



**GENERATION
UNLIMITED**

A young man and woman are standing in a field of tall green corn plants. The man, on the left, is wearing a blue denim jacket over a red shirt and is looking down at a smartphone held by the woman. The woman, on the right, has her hair in braids and is wearing a black turtleneck. She is smiling slightly as she looks at the phone. The background is filled with large green corn leaves.

GenU Strategy

2026-2029

1. Context

A Generation at a Crossroads

For the first time in history, the world is home to the largest generation of youth ever—1.2 billion today, rising to 1.3 billion by 2030, with 90 percent in the Global South.¹ With the right opportunities, this generation has the potential to be a powerful force for economic growth, social progress, and global stability.²

Yet, today, 261 million youth are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET) – 67 per cent of whom are young women- and youth unemployment is three times higher than adult unemployment, exceeding 50 per cent in some countries.³ Over the next decade, 1.2 billion youth in the Global South will enter the workforce, but only 420 million jobs will be created.⁴ Meanwhile, it has been estimated that 75 per cent of employers struggle to find skilled talent, particularly in fast-growing digital and green industries.⁵ At the same time, the AI revolution could disrupt 40 per cent of jobs by 2030, disproportionately impacting low-skilled youth.⁶

Without urgent action, economic and social inequalities will deepen, leaving millions of young people behind in a rapidly transforming labour market.

¹ United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Population Prospects 2024*, <<https://population.un.org/wpp>>
² *World Population Prospects 2024*

³ International Labour Organization, *ILO modelled estimates on youth not in employment, education, or training (NEET)*, ILOSTAT, 2025, <https://rshiny.ilo.org/dataexplorer21/?lang=en&id=EIP_2EET_SEX_NB_A>, accessed November 2025.

⁴ World Bank, *Small and Medium Enterprises Finance*, 2025, <<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/sme/finance>>

⁵ Manpower Group, *2024 Global Talent Shortage Report*, <https://go.manpowergroup.com/hubfs/Talent%20Shortage/Talent%20Shortage%202024/MPG_TS_2024_GLOBAL_Infographic.pdf>

⁶ International Monetary Fund, *Gen-AI: Artificial Intelligence and the Future of Work*, *World Economic Outlook*, 2024, <<https://www.imf.org/-/media/files/publications/sdn/2024/english/sdnea2024001.pdf>>



A Generation of Opportunity

GenU sees this not as a crisis, but as a **transformational opportunity**.

- Young people consistently make up the largest proportion of new internet users and are most likely to be first adopters of emerging digital platforms and services.⁷ Sub-Saharan Africa is the world's fastest-growing region in mobile internet adoption, especially among its youth population.⁸
- Young people aged 18 to 34 are driving growth in new entrepreneurial activity worldwide.⁹
- 70% of youth are very worried about climate change (with higher rates in developing countries bearing the brunt of the climate crisis).¹⁰
- Young entrepreneurs (18-34 years) are more likely to prioritize sustainability (61% vs. 47%) and take steps to minimize environmental impact and maximize social impact (55% vs. 36%) than older entrepreneurs.¹¹

With the right skills, investments, and partnerships, young people can be the force driving: improved quality of life for themselves and their families; economic growth and poverty reduction; socio-political stability and community resilience; and enhanced agency for women and girls.

7 International Telecommunication Union (ITU), *Measuring Digital Development: Facts and Figures 2025*, <<https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Pages/facts/default.aspx>>

8 GSMA, *Youth Population to Drive Strong Subscriber Growth Across Sub-Saharan Africa*, GSMA Newsroom, 2019, <<https://www.gsma.com/newsroom/press-release/youth-population-to-drive-strong-subscriber-growth-across-sub-saharan-africa>>

9 Global Entrepreneurship Research Association (GERA), *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2022/2023 Global Report: Adapting to a "New Normal"*, 2024, <<https://www.gemconsortium.org/report/20222023-global-entrepreneurship-monitor-global-report-adapting-to-a-new-normal-2>>

10 Hickman, C. et al, *Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change*, The Lancet Planetary Health, 2021; summarized in World Economic Forum, "This chart shows global youth perspectives on climate change," <<https://www.weforum.org/stories/2022/10/chart-shows-global-youth-perspectives-on-climate-change>>

11 *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2022/2023 Global Report: Adapting to a "New Normal"*, 2024





Economic Growth & Poverty Reduction

- \$1 in education and skills is estimated to yield \$10-15 in economic growth.¹²
- Youth employment boosts productivity and consumer spending, creating a multiplier effect that drives job creation and economic growth.
- Youth employment in decent jobs decreases household poverty rates.



Socio-Political Stability & Community Resilience

- Lower youth unemployment reduces economic disenfranchisement, decreases the risk of social unrest, limits migration, and strengthens community resilience, fostering greater civic engagement, trust in institutions, and long-term national stability.
- With the right skills and opportunities, young people can drive the green transition, create sustainable jobs, advance innovative solutions and strengthen climate-adaptive communities, becoming architects of a more resilient and sustainable future.



Enhanced Agency for Adolescent Girls & Young Women

- Investing in women's skills and employment significantly enhances their agency and decision-making power. Evidence shows that skill development programmes not only improve women's economic outcomes but also bolster their self-confidence and sense of agency, enabling them to challenge traditional gender roles and societal norms.
- Additionally, women's employment has been linked to improved outcomes for future generations, as employed women are more likely to invest in their children's education and health (including that of girls), thereby perpetuating a cycle of empowerment and improved decision-making within families.

GenU is committed to unlocking this potential for youth, families, communities and nations through a bold, action-driven strategy for 2026-2029.

¹² UNESCO, *Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2012: Youth and Skills – Putting Education to Work*, 2013

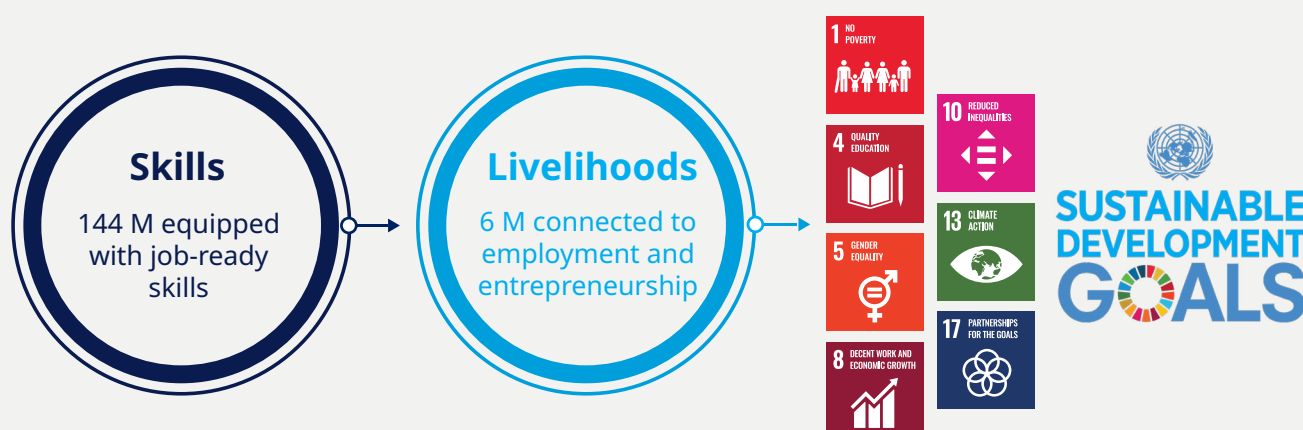


2. GenU Mission, Targets & Strategic Priorities (2026-2029)

GenU's mission is to *skill the world's young people and connect them to opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship*.

2029 Targets:

- 144 million young people (at least 60 per cent young women) will complete market-relevant skilling programmes, acquiring job-ready skills (including technical and vocational skills and/or transferable skills).
- 6 million young people (at least 60 per cent young women) will be connected to livelihood opportunities, including quality employment and entrepreneurship opportunities.
 - Quality employment: paid full-time and part-time jobs, and paid apprenticeships or internships.
 - Entrepreneurship: creating or expanding an existing venture or becoming gainfully self-employed.



To achieve these results, GenU will reach young people with the following **core programme interventions**:

- Skills development programmes, focused on job-ready technical and transferable skills that align with labour market needs.
- Connections to livelihoods via:
 - *Internships & Apprenticeship Programmes*: At least three months of paid work that enables training and acquisition of practical knowledge and skills to increase young people's ability to transition to full-time job placements.
 - *Job Matching & Placement Programmes*: Assisting or matching youth candidates with suitable skills, experience and qualifications to a suitable job, for example via online or offline platforms or job search centres, which can be bundled with career guidance and counselling.

◦ *Entrepreneurial Support:*

1. **Enterprise Incubation and Creation:** Non-financial services to support young entrepreneurs to move from idea to sustainable enterprise. Includes mentorship, business development and advisory services, networking opportunities, access to markets, and alumni engagement.
2. **Access to Finance and Seed Funding:** Availability of money or credit for young entrepreneurs to start, grow or sustain their businesses, e.g. seed funding, micro-grants, revolving loans, brokering with investors, access to pitching events.



In addition, **GenU, with partners, will support strengthening of national systems for sustainable impact at scale.** This includes:

- *Policy & Regulatory Reform:* Advocacy and technical support for enabling policies and regulations that drive young people's access to quality skilling, employment and entrepreneurship opportunities, especially for disadvantaged youth and women.
- *Digital Innovation & Transformation:* Supporting the scale-up of national digital platforms that connect youth to opportunities, leveraging AI capabilities.
- *Institutional Capacity Building & Ecosystem Coordination:* Enhancing institutional capacity (e.g. national training institutions, entrepreneurship hubs) and fostering public-private-youth coordination to align policies and training with labour market needs.
- *Sustainable Financing:* Unlocking domestic, multilateral development bank (MDB) and innovative financing models to scale youth skilling and livelihood opportunities.
- *Data for Impact:* Supporting government to use robust data and evidence to design and refine impactful policies and programmes, especially for disadvantaged youth and young women.

Strategic Priorities:

GenU will double down on its strategic priorities of AI/digital and green skills and opportunities, as well as opportunities for young women.

AI/Digital

The digital economy has been growing 2.5 times faster than global GDP growth according to the World Bank. AI could impact 40 percent of global jobs according to the IMF, which poses a serious risk of widespread job displacement through automation.

While AI is projected to disrupt nearly every industry, it also creates new pathways for young people to fast-track learning and enter the work-force as 'AI natives', better prepared for emerging opportunities. GenU is equipping youth to lead in the AI-driven economy by:

- Tackling the digital divide by expanding access to digital skills
- Scaling AI literacy for AI-powered jobs: Free AI training and certification from industry leading corporations
- Investing in uniquely human skills like creativity and collaboration
- Supporting young entrepreneurs to scale ventures that leverage AI



Green

By 2030, 100 million new 'green jobs' could be created, according to the International Labour Organization, but the current skills shortages will limit young people's ability to seize these opportunities. Investing in green skills at scale while creating resilient livelihood opportunities in the green economy is vital to ensuring that the green transition benefits all young people equitably.

GenU will focus on:

- **Green Skills Training & Job Readiness:** Building youth skills for employment in high-growth green sectors like renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and the circular economy
- **Green Job Pathways:** Partnering with governments and businesses to create green job pathways for youth in emerging sectors
- **Green Entrepreneurship:** Supporting young entrepreneurs to launch and grow green ventures in areas such as agri-business, waste management and climate-smart innovations

Young Women

Young women make up two-thirds of the 259 million young people Not in Education, Employment or Training, which puts them at a greater disadvantage in the evolving workforce. Barriers such as limited access to skills training, finance, and support networks mean that without targeted action, many young women will miss out on opportunities, including those created by both the AI-digital and green transitions.

GenU will focus on:

- Creating tailored pathways for young women into high-demand, non-traditional sectors through targeted skilling and safe, supportive work-based learning opportunities
- Expanding access to women-friendly financial services, seed funding, and mentorship through networks of female role models
- Supporting young mothers and disadvantaged young women through flexible learning, digital and community-based programmes, and advocacy for inclusive social protection policies

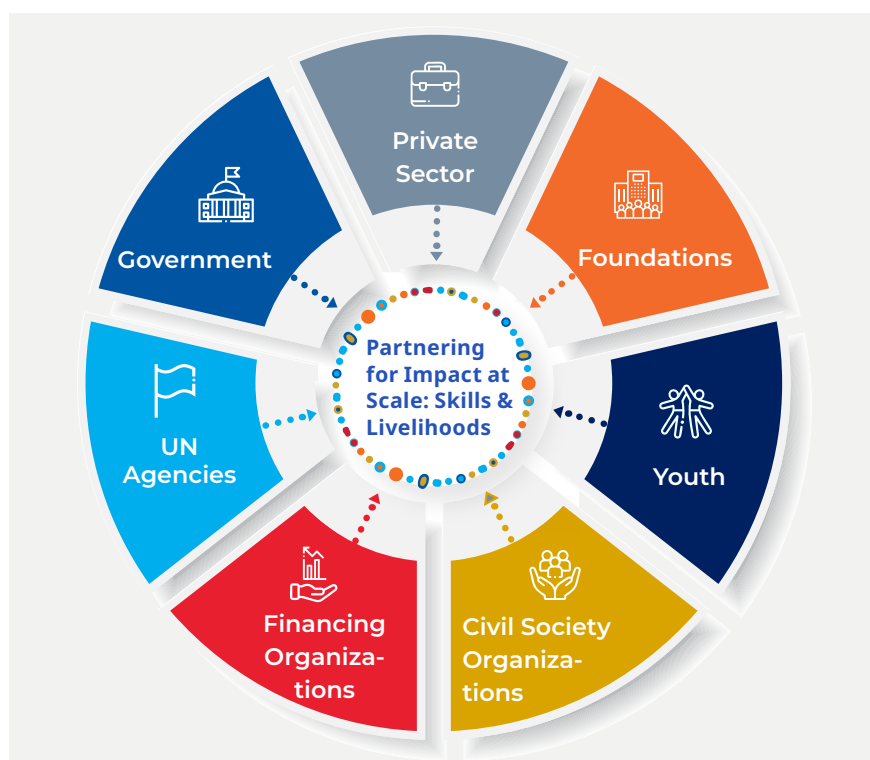


3. How GenU Will Deliver on its Ambition

Global and National Programmes implemented through Public-Private-Youth Partnership

Unlike a traditional development model, GenU delivers impact through Public-Private-Youth partnership, anchored in UNICEF, mobilizing resources, partnerships and solutions to drive large-scale impact.

Programmes are co-created, funded and implemented with public, private and youth partners, ensuring they align with labour market needs and meet aspirations of youth.



There are two main types of programmes:

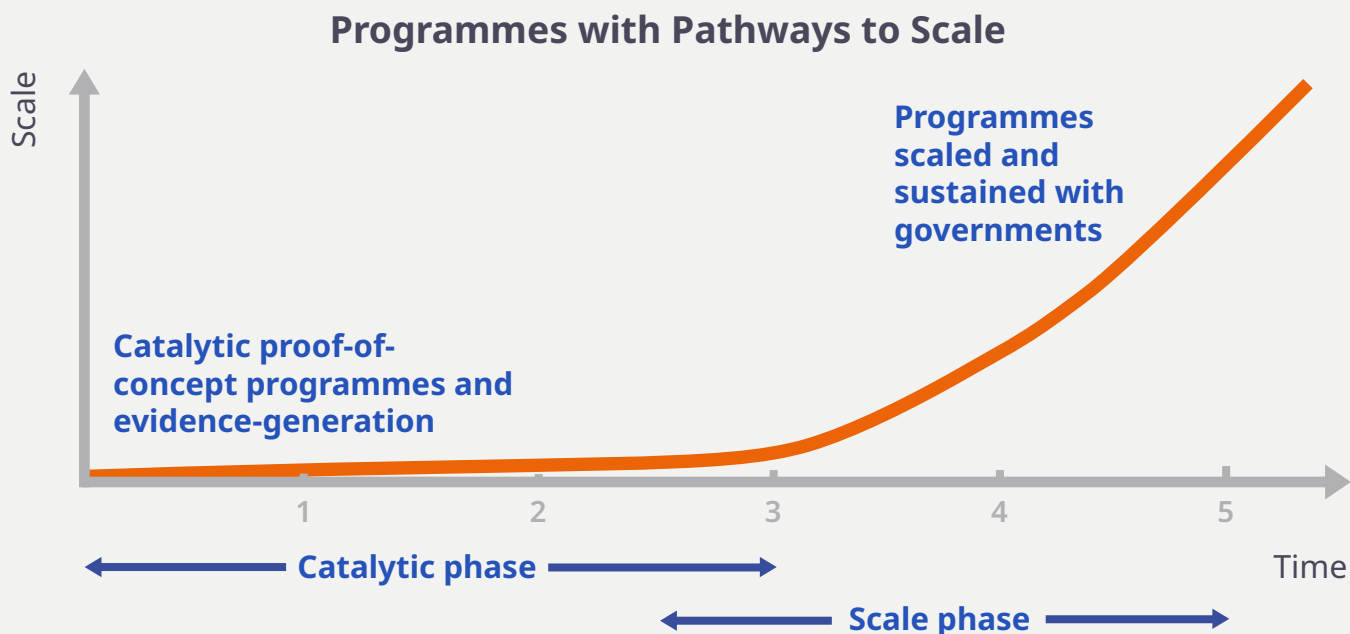
- 1) Global programmes: designed with global public, private and youth partners, often with bespoke resources, and adapted and scaled in multiple countries; and
- 2) National programmes that are conceptualized, developed and implemented with public, private and youth partners in country. These can become Global Programmes if replicable and scalable to other contexts.

Focus on Programmes With Pathways to Sustainable Impact at Scale

GenU prioritizes programmes that have pathways to sustainable impact at scale, most often working through national systems. If the programme is not already implemented through government, this means:

- Designing prototypes and de-risking 'proof of concept' programmes.
- Generating evidence of effectiveness.
- Advocating for adoption by government of successful programmes.
- Providing technical support to governments to implement and deliver at scale.

This does not preclude supporting local and impactful programmes that may not be scalable but are necessary to reach marginalized youth who would otherwise not be reached (i.e. 'last mile' populations).



Deliver Large-Scale Impact in 7 Accelerator Countries While Supporting Programming in 50+ Other Countries

While GenU currently supports programming in over 50 countries, through UNICEF Country Offices, the majority of its financial resources and technical assistance is directed to seven 'accelerator countries' (Bangladesh, Brazil, Egypt, India, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa), chosen for their high youth populations, significant youth employment challenges, vibrant private sector and youth leadership, government commitment and demonstrated potential for large-scale impact.



4. Key Enablers

Leveraging EdTech, JobTech and AI for Impact at Scale

Leveraging EdTech and JobTech is key to scaling skills and livelihood programmes for millions of young people. By integrating these technologies, and leveraging the power of AI, GenU can accelerate skilling, enhance employability, and drive economic resilience, ensuring young people are prepared for the jobs of the future.

GenU will specifically focus on harnessing AI and technology for:

- **AI-powered Guidance and Tutoring:** AI for personalized career counseling, job matching and real-time tutoring
- **National Skilling & Employment Digital Platforms:** Partner with governments to scale digital platforms that provide youth with access to skilling, jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities
- **Credentialing & Verification:** Blockchain to validate and globally recognize youth digital credentials
- **Mobile-First & Immersive Learning:** Mobile-first micro-learning and VR/AR to improve job-ready training
- **Data & Labour Market Insights:** AI-powered tracking of skills trends and job gaps to inform policy-making

GenU's Global Governance: Leadership for Lasting Impact

GenU's Board, Global Leadership Council, and Young People's Action Team will continue to provide the strategic direction, high-level advocacy, and youth-driven insights needed to scale results globally. The Board advises on strategy, ensures GenU's financial health and mobilizes cross-sector investments and partnerships, the Global Leadership Council convenes top decision-makers who drive programme priorities, innovation and advocacy, and the Young People's Action Team ensures youth voices shape strategies and solutions that are relevant and impactful. Together, they help drive bold action, scale-up of effective programmes, and sustained impact for millions of young people worldwide.



Financing the Future: Funding Focus

In addition to maintaining and growing its core resource base (corporates, foundations and governments), GenU aims to add a new 'leveraging stream' which would further diversify its funding base and enable sustainable financing for impact at scale. This is especially critical given the widening SDG financing gap, rising national debt burdens (with total public debt in developing countries reaching approximately 60 per cent of GDP), declining ODA, and increasing threats to traditional development grant sources.

This 'leveraging stream' will include:

1

Influencing domestic government resources: National budgets are one of the largest sources of social spending in many countries where GenU works. In order to deliver impact at scale, GenU must influence government budget allocations. As an example, Yuwaah (GenU India) and UNICEF collaborated with the private sector and government to develop a career guidance programme. Advocacy efforts then secured a \$25 million annual allocation from the Indian government (approximately \$250 million over ten years embedded in the national budget), benefiting 30 million youth.

2

Leveraging financing from Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs): In Low-Income Countries, financing from MDBs ranges from 15-25 per cent. Influencing these financial flows presents an opportunity to mobilize significant financing for youth skills and livelihoods programmes, while GenU can also receive direct funding to provide technical support to governments on programme development and implementation.

3

Innovative Financing: Focus will be on:

- Blended finance: combines public and philanthropic funds with private sector investments to reduce risks and attract commercial capital for high-impact skills and livelihoods initiatives.
- Debt swaps: a financial mechanism in which a creditor (a government, multilateral institution, or private lender) agrees to reduce, restructure, or cancel a portion of a country's external debt in exchange for the debtor country committing to invest this amount in youth skilling and livelihood opportunities.



Youth Centrality: Youth Driving Impact Innovation & Policy

GenU's success hinges on its ability to partner with youth at every stage—from strategy to execution.



Youth in Decision-Making:

Young people hold seats in governance structures, co-design strategies, shape programmes and provide lived experience and feedback to assess results—ensuring accountability and solutions that meet their needs and aspirations.



Youth-Led Innovation:

Direct funding and support for youth-driven solutions accelerates local impact, scales transformative ideas, and enables lasting change.



Youth as Policy Influencers:

GenU and partner platforms equip young leaders to advocate for policies that reflect their priorities, helping to ensure that they drive—not just inform—decisions.

Learning & Adapting: Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning

GenU's Monitoring, Evaluation, Research, and Learning (MERL) agenda aims to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in GenU's efforts to support young people at scale in their transition from learning to earning. MERL ensures robust programme design, implementation, and quality assurance and contributes to advocacy, systems strengthening, and expansion of the evidence base for youth skills and livelihoods.

Monitoring:

GenU will track progress, enable adaptive management, and enhance transparency and accountability through: (1) Programme-level data collection, tools and systems, (2) a centralized High-Frequency Monitoring database, (3) a Global Dashboard to disseminate programme results, and (4) Global monitoring of systems-level outcomes relating to youth, such as SDG 8.6.1 on youth who are Not in Education, Employment, or Training (NEET).



Evaluation:

GenU will deepen its focus on evaluation to generate evidence and actionable insights on a range of outcomes and wider impact of GenU's programmes and partner initiatives, through activities such as: (1) Summative evaluations (including endline reviews and thematic assessments), (2) Primary surveys (including tracer studies, participatory action research, and qualitative data collection), and (3) Impact assessments (using experimental designs, quasi-experimental approaches, and contribution analysis).



Research and Learning:

GenU's research and learning agenda will aim to enhance the creation, sharing, dissemination, and application of knowledge and best practices in youth skills and livelihoods through: (1) Action research (to document innovative approaches and lessons learned), (2) Knowledge partnerships and platforms (including YouthForesight, the GenU Technical Advisory Group on MERL), (3) Evidence-based advocacy through global observatories and technical summits, for instance on NEET and (4) Thought leadership through executive reports and thematic briefs on key topics aligned with GenU's strategic priorities, to inform policy and practice.

Communicating our Impact: Collectively Driving Influence & Investment

GenU's communication strategy aims to position GenU as an exemplar global Public-Private-Youth ecosystem on youth skills and livelihoods, anchored in UNICEF. This will entail credibly showcasing impact, with and for youth, by GenU's partner network through assets such as impact stories, thought leadership, and celebrating results at scale delivered with the partner network.

Voices and channels of GenU partners, leaders and influencers will be leveraged to credibly maximize reach, and key UN, private sector, youth and government forums will be capitalized on to drive influence and investment.





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