it in both ambition and boldness.

**THE PATHWAYS**

The 100 Million Learners Global Initiative offers learners three pathways to advance their personal and professional development.

1

**Foundational Program**

content for learners with any level of education

2

**Intermediate Program**

content at the high school or undergraduate education level

3

**Advanced Program**

content at the graduate education level

Learners will earn badges for each digital course they satisfactorily complete and a certificate for successfully completing all the courses within a program. Learners who satisfactorily complete the intermediate or advanced programs can apply for academic credit, which can be used toward the completion of degrees at Thunderbird/ASU, and virtually any university across the globe.

Our first course launched April 8, 2022, coinciding with the celebration of Thunderbird's Grand Opening and 75th Anniversary Global Reunion, which officially unveiled our new, state-of-the-art global headquarters in downtown Phoenix. The first 20 languages were made available by February 2023, with subsequent courses and languages rolling out continuously thereafter.

**LANGUAGES**

As courses are built out, they are translated and verified by professional translators. In addition, we retain instructors with native language proficiency, who can provide quality control on the digitally-translated languages. These languages include:

Arabic, Bengali, Burmese, Czech, Dutch, Farsi, French, German, Gujarati, Hausa, Hindi, Hungarian, Indonesian (Bahasa), Italian, Japanese, Javanese, Kazakh, Kinyarwanda, Korean, Malay, Mandarin Chinese (Simplified), Mandarin Chinese (Traditional), Polish, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Slovak, Spanish, Swahili, Swedish, Tagalog, Thai, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu, Uzbek, Vietnamese, Yoruba, and Zulu.

**ADVANCING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

The Global Initiative helps advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 4, Quality Education, by ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all. The initiative will also help advance other SDG indicators, including Goal 5, Gender Equality, and empowering all women and girls. Women and girls will account for 70% of the 100 million learners worldwide. With increased education and improved livelihoods, there will be a reduction in inequality and an end to poverty in all forms everywhere which supports Goal 1, No Poverty, and Goal 10, Reduced Inequalities.

Learn more at:  
**100millionlearners.org**