GAMEUP AFRICA

5-YEAR IMPACT REPORT

A Talent Plan for Africa's Video Game Industry

2021 - 2026



How a five-month experiment became Africa's largest game developer ecosystem.

AMBASSADE DE FRANCE AU NIGÉRIA
Liberté Égalité Fraternité

maliyo GAMES

Google

ENDLESS

6,000+
APPLICANTS SINCE 2021

The talent was always there. GameUp Africa created pathways.

WHERE THEY'RE FROM

40+
Countries Represented

Top: Nigeria (36%), Kenya (28%)

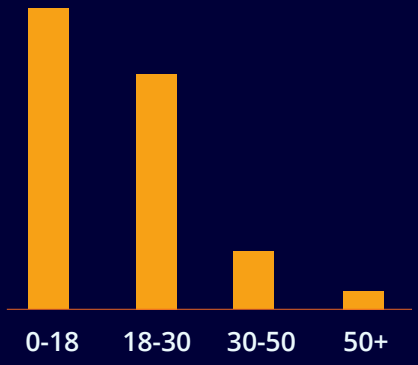
Growing: Ivory Coast, Angola, Rwanda



HOW OLD

77%
Are Under 30

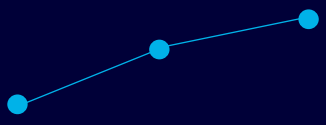
Africa's youngest population is showing up.



GENDER

1,077
female applicants

Female participation has grown every year



~16% > 22% > 25%
2021 > 2023 > 2025

BACKGROUND

84%
software dev / engineering

53%
hold a bachelor's degree

40%
are students

25%
are employed

Technically literate.
Ready for the on-ramp.

**Source: 2021-2025 cohort data*

EXPERIENCE IN GAMES

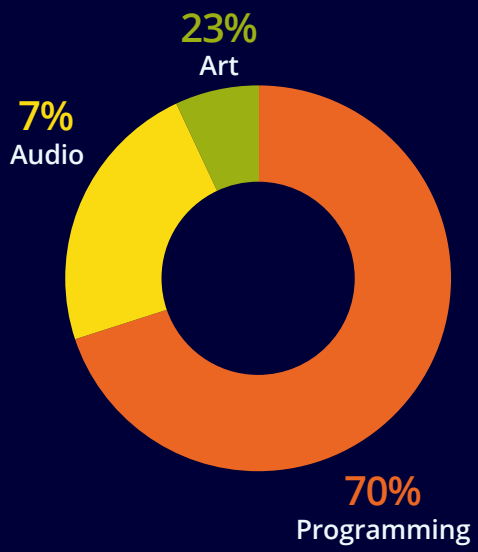
65%
had never worked in games

Only **36%**
had ever built one.

GameUp Africa isn't skimming the top.
It's building the pipeline.

**Source: 2024 cohort data*

LEARNING PATHS



ABOUT GAMEUP AFRICA

Africa is home to the world's youngest population with a surge of creative talent. Across the continent, aspiring game developers have limited structured pathways to move from learning to professional practice. GameUp Africa was designed to close this gap: a continent-wide programme that turns raw creative potential into skilled, portfolio-ready game developers through structured learning, real production, and a community that compounds year after year.

Since 2021, it has grown into the continent's largest game development programme, drawing applicants from over 40 countries with structured curriculum, mentorship, real projects, and a community that keeps people coming back.

Run by Maliyo Games, a pan-African studio based in Lagos, Nigeria, the programme is built on a simple conviction: Africa's next generation of creators shouldn't have to leave the continent to find world-class training. So we built it here.

6,000+
applicants across 5 years

30+
global partners (Xbox, EA, Disney Games, IGDA)

40+
countries represented

161
game projects published

FIVE YEARS. ONE SYSTEM.

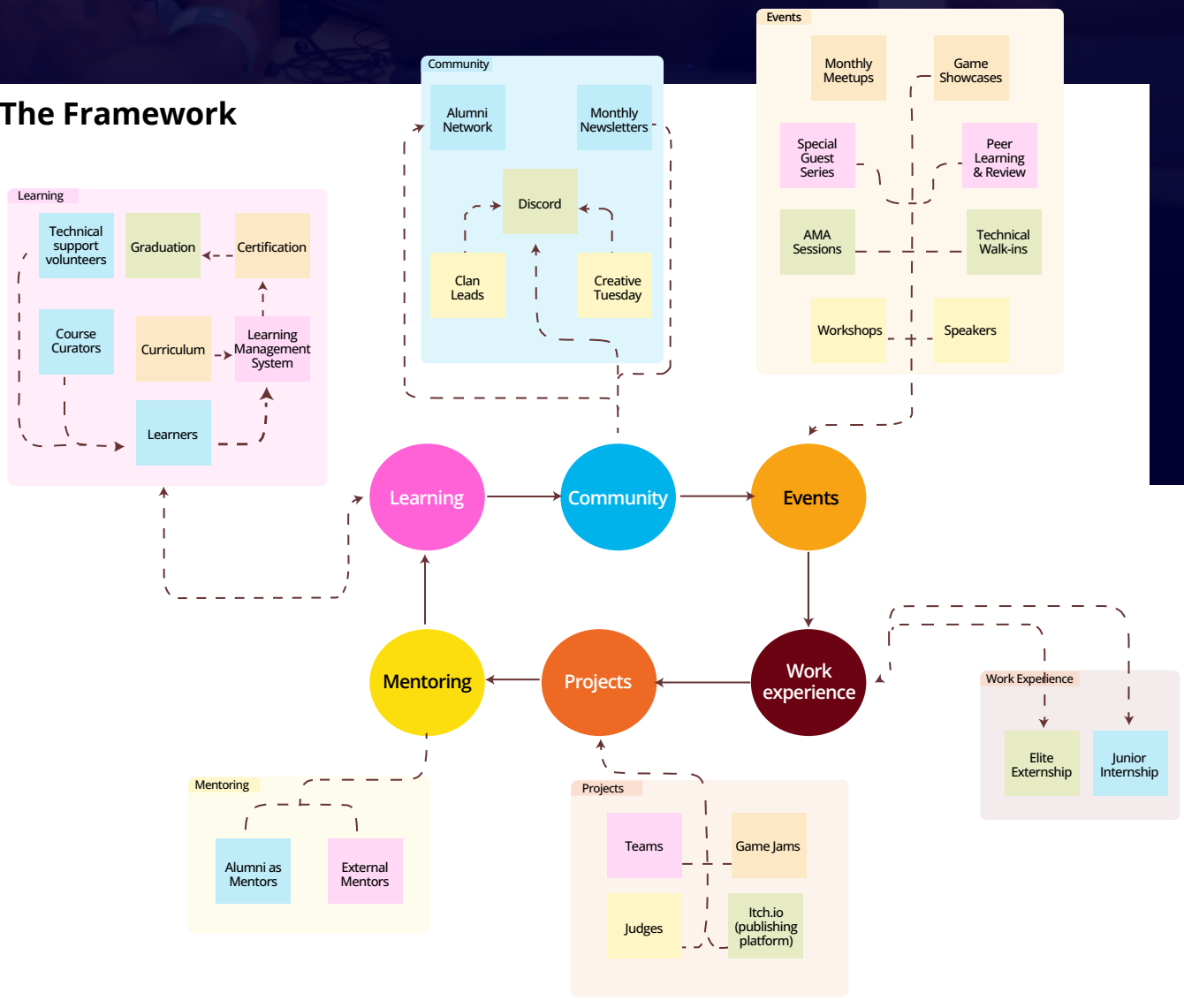
From experiment to ecosystem.

In 2021, GameUp Africa launched with a focused ambition: to build a structured pathway that could turn Africa's growing pool of creative talent into skilled, industry-ready game developers.

Pockets of game development education existed across the continent, but the ecosystem remained fragmented. Training programmes operated in isolation, mentorship was scarce, and the bridge from learning to professional practice was largely missing. GameUp Africa set out to connect those dots: a system where training feeds into mentorship, mentorship feeds into production, and alumni feeds back into the next cohort.

Five years later, that system is delivering.

The Framework



PARTNERSHIPS

Partnerships with Xbox, EA, Disney Games, and IGDA brought global mentorship into the room. Alumni progressed from solo experimentation to shipping games played by real users. And in 2025, the launch of Elite, a production accelerator embedded in a live mobile title, showed that African teams can ship real games to real players.

This report examines how that happened. It is structured around six interconnected pillars that, together, form the system GameUp Africa has built.

> **Being in a talented community supported by industry mentors, the experience was both empowering and super fun.**

Mwayiwawo Solomon
Malawi (2025)



Every lesson leads to a deliverable. Every week builds toward something tangible.

GameUp Africa's model is built around practice, not theory. Nine weeks. Nine-plus projects. One published game. That's the structure.

The Learning Loop

Weeks 1–9 run as self-paced challenges with weekly releases. Friday Technical Walk-Ins handle debugging. Clan study sessions drive peer accountability. Milestone reviews make progress public. Every step is designed to get people making things, not just watching tutorials.

2024 Snapshot

246
accepted learners
total intake 2024

99
reached mentorship
40% of learners

51
published games
games on itch.io

59
graduates with portfolio
23% of learners



Why the System Works

It respects reality. Learners balance exams, jobs, and family. Laptops are shared when possible. Infrastructure across the continent is uneven. The system adapts and uses community to close gaps.

It builds identity. People don't gain confidence from a pep talk. They gain it from doing the work: submitting, getting feedback, revising, presenting. The moment a learner sees their work live, something shifts.

It compounds. No one really graduates from GameUp Africa. They evolve through it. Each cohort adds a layer to the collective memory. Each Elite Team strengthens the bridge between learning and industry.

It travels. Version control etiquette. Clear briefs. Meeting hygiene. Post-mortems that explain what didn't ship and why. Not glamorous. Employable.

❝ ALUMNI VOICE

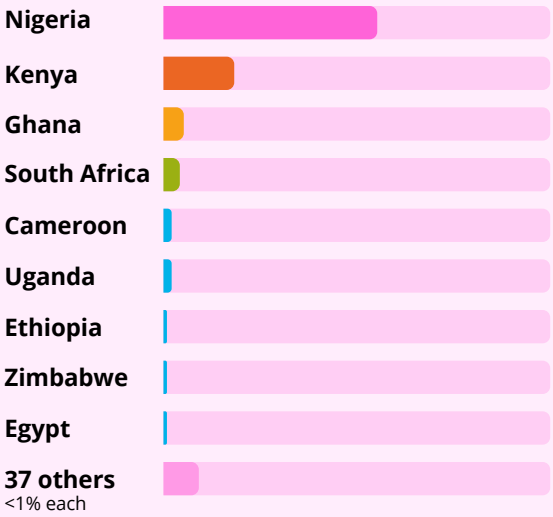
The bootcamp's curriculum was well structured, touching on foundational concepts to advanced, industry-relevant techniques. Our mentors were seasoned industry professionals who offered personalised feedback, real-world context, and a deep wealth of knowledge.

Clement Obieke
Nigeria (2025)

Discord isn't just infrastructure. It's where the culture lives.

From the earliest cohorts, Discord became the space where meltdowns and breakthroughs happened side by side. Learners shared fixes at 2 in the morning, dropped memes after hard nights, and cheered when someone shipped a first prototype. Over time, that energy turned into something lasting.

% of applicants by country





Clans: Where scale becomes intimate

In 2022, GameUp introduced clans: pods of 8 to 12 learners led by alumni volunteers. A massive digital room became intimate. Small circles formed where people brought questions, first drafts, and courage.

Clan leads set the rhythm: two light touchpoints each week, a study session to move through material, an accountability hour to surface blockers and share solutions. They taught peers to name files consistently, document their builds, and write clean updates that someone in another time zone could act on.

These habits were the difference between a plan and a submission. Between a quiet channel and a cohort that finished together.

Discord Snapshot

967
discord members
2025

50
average daily engagement

> **The community is so welcoming and helpful.**

Mohamed Zorainy
Egypt (2024)

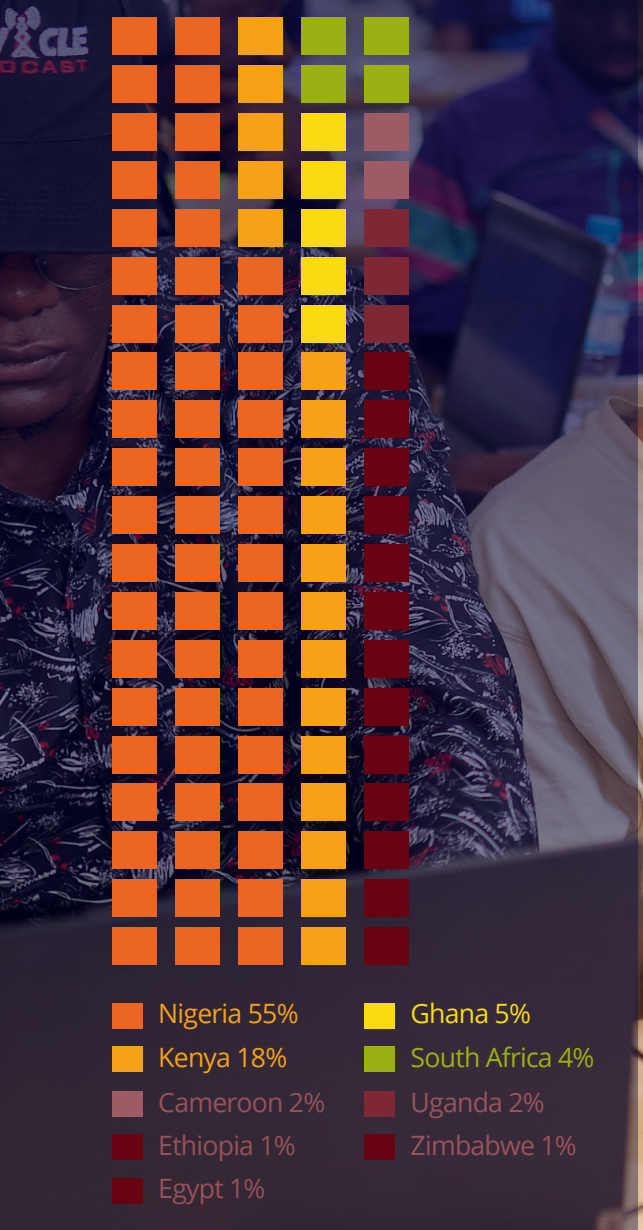
Facilitators described it as electric. Some mornings the chat woke up before the sun, with students posting solutions or celebrating a first working build. Clan rooms functioned like seminar halls: practical, social, and safe enough for failure to be visible without being final.

“

Over the past four months, I’ve had the incredible opportunity to work with three different teams made up of talented developers, artists, and audio engineers from across Africa. Each team brought its own rhythm, creativity, and approach to problem-solving; and learning to adapt to those unique dynamics has been one of the most valuable parts of this journey.

Ibrahim Karl
Togo (2024)

Alumni describe community as an anchor. One art-track participant remembers hearing from professionals in other countries that his work had promise. He pushed harder, then returned to mentor younger artists because he remembered what that encouragement felt like. Collaboration continues beyond graduation in game jams, studios, and communities that don’t stop at borders.



“ **ALUMNI VOICE**

I knew nothing about game development. Now I’ve built two games. Community accelerates skill-building and opens networking opportunities.

Lucky Sikolia
Kenya (2024)

Community isn’t part of the pipeline. It *is* the pipeline.

If community is the heart, mentorship is the engine.

Early on, mentors came from the outside. Developers from Xbox, EA, Disney Games, IGDA, and other global studios gave feedback and context. They brought validation as much as technique. Their presence said it clearly: African learners belong in the global conversation.

Then the system began feeding itself. Graduates returned to guide new cohorts. Elite participants coached beginners. Facilitators made mentorship part of the culture, not a box to tick. That quiet shift, from importing mentorship to generating it, might be the most important thing GameUp Africa has done.

Mentor Snapshot

80

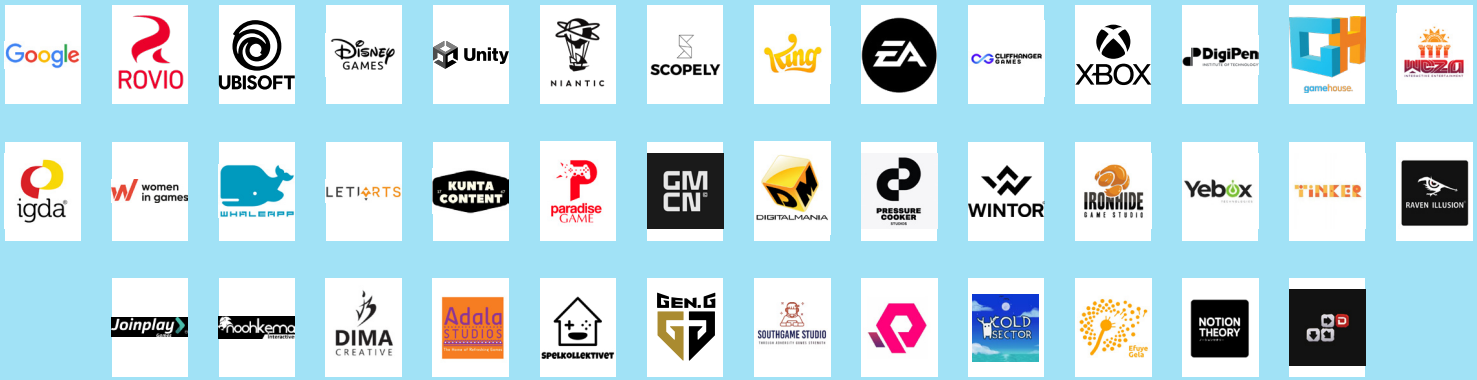
mentors from 30+ global companies

19

local industry mentors

Alumni mentors growing year on year

A sign the ecosystem is becoming self-sustaining.



What mentors actually teach

Not how to make the best game in twelve weeks. How to communicate. How to scope. How to solve problems as a team. The strongest teams aren't the most talented; they're the most connected. They write things down. They listen well. They give critique without harm and receive it without fear.

Confidence as a Doorway

When a working professional tells you "you think like a developer," it changes something. You stop chasing perfection and start focusing on clarity and delivery.

> **Ship what you can defend.**
>
> **- A line many recall from a seasoned producer**

THE ELITE ERA: TIGHTER LOOPS

As learners progress through the GameUp Africa system, building skills, joining communities, receiving mentorship, and assembling portfolios, a question emerges: what happens next? Elite was created to answer it. Launched in 2025, the GameUp Africa Elite Externship is a 12-week studio simulation programme that places top alumni inside a live game studio environment, working on real titles with real deadlines.

> Learning from mentors and peers broadened my perception of what it means to be a game developer in Africa and beyond.

Jimmy Junior Njenga
Kenya (2024)

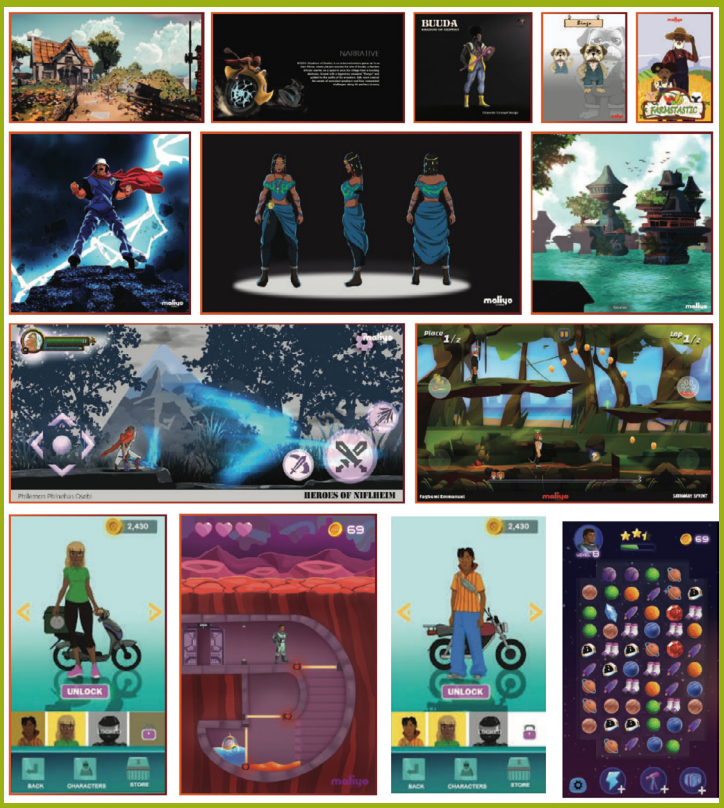


As Elite took shape, mentorship tightened. Monthly showcases put work on record. Post-mortems turned misses into shared learning. Near-peer mentors joined Friday clinics for the hardest debugging weeks. Clan leads invited alumni to co-host sessions so newcomers could watch someone just a few steps ahead solve problems they'd soon face.

Today's mentees become tomorrow's guides. That cycle holds.

Closing the gap between learning and professional delivery.

GameUp Africa instils studio habits from day one: version control, asset naming, folder hygiene, clear code, review cycles, public showcases. These are the practices that separate learners from professionals ready to contribute in a team.



The Toolkit

Learners work with Git and GitHub for collaboration, HacknPlan and Trello for sprint management, structured asset maps so teammates can navigate each other's work, and documentation standards (READMEs, changelogs, build instructions) that mirror real studio practice.

Portfolio as Proof

Every graduate leaves with published games on Itch.io. Playable builds. Credits on LinkedIn. For many, this is the first time their work exists beyond their laptop. That shift matters. You stop calling yourself a beginner. You've shipped something.

2025 Snapshot

436
applicants

225
learners

32
game projects

41
portfolio ready graduates

> **I got insight into working in the game industry and how to be professional while working collaboratively. It was an overall enriching experience which will further help me in my journey as a game developer and I appreciate the Maliyo team for this amazing opportunity.**

Oreva Ohore
Nigeria (2024)

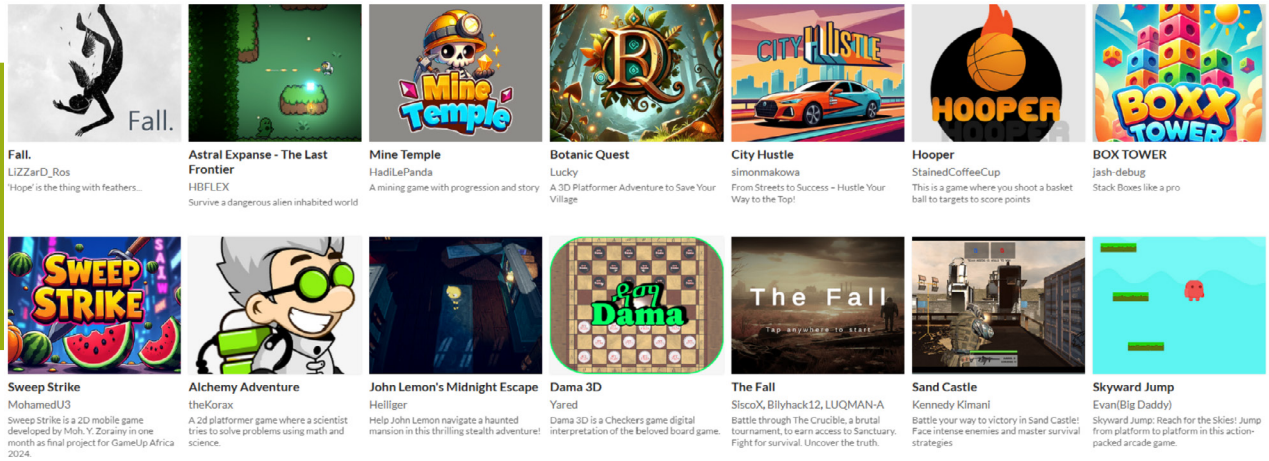


ALUMNI VOICE

I didn't know Clip Studio Paint, line art, UI/UX. Now I do it all confidently. This bootcamp changed everything.

Chioma Goodness,
Nigeria (2025)

Build. Submit. Get feedback. Revise. Repeat. That's how people go from learner to professional.



Where learning meets live production.

The Elite Externship is the bridge between learning and industry.
12 weeks. Three sprints. Contributing to live Games.
Working in a simulated studio environment.

Participants, selected from top GameUp Africa participants, work in multidisciplinary teams across programming, art, audio, and design. The workflow is disciplined and public: teams pitch, build, review, and present on a clock. Showcases and post-mortems create a record of decisions, so learning compounds and the best work ships.



Elite Application Snapshot

141
applicants from 25 countries

18
selected participants

18%
female representation

Three Sprints, One Standard

Sprint 1 proves collaboration: turn a strong idea into a playable slice.
Sprint 2 layers engagement and social loops while protecting core game's tone.
Sprint 3 sharpens first-time user experience, day-one retention, and visual polish so outputs feel at home in the live title.

18
concepts pitched

13
prototypes developed

7
games completed

3
live in Safari city

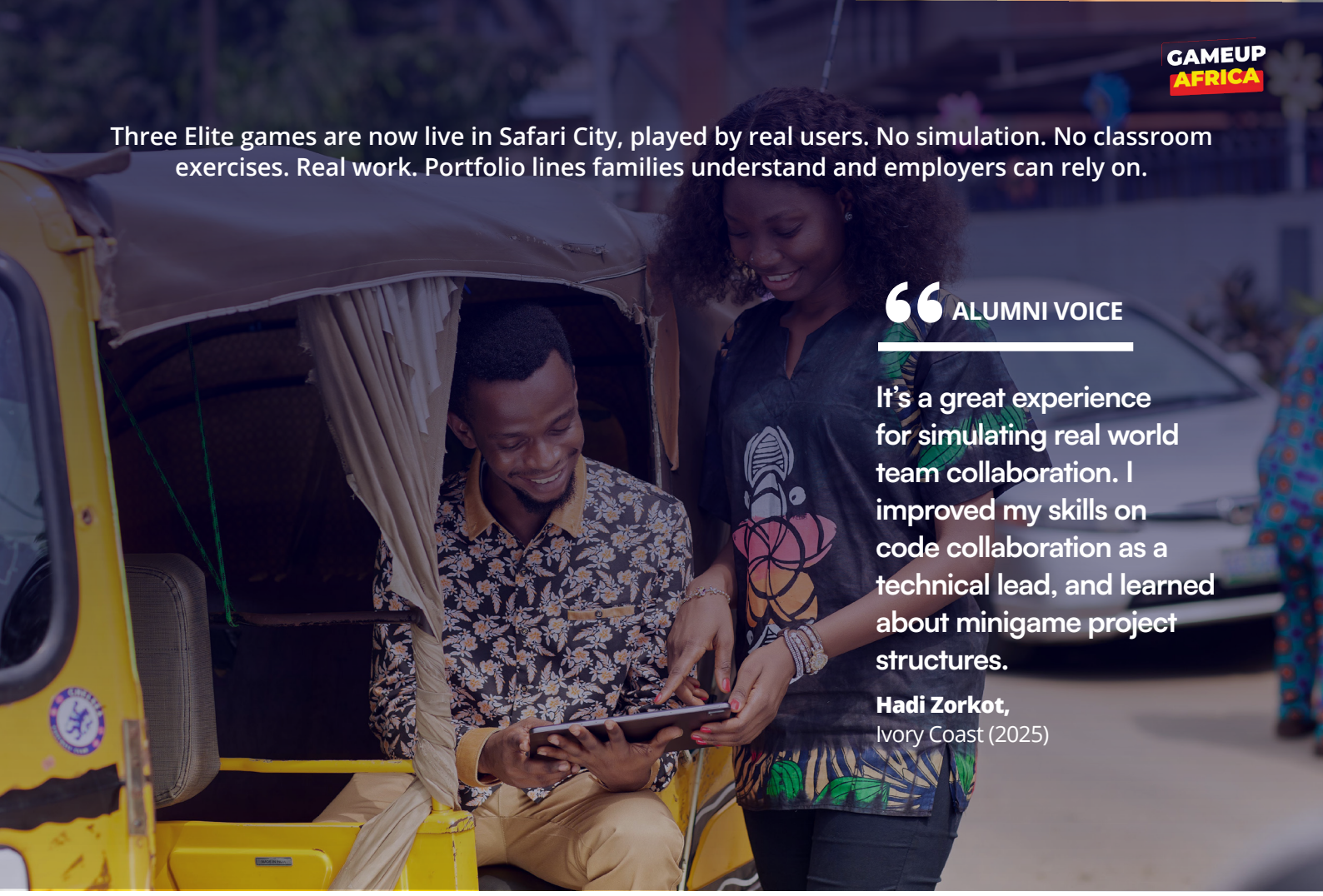
Growth you can measure

67 → 89%
professional growth
(sprint 1 to 3)

+33%
confidence in ability to create games

4.27/5
peer ratings across all sprints

Three Elite games are now live in Safari City, played by real users. No simulation. No classroom exercises. Real work. Portfolio lines families understand and employers can rely on.



ALUMNI VOICE

It's a great experience for simulating real world team collaboration. I improved my skills on code collaboration as a technical lead, and learned about minigame project structures.

Hadi Zorkot,
Ivory Coast (2025)

ALUMNI VOICE

Through the Elite Program, I was able to grow my portfolio, collaborate with developers across Africa, and benefit from hands-on mentorship and feedback from the Maliyo team. The exposure and experience have been truly invaluable.

Andrew Njenga
Kenya (2025)



Elite proves the system works.
People who came in as learners leave with published games, professional habits, and the ability to bring the next cohort along.

Representation doesn't happen by accident.

Over five years, one of the clearest patterns has been the uneven participation and retention of women. Gender balance has improved, but the work is ongoing.



~16%
female applicants
(2021–2023)

22%
female applicants
(2024)

25%
female applicants
(2025)

The Barriers Are Real

Across interviews, female participants described family hesitation, lack of understanding about game development as a legitimate career, domestic responsibilities, and households where creative careers for women remain unconventional.

Active Redesign

The team didn't wait for the numbers to change on their own. Application campaigns now feature alumni stories highlighting women in leadership and creative roles. Mentorship pairings increasingly match female learners with women in the industry. Flexible deadlines and asynchronous options accommodate participants with caregiving duties. Clan structures create safer spaces for women to lead.

By 2025, women were leading clans and project teams, mentoring new cohorts, and producing standout work in both art and programming tracks.

Family as the Deciding Factor

The data backs this up: participants who reported strong family support, regardless of gender, complete at higher rates. Where creative tech careers are still new, a family that takes it seriously can be the difference between someone finishing and someone walking away.

Inclusion isn't only a gender issue. It's a cultural one. Building diversity in the pipeline requires changing perceptions about who creative work is for.

> **"It took a while for my family to understand that I was not just playing games. I was building them.**
>
> **GameUp Africa Alumni**

> **"Sometimes the greatest barrier isn't skill, but the doubt shaped by society's perception of the game industry and the uncertainty of where this path leads. When support is offered, talent flourishes.**
>
> **Dorothy Orina,**
> Program Manager

WHAT FIVE YEARS TAUGHT US

Six principles forged by building, testing, and refining.



1

Talent is everywhere. Opportunity is not.

The continent overflows with creativity. What young Africans lacked was structure. Facilitators recall learners building prototypes on old laptops, unstable connections, and sheer determination. When access arrived, people showed what they could do.

2

Learning is cyclical, not linear.

Growth happens in loops: learn, practice, fail, reflect, repeat. Each iteration adds depth. The best learners aren't the fastest. They're the ones who adapt when things fall apart.

3

Mentorship multiplies progress.

Global mentors brought credibility. Alumni mentors made it self-sustaining. Peer mentors understand the lived experience: the exhaustion, the breakthroughs, the fear. "They've walked the same road. They know when to push and when to encourage."

4

Resilience is learned behaviour.

Missed deadlines, team breakdowns, technical failures: these moments led to the deepest growth. GameUp Africa creates pressure that tests without breaking. The most successful graduates weren't the most gifted. They were the ones who kept going.

5

Impact must be engineered.

Influence doesn't happen automatically. Bootcamp feeds mentorship. Mentorship leads to Elite. Elite produces alumni who return as leaders. A closed loop designed, tested, repeated.

6

Inclusion requires more than access.

Changing who participates means changing perceptions in families, communities, and the industry itself. Representation has to be designed into the system at every level.



> GameUp Africa does not teach people to code. It teaches them to persist.
>
> **GameUp Africa Mentor**

THE ROAD AHEAD

The first five years built the model. What comes next builds the industry.

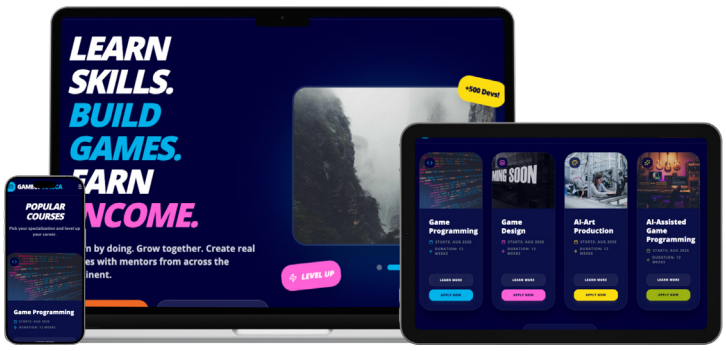
GameUp Africa began as a five-month bootcamp. It proved that the talent exists, that structured training works, and that African developers can ship real games to real players. But it also surfaced hard truths: learners drop off when programmes run on fixed cycles, local studios can't yet absorb all the talent being produced, and alumni need more than a certificate to sustain momentum. Beginning in 2026, GameUp Africa evolves from a seasonal programme into a continuous learning ecosystem designed around a single objective.

Learn. Build. Launch. Earn. Repeat.

The model is proven. The talent is ready. What scales it is partnership: from funders, studios, universities, mentors, and the global games industry.

From Bootcamp to Always-On Platform

The annual cohort model served its purpose. The next phase removes the waiting. GameUp Africa is building an always-on learning platform where anyone on the continent can sign up and start learning immediately. Courses will be modular, short, and project-based and designed to produce tangible outputs, not just hours logged. A centralised learning library will house original GameUp Africa content alongside curated resources, accessible year-round. For learners who want deeper structure, facilitated tracks, mentorship, portfolio reviews, and masterclasses will provide guided pathways from beginner to professional.



AI-First Game Development Curriculum

GameUp Africa is becoming an AI-first training provider where emerging creators learn to work smarter, faster, and more efficiently. The curriculum integrates AI across the entire game development pipeline, helping learners accelerate production while maintaining creative control and quality.

Learners will be trained to leverage AI tools and systems to streamline workflows, automate repetitive tasks, and enhance creative output.

Ultimately, learners will graduate with the ability to build more ambitious, complex, and production-ready games in shorter timeframes, positioning them for a rapidly evolving global games industry.

Enhancement of Externship Model

Training without opportunity is incomplete. GameUp Africa's next chapter embeds career readiness into everything it does. Every learner will build a public portfolio: published games, documented projects, version- controlled repositories. Modules on remote cross-border collaboration, freelancing, and professional communication will prepare graduates for a global market. A Talent Directory will connect top performers directly with studios, publishers, and partners.

Through partnerships with global studios, GameUp Africa will run externships for aspiring talent to accelerate knowledge transfer on studio best practices. Learners will build stronger portfolios and acquire solid references.

And for those who want to build rather than be hired, structured game jams, incubation tracks, and milestone sprints will support the formation of independent teams and studios. Africa's games industry won't grow through employment alone. It will grow through IP ownership and small independent teams.

Physical Hubs, Real Infrastructure

Digital access opened the door and physical spaces will hold it open. GameUp Africa is introducing campus-embedded Hubs. These Hubs are collaborative workspaces inside tertiary learning institutions that provide reliable power, hardware, internet, facilitators and a community of peers. These Hubs bridge the infrastructure gap that still holds many learners back, while activating game development communities inside existing academic ecosystems. Over time, a network of Hubs across multiple countries will create localised clusters of talent connected through one unified platform.





Certification from an accredited institution

GameUp Africa is partnering with Arizona State University to issue stackable micro-credentials to graduates, placing a globally recognised stamp on their efforts and offering them a pathway to further education at a globally recognised institution.









JOIN US

GameUp Africa is an invitation.
Here's how to accept it.

For Learners

Join our community and start learning.
www.gameupafrica.com

For Mentors & Industry Professionals

Provide mentorship, and studio externship opportunities.

Learn more at **www.gameupafrica.com/mentors**

For Funders & Partners

Support our growth plans through funding and sponsorship.

Connect with us
www.gameupafrica.com/partners

For Studios & Employers

Hire graduates and let's build a solid workforce for the African games industry together.

Find a new hire
www.gameupafrica.com/graduates

Partners

maliyo GAMES · ENDLESS · Google · AMBASSADE DE FRANCE AU NIGÉRIA *Liberté Égalité Fraternité*

Media Partners

GLOBAL GAME JAM · GAMES FOR CHANGE · AFRICA GAMES WEEK · GIA GAMES INDUSTRY AFRICA · igda · agr AFRICA GAMES REPORT · THU TALENT LEAGUE 2024

Contact



Hugo Obi
Founder
hugo.obi@maliyo.com



Dorothy Orina
Programs Coordinator
dorothy.orina@maliyo.com

With gratitude to: Course curators, facilitators, clan leads, volunteer mentors, alumni, and global partners from Xbox, EA, Disney Games, IGDA, and more.


GAMEUP
AFRICA