

SDG PROGRESS REPORT

2024



Knowledge E

enriching | engaging | empowering

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Introduction

Sustainability is no longer an option, it is a necessity. As the world faces complex social, environmental, and economic challenges, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as a universal blueprint for action.

At our core, we believe that businesses have a responsibility to be part of the solution, using their influence and resources to drive meaningful change.

This past year, we have deepened our commitment to embedding sustainability into every aspect of our operations. Rather than viewing the SDGs as standalone targets, we have embraced them as a guiding framework for innovation, growth, and long-term resilience. Our approach prioritises areas where we can make the most significant impact, ensuring that our efforts lead to tangible, lasting benefits.

As in the past years, our annual report reflects our achievements but also the challenges we continue to face and address. Transparency, accountability, and continuous learning remain at the heart of our journey.

Through collaboration, bold action, and an unwavering commitment to the SDGs, we aim to create a future that is not just sustainable but also equitable and inclusive for all.

Message from our CEO

Over the past year, we have continued to push the boundaries of sustainability, reinforcing our commitment to responsible business practices. This report reflects our progress, the challenges we have navigated, and the insights we have gained as we continue to be a force for positive change in our industry.

Building on last year's momentum, we have deepened our impact through new initiatives, expanded partnerships, and placed a stronger emphasis on innovation. Our teams remain at the heart of this journey, and we are proud to see their dedication to sustainability and community engagement grow.

We recognise that sustainability is a continuous pursuit. The challenges we face globally demand resilience, collaboration, and bold action. As we look ahead, we reaffirm our commitment to integrating sustainability into every aspect of our strategy, ensuring that we create long-term value for our stakeholders and the world around us.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Kardan', positioned above a thin horizontal line.

Kamran Kardan
Chief Executive Officer

Measuring progress:

A review of our 2024 goals

Goal	Activity / Project
Establish a DEI group	As part of our 2024 sustainability objectives, we committed to forming a DEI group. This goal was achieved with the formal establishment of the group in late 2024. Further details on the group's formation and early progress can be found on page 7.
Continue to support democratisation of knowledge	As always, a lot of effort is put into advancing this goal. In 2024, our KnE Clues series continued to simplify complex academic concepts and expand understanding. More information on our FORM initiative and free resources is available on page 12.
Strive to net zero CO ₂	In 2024, we upheld our commitment to minimising our net CO ₂ emissions by focusing on both reduction and offset strategies. We took steps to track and better understand our carbon footprint across our operations. While this remains an ongoing journey, our continued efforts reflect a growing focus on environmental responsibility and contribute to our broader sustainability goals.
Offer free courses with KnE Learn	In 2024, we achieved our goal of providing accessible learning opportunities designed to remove financial barriers, empower diverse communities, and promote lifelong learning. Through a range of free and inclusive educational initiatives, we were able to reach a broad audience and support equitable access to knowledge.
Develop AI tools	As part of its 2023 SDG commitments, Zesty pledged to develop AI tools that promote equitable access and responsible innovation. In 2024, the company developed a range of new AI features to support accessibility and enable a more inclusive user experience. More details can be found on page 10.

Priority SDGs

As part of our commitment to advancing sustainable development and addressing the world's most pressing challenges, we have prioritised five key Sustainable Development Goals in 2024. We recognise that creating a more equitable, inclusive, and sustainable future requires coordinated action that supports education, empowers marginalised voices, strengthens communities, and safeguards the planet. These SDGs are deeply aligned with our mission, and our efforts this year are focused on driving meaningful impact across these interconnected areas.



Gender Equality & DEI:

Building an Inclusive Future

In July 2024, a group of Knowies and passionate equality advocates teamed up to launch KnE Unite. KnE Unite identifies best as a DEI group with the aim and vision to have a psychologically safe community where everyone feels welcome and accepted. The mission of the community is to cultivate a culture of diversity, equity and inclusion within our organisation and the broader community. The group is committed to fostering an environment where all individuals, regardless of their background, feel valued, respected, empowered and safe. Key focus areas are ethnicity & culture, gender and identity, and mental health.

The expected outcomes are:

- As a part of the Publishers' SDG Compact, and with a focus on SDG 10, we plan to reduce (if any) inequalities in the workplace.
- Make Knowledge E a (more) inclusive workplace where everyone feels welcome, accepted, and safe.
- Achieve a more engaged and more involved internal community.
- Project our values and mission to the wider industry, alongside the KnE Foundation.

While still in its early stages, the formation of this group marks a step toward creating a more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable organisational environment.

Looking ahead, the group plans to roll out targeted training and awareness campaigns on unconscious bias, growth mindset, and inclusive leadership. These educational efforts are designed to equip teams with the tools and understanding needed to support one another in meaningful ways.

KnE Unite represents a commitment to continuous improvement in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion. As the community grows, so too does its capacity to inspire real change, not only within Knowledge E but across the entire scholarly publishing ecosystem.

Gender equality at Knowledge E

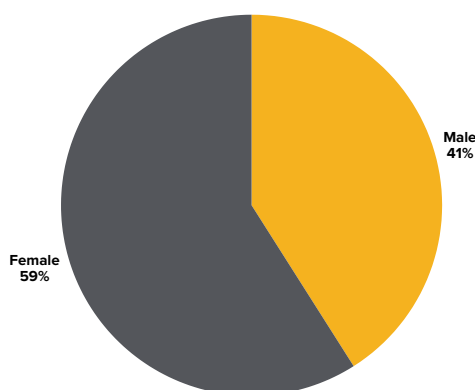
Gender equality remains a core value at Knowledge E, reflected in both our internal culture and our external activities.

In 2024, we continued to build a more balanced and inclusive workforce, with a global gender distribution of 59% women and 41% men. At our UAE headquarters, which represents 70% of our total workforce, the gender balance stood at 58% women and 42% men.

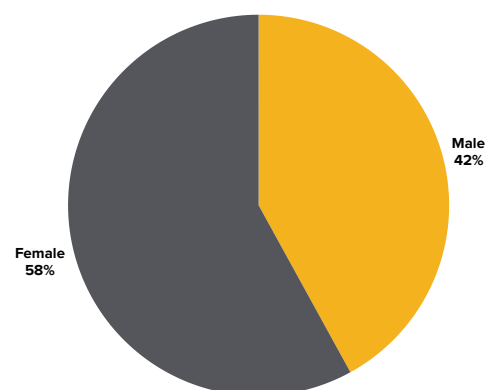
These figures demonstrate a positive shift toward greater gender equity across the organisation, moving beyond female representation alone to fostering a more inclusive environment for all.

Our ongoing efforts aim to ensure equal opportunities, support diverse perspectives, and create a workplace where everyone can thrive.

Gender distribution - Global



Gender distribution - HQ



Zendy and KnE Learn:

Empowering knowledge, bridging inequalities

Zendy is committed to supporting the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2024, with a particular focus on SDG 4 (Quality Education) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). A mission-driven digital research platform, Zendy focuses on democratising access to scholarly literature through affordable subscriptions and ethically developed AI tools tailored to diverse learning environments.

Zendy's core mission supports SDG 4 by increasing global access to peer reviewed academic publishing with a focus on under-represented student populations and first-generation researchers.

In 2024, Zendy expanded its global content coverage by adding more than 50,000 new open access and paywalled resources, including scholarly articles, books and grey literature across STEM and HSS subject areas, and with a particular focus on education, health, sustainable development, and applied sciences. New partnerships with providers such as UNESCO continue to diversify the platform's content, ensuring that students and researchers from underserved academic communities can engage with relevant content regardless of funding or institutional affiliation.

Zendy's platform is designed to address systemic inequalities in access to knowledge, providing a solution for students and researchers penalised by lack of funding. In 2024, Zendy worked on heightening the visibility of regional and local research outputs, integrating content from publishers and research centres in the MENA region, Sub-Saharan Africa, and South Asia. These partnerships help to promote important scholarship which is often excluded from mainstream indexes, thereby reducing content visibility gaps and promoting South-to-South knowledge exchange.

Zendy additionally supported the inclusion of regionally published academic materials in languages other than English, with the aim of promoting voices from the Global South, directly supporting SDG 10 by broadening what is visible, cited, and discoverable globally.

Alongside this expansion in content, Zendy significantly developed its AI capabilities to enhance the discoverability and accessibility of its content. As part of its 2023 SDG commitments, Zendy pledged to develop AI tools that promote equitable access and responsible innovation. In 2024, the company developed a range of new AI features, including text to speech, key phrase highlighting, source-aware summarisation, citation generation, and adaptive content recommendations tailored to users' disciplinary focus and linguistic preferences, to support accessibility and enable a more inclusive user experience.

Zendy also successfully launched ZAIA RAG (Retrieval-Augmented Generation), a context-aware AI assistant designed for academic research. Unlike generalist AI models, ZAIA is powered by licensed content and provides transparent citations for every generated output. To protect publisher rights and uphold ethical AI practices, Zendy implemented a publisher opt-in licensing model, ensuring that content used in AI interactions is governed by mutual agreement. All AI tools were developed within a framework of clear, consent-based licensing, ensuring that innovation is grounded in equity and transparency, a core priority in advancing both SDG 4 and SDG 10.

Zendy also started developing usage dashboards to support content providers and institutions in understanding the broader impact of their publications. These dashboards are designed to go beyond conventional metrics and capture how research is engaged with in real-world contexts. The aim is to provide partners with transparent insights into the societal relevance and geographic reach of their content, particularly in regions where visibility and access are often limited.

Looking ahead, Zendy remains committed to advancing equitable access to knowledge through responsible innovation, inclusive partnerships and ongoing dialogue with the communities we serve. By aligning our work with the goals of SDG 4 and SDG 10, we aim to support more just, informed, and resilient education and research ecosystems worldwide.

Advancing knowledge without barriers

In 2024, we continued to commit to Quality Education and Reduced Inequalities by expanding our portfolio of fully online, self-paced programmes, courses, webinars, and workshops. These on-demand, professional development resources eliminate barriers related to time, geography, language, and cost. We've also made some of this educational material freely available to everyone, including:

- Academic Conferences: Select, Submit & Present Successfully
- CV Writing for Career Success
- [The Principles of Adult Learning](#)

In response to the growing intersection of technology and academia, we're similarly providing courses and trainings at no cost, including:

- [Learn the Basics of AI](#)
- Exploring AI's Role in Healthcare Leadership

We're similarly nurturing more interdisciplinary and inclusive approaches to research and knowledge production, through:

- [Inter and Transdisciplinary Approaches in Research and Higher Education](#)

These educational resources, some of which are completely available for free, reflect our ongoing mission to enhance professional competencies, encourage lifelong learning, and foster inclusive academic ecosystems. They also contribute to SDG 4, which emphasises education for sustainable development, and SDG 10, which calls for the empowerment and social, economic, and political inclusion of all, irrespective of age, sex, disability, race, ethnicity, origin, religion, or economic or other status.

By expanding access to knowledge and skills across the MENA region and beyond, KnE Learn continues to play a vital role in building a more equitable and sustainable future.

Forum For Open Research in MENA:

A catalyst for positive action

The Forum for Open Research in MENA (FORM) is a non-profit membership organisation supporting the advancement of Open Science policies and practices in research communities and institutions across the Arab region.

FORM is an independent project of the [Knowledge E Foundation](#) (a community interest company). We believe that increasing the accessibility and visibility of research is key to ensuring the sustainability of scholarly ecosystems.

Our focus is on empowering libraries, higher education institutions, research councils and policy makers to collaborate on activities, projects and resources that promote engagement with, and the generation of, open research, enabling them to better serve the needs of local research communities. We want to support all our stakeholder groups in the journey towards a more ‘open’ world by facilitating the exchange of actionable insights and the development of practical policies, and by encouraging the evolution of a strong cross-regional collaborative community.

This has been a significant year for Open Science advocates across the world, with a range of developments and advancements - with new initiatives, infrastructures, policies, practices and funding bodies emerging to support the progression of Open Science activities in their myriad forms. FORM has been honoured to be able to participate in and support, many of these advances – both globally and locally. In addition, it has been a busy year for us as an initiative. We have expanded our membership and are delighted to be able to formally welcome new Member Organisations and Strategic Partners. We have also augmented our Community Development Activities to include a new workshop series, ‘How to be Open’, providing targeted capacity building opportunities for researchers, librarians and institutional administrators.

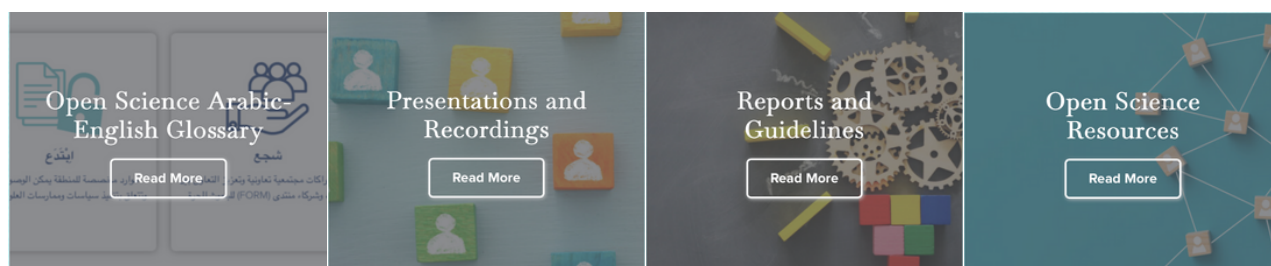
These workshops are complemented by our recently launched resource series containing short guidelines and useful tips for our stakeholders. We also launched a new diamond Open Access journal, *Al Wusul: The Arab Journal of Open Science Policies and Practices*.

In addition, we were also invited to convene a special regional session at the 10th Science Summit, taking place in New York alongside the 79th UN General Assembly, to discuss key challenges and opportunities for fostering equitable and sustainable research ecosystems within the Arab states, and facilitate multi-stakeholder dialogue concerning the visibility of Arab voices and research within the global scientific community.

Free resources

The production and promotion of open research is becoming increasingly important; it is not only a primary concern for all areas of the academic ecosystem, but also impacts the commercial and industrial sectors, and is crucial to the development of successful knowledge economies across the world.

Our aim is to provide a library of educational resources in Arabic and English, relating to the development and implementation of Open Science policies and practices in higher education institutions and research communities. Our goal is to empower libraries, higher education institutions, research councils and policy makers to collaborate on activities, projects and resources that promote engagement with, and the generation of, open research – enabling them to better serve the needs of local research communities.



We have started to produce localised guidelines on key topics for our stakeholders. Topics so far include ‘What are Preprints?’, ‘How to Safeguard Your Open Access Copyrights’, ‘Becoming an Open Peer Reviewer’.

We are also providing translation support to global open science advocacy organisations to ensure their toolkits, guidelines and solutions are accessible for Arab research communities. Groups we have supported include: PKP, DOAJ, and ASAPBio.

We have continued to provide free, high-quality resources and learning opportunities for researchers, librarians, and academic institutions. Through our collaboration with the Forum for Open Research in MENA, we have hosted a series of open-access webinars and workshops designed to address key challenges and emerging trends in scholarly communication. These sessions have covered practical topics such as launching diamond Open Access journals, understanding transformative agreements, and implementing Open Access policies within libraries.

By making these resources freely available, we aim to empower academic stakeholders across diverse regions, particularly in the Global South, to engage with and contribute to a more open, equitable, and sustainable scholarly ecosystem.

Finally, we have collaborated with the Qatar National Library to organise the 3rd Annual Forum for Open Research, with a record-breaking 1,400+ registrants.

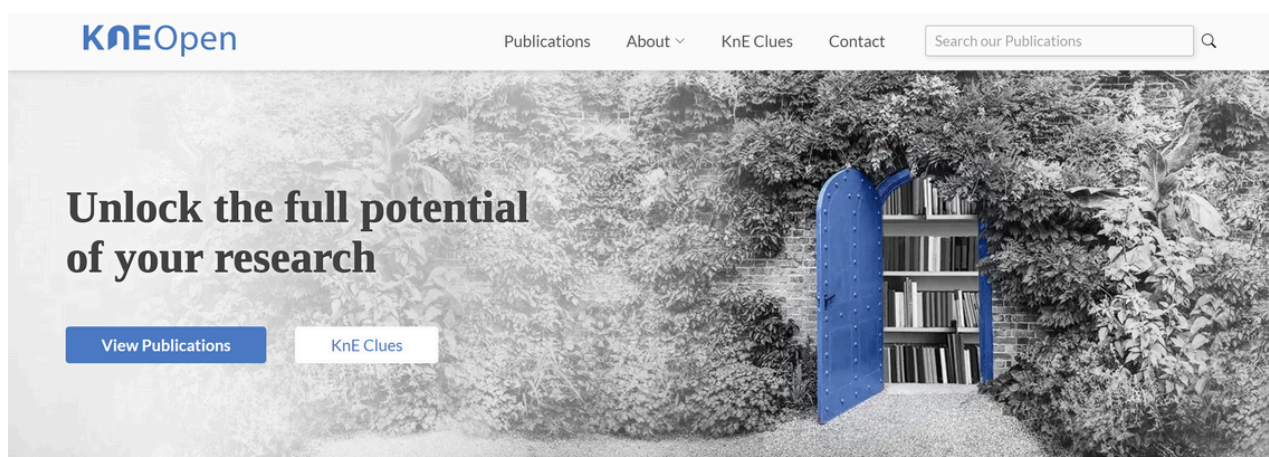
With 21 sessions, 67 speakers, and 1457 delegates from 89 countries (representing 760 institutions) across the world, this was a truly rich event filled with valuable insights, allowing delegates to share ideas, discuss challenges and exchange solutions. The event was further enriched with two outstanding workshops on the final day for in-person delegates, one for librarians offering an in-depth exploration of how to set up institutional repositories, and the other offering a valuable overview of best practices for engaging with open science in scholarly communications.

In addition to the scientific programme, we also had a number of other additions to the schedule, including our first Annual General Meeting (to establish the community's objectives for the coming year and elect a temporary Executive Committee) and a Signing Ceremony (to welcome new member organisations joining FORM).



Over the past year, FORM has started to take on a new role as a facilitator connecting global open science advocacy groups with those from the Arab region. This has encouraged us to enlarge our objectives to encompass supporting the visibility of Arab voices in global discussions.

Knowledge E Publishing



In 2024, Knowledge E rebranded its open-access research platform as KnE Open, introducing KnE Clues: a dedicated resource hub offering guidance for authors, researchers, journal editors, and conference organisers.

KnE Clues provides a wide range of free resources, including blogs, videos, detailed guides, and whitepapers, covering topics from journal creation to conference abstract writing.

By offering practical tools and insights, KnE Clues empowers individuals across the academic spectrum to enhance their research and publishing capabilities, fostering a more knowledgeable and informed global community.

As part of our ongoing commitment to SDG 4 and SDG 10, our publishing department has actively worked to expand access to scholarly knowledge through a range of impactful initiatives.

Our publishing portfolio also saw meaningful growth, with the addition of new journals that align with our mission to support equitable access to knowledge, such as *Al Wusul: The Arab Journal of Open Science Policies and Practices*. A significant focus has been placed on promoting and developing diamond Open Access journals, reinforcing our goal to eliminate financial barriers for both authors and readers.

These efforts reflect our commitment to fostering a more inclusive and sustainable scholarly communication ecosystem, especially within underrepresented and emerging research communities.

Climate action:

In our office and beyond

Also in 2024, we continued to advance our climate responsibility efforts by more accurately tracking and monitoring our CO₂ footprint and maintaining our commitment to long-term net-zero goals.

While balancing operational needs with environmental impact, we remained focused on reducing emissions, particularly within our headquarters. Efforts were directed toward improving energy efficiency, with a continued emphasis on minimising electricity usage related to air conditioning and indoor lighting, key factors given the regional climate.

Alongside these internal initiatives, Knowledge E continued to explore opportunities for carbon offsetting, reinforcing its dedication to sustainable business practices. We have conducted our first, of hopefully many to come, carbon offsetting activities. We have fully offset the CO₂ of our HQ electricity consumption.



In 2024, the Knowledge E Foundation furthered its commitment to SDG 13 by sponsoring a second large-scale climate change mural in Cairo, Egypt.

This initiative, in collaboration with the University of Exeter and Art Work Exeter, aimed to raise public awareness about environmental challenges and inspire community engagement.

This year's mural was commissioned to another experienced muralist, Gary Cook. The Exmouth-based artist, also known as "GARf", was selected by Art Work Exeter and the University of Exeter to create an unforgettable contribution for the University Green Futures' We Still Have a Chance project.

Cook was an art director for most of his career, working in advertising for more than 20 years. A few years ago, he began creating wall art and has since been working in Exmouth, where his talent and efforts have transformed numerous public spaces. As an artist who deeply considers the impact of his work, Cook focuses on selecting the right style, colour palette, and elements for each piece, ensuring it harmonises with the setting, environment, and community where it will reside.

The new mural depicts a young girl with a butterfly in her hand, staring at a bright world ahead. The left side of the mural is monochrome with ships, sewer pipes, cars, and smoke that overtakes the sky, while the right side depicts a vibrant community with houses, buildings, and different means of transportation and sustainable energy sources like wind turbines. Separating both worlds is a parent and their child, their backs turned to the decay behind them as they look ahead at the vivacious community in front of them. This transition is a powerful reminder that we can be the difference between these two worlds through our actions and our choices.



Art Work Exeter and the Green Futures team have provided an exceptional opportunity for emerging artists to showcase their work on a large scale, while also making a meaningful contribution to the city's streets. We are honoured to support this creative initiative, which exemplifies the power of creativity and collective effort in envisioning a sustainable future and raising awareness about pressing global challenges, particularly climate change.

Kamran R. Kardan – Founder, Knowledge E Foundation

Situated near the City Library, the artwork serves as a daily reminder of the impact of individual and collective actions on the planet. This project builds upon a previous mural sponsored in Alexandria ahead of COP27, reinforcing the Foundation's dedication to using art as a medium for environmental advocacy and education.

Conclusion

As we close out 2024, we take pride in the meaningful progress made across our sustainability and social impact objectives. From the successful formation of our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) group to the advancement of inclusive publishing practices, we have taken measurable steps toward building a more just, equitable, and sustainable future.

Our commitment to the democratisation of knowledge remained at the forefront throughout the year. Through KnE Clues, FORM, and our free webinars and workshops, we continued to break down barriers to information and empower researchers and learners from all backgrounds. These efforts underscore our belief that open access publishing is not just a business model but a global imperative that promotes equity, transparency, and shared progress.

In parallel, we recognised the urgent need to confront climate change and took steps to better understand and reduce our carbon footprint across operations. From monitoring our energy usage to environmentally conscious practices in the office, we view climate action as a core component of our broader sustainability mission. These actions represent the early stages of a longer-term strategy that aligns with global climate targets and reinforces our responsibility to future generations.

The launch of KnE Unite in 2024 marked a foundational milestone in our DEI journey. By fostering a psychologically safe and inclusive workplace, we are laying the groundwork for deeper engagement, richer collaboration, and a culture where every voice is valued. This initiative, along with our investment in accessible education through KnE Learn, reflects our unwavering dedication to creating systems that uplift and include.

2024 was also a year of innovation with purpose. Through Zendy's AI-driven features, such as adaptive content recommendations, source-aware summarisation, and accessibility tools, we made major strides in leveraging technology to enhance user experience and support equitable access to knowledge. These advancements demonstrate our belief that digital transformation should go hand-in-hand with social good.

Looking ahead, we remain committed to expanding these efforts in 2025 and beyond. Our focus will remain on embedding sustainability and inclusion into every aspect of our operations—driving positive impact not only within our organisation but across the global knowledge ecosystem. By continuing to invest in open access, environmental stewardship, inclusive technology, and community-building, we aim to be a model for socially responsible innovation and a force for change in the scholarly publishing industry.

Next steps

As we look toward 2025, we remain committed to building on the progress of 2024 by further integrating sustainability, inclusion, and open knowledge into every layer of our organisation. Our goals are aligned with several priority Sustainable Development Goals, each representing a pillar of our vision for a more just and sustainable global knowledge ecosystem.



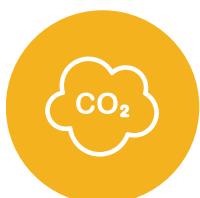
Further develop our DEI group

We will aim to introduce targeted capacity-building programs that support the personal and professional growth of staff fostering an inclusive workplace culture and equitable opportunities for advancement.



Continue to support democratisation of knowledge

We remain steadfast in our commitment to breaking down barriers to information and ensuring equitable access to knowledge for all. This is not a one-time goal but a continuous pursuit, and we recognise it as a vital foundation for social equity, innovation, and global progress.



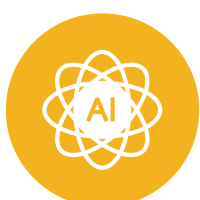
Measure and share our impact transparently

We commit to implement improved monitoring tools to track the educational, social, and environmental outcomes of our initiatives, and publish regular updates that reflect our progress toward the SDGs ensuring accountability and shared learning.



Inclusive education with KnE Learn

Continue expanding KnE Learn with new, multilingual courses developed in collaboration with diverse regional partners—supporting SDG 4 and SDG 10 by breaking down barriers related to language, cost, and geography.



Advance ethical AI

Building on last year's innovations, we are committed to ensuring that these technologies remain transparent and inclusive, auditing their impact regularly to safeguard against bias and uphold our mission to make information accessible to all.

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