



Transforming Lives
Riley Orton Foundation



2025 Newsletter

Vision

We envision a future where all children, especially girls, have equal access to education, technology, and opportunities to become skilled innovators and leaders, gaining the agency to achieve their full potential and drive sustainable change.



Message from the Programs Director



Dear Partners,

As we reflect on the past year, I am deeply grateful for the progress we have made together and the resilience of the communities we serve. At Riley Orton Foundation, we believe that every young person deserves access to quality education, opportunities to explore their talents, and the support needed to build a better future.

In 2025, we witnessed remarkable growth across our programs. Through STEM camps, school partnerships, and the Akili STEM Lab, thousands of learners gained hands-on exposure to science, technology, and digital skills. Teachers embraced new tools and teaching approaches, and students developed innovative ideas to address real challenges within their communities.

At the same time, our scholarship, mentorship, and school support programs ensured that vulnerable learners could remain in school and pursue their dreams with dignity. Our vocational training initiatives also empowered young women and youth with practical skills in tailoring, digital entrepreneurship, and business development, opening new pathways toward economic independence.

We are equally proud to be strengthening the sustainability of our work through initiatives such as the Sare Design Shop and the Akili Suites housing project, which help generate local income to support education programs.

None of this progress would be possible without the dedication of our staff, volunteers, partners, and supporters. Your belief in our mission continues to inspire the work we do every day.

As we look ahead to 2026, we remain committed to expanding opportunity, including launching a Mobile STEM Lab to reach even more underserved schools. We remain committed to ensuring that every learner we reach has the tools, confidence, and support needed to thrive.

Thank you for walking this journey with us.

Monica Adhiambo
Programs Director



Fig; Programs Team



Fig; Monica Adhiambo leading a Teacher Capacity Building Session

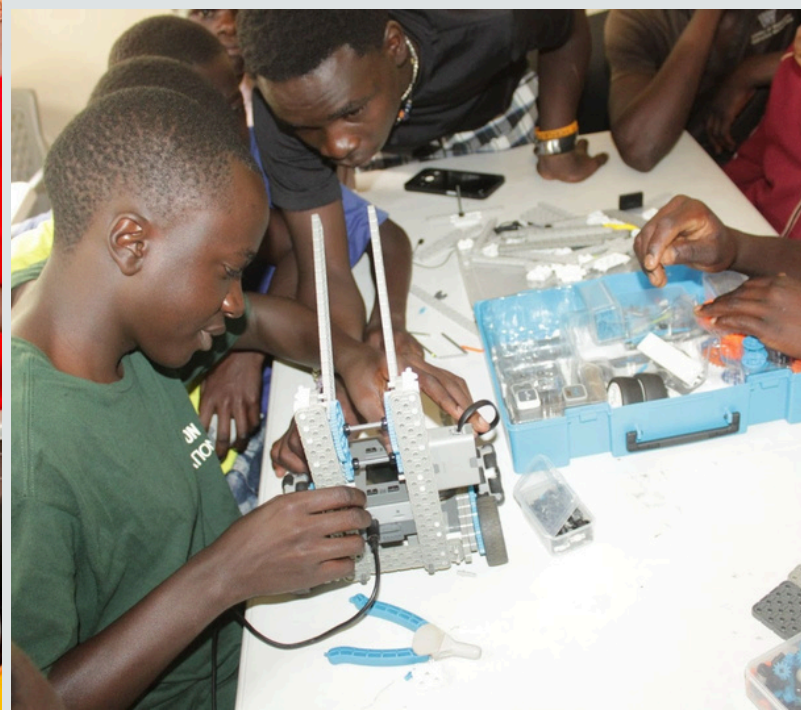
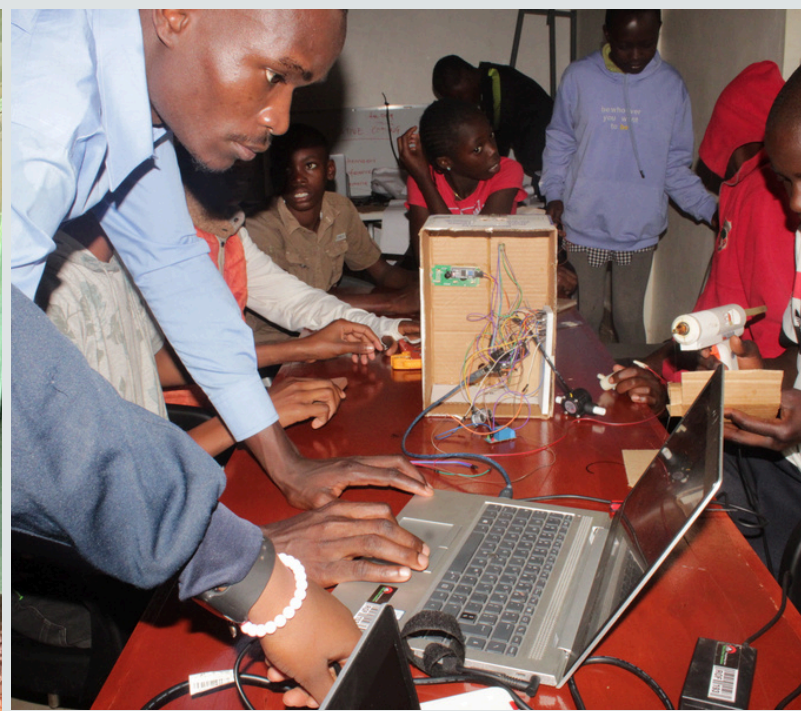


Fig; Volunteers & Staff

STEM Education: Expanding Access to Innovation

In 2025, Riley Orton Foundation (ROF) significantly expanded access to hands-on STEM education for learners and educators in rural and underserved communities. Through camps, school partnerships, and our Akili STEM Labs, our programs reached **3,243 learners and 326 teachers**, helping bridge the digital divide as Kenya continues its transition to the **Competency-Based Education (CBE)**.

CBE places strong emphasis on innovation, problem-solving, and technology integration. Recognizing that many rural schools lack access to these tools, ROF focused on learner-centered programming and teacher empowerment to ensure that students are not left behind.



Akili STEM Camps



The 2025 STEM camps themed “Engineering a Water-Secure Future,” engaged learners in robotics, coding, environmental science, and design thinking, where teams designed innovations such as water kiosks, smart pumps, and irrigation systems, which they confidently presented before a community and facilitator panel.

ROF also held a four-week STEM and life-skills camp for learners, blending robotics, digital literacy, creative design, and upcycling with sports and teamwork. Across all camps, students built confidence, problem-solving skills, and practical know-how, widening access to hands-on STEM for resource-limited schools.



Akili STEM Lab: A Hub for Digital Learning

The **Akili STEM Lab** continues to grow as a vital learning hub for schools around Kisumu West subcounty that lack ICT infrastructure.

In 2025, the lab was further equipped with computers, STEM kits, and furniture to support digital learning and the implementation of CBC in surrounding schools. Through a partnership with EDP A2E Access Fund, Portugal,, solar panels were installed across the Akili campus, ensuring reliable 24/7 renewable energy to power classrooms, labs, and program activities.

During the year, 415 learners from Baby Shine Primary School, Oyiengo Junior Secondary School, and Obambo Junior Secondary School accessed the lab, gaining foundational computer skills, exposure to coding, and practical digital literacy competencies including Microsoft Excel for school assignments.

For many of these students, the Akili Lab provides their first meaningful interaction with computers and digital learning tools.



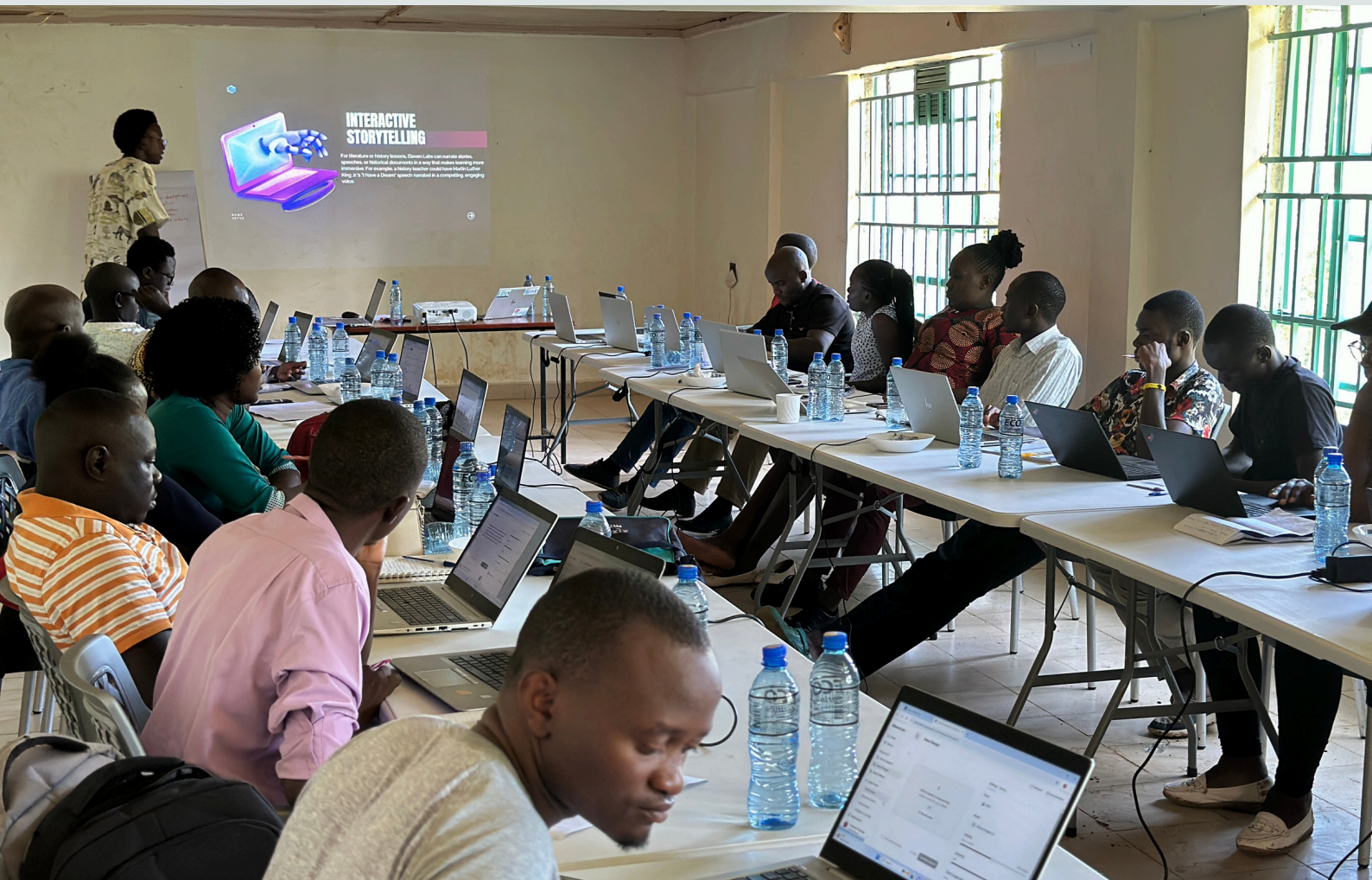
Teacher Capacity Building

Teachers play a critical role in transforming classrooms and ensuring students benefit from modern learning approaches. In response to the growing demand for STEM and technology-enabled education in rural schools, ROF conducted eight teacher training sessions in 2025 in partnership with organizations including Africa Maths Initiative and Futures Infinite.



These trainings reached **326 teachers** across Kisumu, Siaya, and Bungoma counties, equipping educators with practical skills in: STEM pedagogy and project-based learning, Artificial Intelligence tools for education, Scratch coding and robotics, Arduino and Pico microcontrollers and 3D printing and digital fabrication.

As a result of these trainings, many teachers have begun integrating hands-on STEM learning into their classrooms, and several schools have established STEM clubs to sustain innovation beyond the workshops.



Scholarships for Vulnerable Learners



Education remains one of the most powerful pathways out of poverty, yet many families in rural communities struggle to afford school fees and basic learning materials. In 2025, the ROF scholarship program supported 80 students in high school and college.

These students received comprehensive support including school fees, uniforms, sanitary pads, underwear, mentorship, college upkeep and accommodations. Among the high school students, **13 completed their secondary education with outstanding KCSE results**, each achieving at least a **B grade**. These students are now preparing to transition to university in 2026, marking a significant milestone in their academic journeys.

We provided college scholarships to 15 young women. In line with our sustainability plan, we prioritized supporting students who successfully transitioned from our high school program. Several recent high school graduates, who are awaiting college admission, are encouraged to enroll in our digital literacy training at our vocational education center to continue building relevant skills.



HIV Awareness, Mentorship and Academic Support

ROF continues to invest in mentorship and holistic student development. The organization hosted a wellness retreat for scholarship recipients, bringing together students and staff members for a day of reflection, mentorship, and confidence-building.

ROF also organized an Academic Clinic for continuing students, which also served as a celebration for Grade 12 graduates and scholarship recipients. The event included: One-on-one academic coaching, Peer-led workshops on study skills and goal setting and Group discussions addressing academic challenges

The clinic concluded with a ceremony recognizing top-performing and most improved students, celebrating their dedication and resilience.

In partnership with Mercury Phoenix Trust UK, ROF integrated HIV awareness health education and mentorship into its STEM/School outreach, STEM camps, and community programs.

These initiatives reached 3011 young people across Kisumu and Siaya Counties, addressing issues including: HIV/AIDS awareness, mental health, mentorship and life skills, and menstrual health education.

Students learned about the biology of the HIV virus, how it spreads, and prevention strategies. They were also encouraged to use technology tools, including AI-based learning platforms, to research and ask questions they might otherwise hesitate to discuss at home.



Improving Access & Strengthening Dignity Through School Uniform & Sanitary Pads Support



ROF advanced student access, dignity, and learning through a combination of uniform provision, sanitary pads support, and parent-led school improvements. Through our partnership with Tailored for Education, we distributed 1,092 full uniform kits including school uniforms, quality shoes, and undergarments to vulnerable learners across Kisumu and Siaya counties.

An additional 2,000 uniforms were produced at subsidized rates through our Sare Designs Workshop, bringing the total to 3,092 students equipped for school, helping reduce absenteeism and boosting confidence.

Alongside uniforms, we distributed 5,722 packets of sanitary pads, ensuring girls could attend school with dignity and fully participate in classroom and sports activities.

Through the Parent Contribution Fund (PCF), parents contributed modest amounts of up to KES 500, raising KES 372,550 to fund tangible school improvements: whiteboards, textbooks, sanitation facilities, goalposts, a 10,000-liter water tank, and ICT labs; including Nyangulu Secondary School's first-ever computer lab.

At Oyiengo JSS, contributions supported a school kitchen garden, providing sustainable meals for over 200 students while teaching practical agricultural skills. These programs increased school access, strengthened learning environments, and nurtured a sense of pride, dignity, and ownership among students and their families.





Vocational & Digital Literacy Training: Building Economic Resilience

Recognizing that not all youth have access to formal employment pathways, ROF continued strengthening its Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs in 2025. A total of 52 youth graduated, including: 21 graduates from a four-month digital program covering AI, graphic design, and digital entrepreneurship, including youth preparing to join college, equipping them with digital skills to succeed in higher education and the modern workforce. 31 graduates from a one-year tailoring and garment-making program, which also included soap-making and entrepreneurship training, empowering out-of-school young women to create sustainable livelihoods.

Through these programs, ROF bridges the digital and vocational skills gap while fostering economic resilience and independence among young people in marginalized communities.



Income-Generating Activities: Building Sustainable Impact

ROF continues to strengthen financial sustainability through social enterprise and community-driven projects. In 2025, the Sare Design Shop produced school uniforms which were provided free to vulnerable learners, and sold at subsidized rates to able parents ,reducing financial strain on families and creating employment for local tailors.

Additionally, the Akili Suites Estate, a residential housing project, completed its first phase of 15 units, generating rental income projected to partially fund school fees and operational costs annually. These initiatives build predictable local income while supporting education and livelihoods in the community.



Partnerships & Capacity Building



Strong partnerships and learning networks were central to ROF's impact in 2025, enabling us to strengthen programs across STEM education, health, mentorship, and youth empowerment.

Collaborations with Africa Maths Initiative, Futures Infinite, and the Raspberry Pi Foundation enhanced teacher capacity in creative coding and robotics, while partnerships with HEDSO, Homeless of Kisumu, KIMUTA, Dreams Redefined CBO, and Dandelion Africa supported initiatives in health, mentorship, and livelihoods.

ROF also actively engaged in strategic learning exchanges and networking platforms to share knowledge and strengthen community-driven approaches. Key engagements included the Segal Family Foundation networking dinner in Kisumu, the Amplify Partners meeting in Nairobi, the STEMtastic Adventures Africa Symposium, and the AMPLIFY Girls Kenya Learning Exchange. These experiences fostered collaboration, practical learning, and strengthened our ability to scale impact.

Staff capacity was also prioritized: in 2025, our Director of Programs completed a one-month leadership training with the Trevor Noah Foundation, and our Programs Assistant completed a 12-week Systems Change Leadership course with Nia Upeoni, Ubele Initiative, and Masterpeace Kenya. These training enhanced our skills in design thinking, empathetic leadership, and systems change, enabling ROF to design inclusive, high-impact interventions that address complex challenges in education, health, and youth empowerment.



Our Impact

- **3,243 students** reached through STEM camps and life-skills programs
- **326 teachers** trained in STEM education
- **3,092 students** supported with school uniforms
- **5,722 menstrual hygiene kits** distributed
- **80 girls** supported with high school scholarships
- **15 girls** supported with university scholarships
- **100% transition rate** achieved for sponsored students advancing to college
- **52 youth** trained through vocational programs
- **200 students** provided with school meals

2026 Plans

Building on the success of our 2025 STEM camps and school clubs, ROF is set to bring STEM and digital literacy to even more learners across rural communities. In 2026, we will strengthen STEM clubs in partner schools, helping students deepen hands-on learning and develop practical problem-solving skills. A Mobile STEM Lab van will take equipment and STEM education directly to marginalized schools that lack dedicated facilities, while our Akili STEM Labs will continue to expand access to digital learning, equipping students with the skills needed to thrive in a technology-driven world.

We will also focus on teachers, providing ongoing training in STEM pedagogy to improve classroom outcomes and inspire students to pursue STEM subjects and careers. For youth, vocational and digital literacy programs including AI, graphic design, entrepreneurship, and garment-making, will create pathways to sustainable livelihoods.

Sustainability remains central to our work. The Akili Suites housing project will expand with solar-powered units, providing reliable energy, improved tenant retention, and a steady income stream to support our programs. At the same time, clean water distribution to local communities will continue, promoting health while generating local revenues to strengthen our impact.

Through these initiatives, ROF aims to ensure that rural learners and youth continue to access opportunities that empower them to grow, innovate, and thrive.

Our Partners

- Amplify Girls Org, USA
- EDP - Access to Energy Fund, Portugal
- North American Association of Environmental Education (NAAEE) - E-STEM Grants, USA
- Gates of Hope Org, USA
- Mercury Phoenix Trust, UK
- Segal Family Foundation Org, USA
- Mama Hope Org, USA
- Tailored For Education Org, USA
- JDC Trust, USA
- Sunflower Foundation NGO, AU
- Omprakash Org, USA
- Futures Infinite Org, KE
- HEDSO Org, KE
- KIMUTA Org, KE
- Homeless of Kisumu, KE
- African Math Initiative, KE
- Dreams Redefined CBO, KE

Our Champions

- Ali Osborne
- Lauren Else
- Connor Deegan
- Jujja Wieslander
- Haley Allen
- Marilyn Body
- Margaret Horan
- Sriram Kolla
- Lottie Van Grieken
- Anonymous
- Rachael Nickerson
- Sandra Green
- Kendra Nicolai
- Michelle and Jeff Eckroth

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