



# 2024

## ANNUAL REPORT



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# About Onja, our mission, and values

## Mission

To nurture talented, underprivileged youth to lead impactful careers in tech, unlock opportunities for others and accelerate Madagascar's development.

## About

Onja is a social enterprise training underprivileged youth into world-class software developers.

We find the brightest students in Madagascar who can't afford to continue their education and train them in English language and software development. After just two-and-a-half years they are ready to work as remote front-end software developers in international tech teams.

Once in a job, our developers earn a good salary that helps them support their families and pay forward the opportunity to a new wave of students. They unlock exciting careers that fulfil their potential and accelerate the development of their nation.

Our first cohort, 'Wave 1', consists of nineteen talented and committed graduates who are now working remotely for our partner companies in Europe and the US.

With this immensely successful first cohort, and a proven social model, our goal is now to scale our impact by training 360 students over the next four years.





## Values



**Love**

Love is the fuel to all good deeds and the essence to life itself. Love lets us put our mission before ourselves and have a meaningful impact that will burn bright long after we are gone.



**Diligence**

Our common goal is to help underprivileged youth to get the same opportunities we had, so we work hard and we don't give up, even when things can seem impossible.



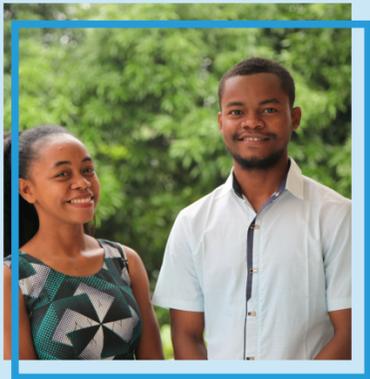
**Integrity**

We uphold our commitments. We align what we say and what we do, live by our word and stick to our values even when it might be easier not to.



**Togetherness**

Our team members are chosen from all over Madagascar and the world and have different backgrounds and upbringings. So far from home, we support each other like family.



**Humility**

We keep our feet on the ground and our heads in the clouds: Understanding where we come from and being grounded to that, while dreaming big and believing we can achieve what others say is impossible.



**Gratitude**

At the core of Onja's model is giving back to the community. Through gratitude, we not only appreciate the opportunity and support we receive but also commit to contributing, ensuring our mission advances and positively impacts the community we serve.



**Respect for Malagasy culture and values**

The majority of our team and stakeholders are Malagasy so we strive to ensure that Malagasy culture is given an importance that reflects this. While Malagasy culture is our baseline, we have a unique blend of Malagasy and western cultures, leveraging the strengths of both.



**Business Excellence**

Our mission is purely social, but we can only maximise our impact through a thriving social enterprise. We are a non-profit but operate like a lean startup. This means we strive for outstanding results and continuous improvement and bring exceptional value to our clients.

# Update from the team

Dear Onja Partners,

2024 was a big, exciting year for Onja. Thanks to your support, we're closer than ever to the growth stage we've been working so hard to achieve.

We started as a small team on a small beach town in Mahanoro. The first wave of students entered into their first year of work as developers back in 2021, and we had some big dreams for the future. By the end of 2024 we were growing fast, found our feet in our new campus in Toamasina – the second largest city of Madagascar – and laid strong foundations for rapid growth.

Our key focus of 2024 was preparing for the recruitment of Onja's next wave of students. A wider team of 67 members and 15 departments contributed uniquely to this effort. We strengthened relationships with key partners and explored innovative recruitment strategies, made great progress designing Onja's custom-made courses for the next wave, and brought the right people on board to support our growth.

Meanwhile, our first wave of students – who are now working developers – built on small and big wins throughout the year. Many reached work milestones, and we renewed contracts for the 2nd and 3rd years with multiple partners in 2024. Developers received incredible feedback from their managers and teams, who are so impressed with their hard work, collaboration, and problem solving skills.

With all this under our belt, we're in an exciting time in Onja's development. The following report will outline our current priorities, challenges faced and overcome, highlight some good news stories from around the organisation, and look to the year ahead.

Thank you for your continued support and for believing in our mission.

**Sam Lucas**  
CEO



**Program updates  
and progress made**



# Progress in key priority areas

Onja's current highest priorities, and progress made against each one, can be found below. We tend to point the efforts of the whole organisation towards these priorities, helping steer the way for everyone to move forward together.

## Recruiting Wave 2

Now we've proven the model, it's time to grow! Our goal is to recruit 90 students every year over the next 4 years, and we're on the journey of recruiting for Wave 2. The process hasn't been straightforward, but we built a solid foundation in 2024.

### *Pilot Waves on board!*

We started by recruiting small trial waves who will allow us to test and refine our scalable digital courses as we build them. This way we'll get the highest course quality ready for the large cohort.

In December 2024, the Recruitment team successfully selected a dozen students for a camp planned in January 2025. 4 students will pass the final selection to constitute a pilot wave 2.1, and will enter Onja's training program. They will play a pivotal role in providing feedback to improve our courses as they progress through the training.

Additionally, we recruited 3 other students to form a pilot wave 2.3. They have been testing and learning from our coding courses since November 2024. Read more on wave 2.3 in the 'Coding courses progress' section.

Aside from their invaluable inputs on the courses, the pilot waves are also instrumental for our Recruitment team. The selection process of these waves provided great insights to improve the assessment tools for the next wave of students. It also helped the Recruitment team develop alternative outreach methods through schools, churches, and other social organisations to connect with rural candidates.



*Pilot wave 2.3 testing our coding course.*





## Building a strong team

A key ingredient for scaling Onja is building a strong team. Our people are the cornerstone of the organisation, and we are committed to bringing the right fit on board! That means individuals who connect deeply to our mission, share the same values and are willing to make the big move to Toamasina, Madagascar. With a blend of local and international team members from different cultures, backgrounds and walks of life, we embrace different perspectives to strengthen and grow Onja.

Over the span of 12 months, we consolidated our Hiring department to work on this pivotal area of our organisation. They improved existing processes and implemented new ones, fostered more transparency around our life at Onja and our hiring process.

At the end of 2024, they grew our team with 21 successful new hires (9 international and 12 Malagasy) who made it past their initial probation period. This is more than a 50% increase in hire rate from 2023.

We've also been able to build out some key new departments to support our growth – such as Business Transformation, East Africa Expansion, and Human Resources – and filled key roles, including more English Course Designers to design the courses for our next wave of students.

## Exploring Onja's expansion

To create opportunities for as many students as possible and expand our impact further, Onja is turning its sights to where else we might be able to train new students.

While there is no shortage of talented, underprivileged students in Madagascar, the main purpose of international expansion is to reduce risk. Operating in just one country – especially a developing country in Africa – is risky to Onja's long-term future. With operations in more than one place, we can redirect resources to other locations if one becomes blocked, ensuring that our impact continues to grow.

We have opted to take a slow and steady approach, taking time to explore multiple options, and select the nation with the highest chance of success.

### The main criteria are:

1. A poor nation with very high need
2. Significant numbers of high-achieving students without opportunity to study at university
3. English language reasonably widely spoken
4. Safe, secure and welcoming
5. Access to reliable internet (starlink).

Points (1) and (2) are crucial for our mission. We believe that points (3) and (4) will help attract and build the team we need to scale effectively. (5) is important for our enterprise. Our developers rely on a decent internet connection to communicate with their colleagues and get their work done. Starlink is a game changer, allowing us to operate anywhere with the technology.

We have explored Rwanda and Uganda, which both have great potential. We will continue to explore these nations this year. Also on our list to explore are Sierra Leone, The Gambia, and Ethiopia.

If we are confident a nation meets our criteria we will start operations there. If no nations fully meet our criteria, we will choose one that best fits.



# Achievements, impact and reach





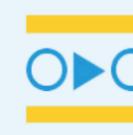
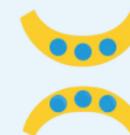
## Initial Graduation

After 2.5 years of intensive training programme and an average of 2 years work experience with international tech companies, our first wave of students officially graduated from the study component of their time with Onja in March 2024.

Their parents joined us from all over Madagascar to celebrate their hard work and achievements.

In Madagascar only 1 in every 6 students access higher education. As a result, the majority of the most brilliant young people are limited to low- paying, unfulfilling careers. So we're very proud of this accomplishment.

This achievement also proves that Onja's training program is effective. We're working to make it even better for the next wave of students!





## Scalable Onja online course creation

Onja's training programme lasts 2.5 years. It's essentially an accelerated degree in software development and English language at the same time! The first year is dedicated to learning English. Next, students are trained as front-end developers. Our first wave of students studied in the classroom with teachers and lecturers.

As we scale our impact with hundreds of students, we are moving towards a primarily digital based course. Students will still learn in the classroom but from our online courses, and with the assistance of an Onja tutor. This means our students get the same high-quality lessons across classes and cohorts.

### English Course Design updates

The English Course Designers are on a mission to design high quality online courses that will bring Onja students from a beginner level (A1) to a professional level (C1) within a year. This will enable students to work with international tech teams after just 2.5 years of training.





## Four fundamental English courses in progress!

The English Course Design team progressed well in the design of 4 courses so far:

- **Beginner level (A1):** the goal is to help students develop basic communication skills in everyday situations. The team designed 2 weeks of content which equals to 54% of the courses for this level. This includes video lessons, workbook activities, exam preparation sessions and assessments. The team hit their 100th video made for A1 in 2024.
- **Low intermediate level (B1):** it aims to help students communicate more independently. The team designed 2 weeks of content for B1 (lower intermediate level) which makes up 15% of the courses for this level.
- **Speech and pronunciation course:** Students usually struggle with the sounds of English and we hope to assist them with a course that is tailored to their background and language. The team designed 1 week of content for the Speech course which makes up 43% of the course.
- **Growth mindset course:** the team developed this Growth mindset course alongside the English courses. We believe students need to have a growth mindset to overcome challenges, have good academic performance and learn how to cope with failures. The team designed 4 weeks of content for the Growth mindset course which equals to 20% of the course.



Our pilot wave is currently testing the English Course design content, ready to deploy for Wave 2!

## Coding Course Design updates

Onja's first coding course enabled our first wave of students to progress from absolute beginners to industry-ready software developers. As we grow, the Coding Course Designers are now responsible for rebuilding this course, from the ground up, into a highly scalable online-style programme.

In 2024, the Coding Course Design team successfully planned and structured the curriculum for Wave 2. To ensure a smooth transition from the English training to Coding, the team designed some prerequisite courses. These include a computer basics course (2-day content) and a basic programming course (1-week content) which will provide an introduction on the internet and how computers work.

Similar to the English courses, we test our coding courses through trial runs before they are integrated into the training programme. In contrast to the Wave 2.1 who will be joining the full programme as Onja students, the Wave 2.3 will just learn software development from our custom-made courses and provide feedback to ensure the course is ready for Wave 2!



*From left to right: Laura and Mohammed - our Coding Course Designers.*



# Developer's accomplishments

3 years following their training period, our first wave of students are shining! We're proud of their hard work and commitment. Read some of the best highlights of 2024 below:

## Career growth

**7 new placements** in international tech companies, including a few notable ones:

- Sarah and Jerome at Inspired Consulting
- Clopedia and Peta at Wasabi
- Manjaka at THDS

## Many contracts with partner companies extended!

In 2024, 10 developers were extended for their 2nd or 3rd year at their companies. This is a significant achievement for both the developers and Onja. Long-term placements foster the sustainability of our model.



## Success story

### Tantely, smart and knowledge-driven: from student to a Mid-Level Developer at 90POE!

Tantely comes from Vodivato, a small remote village in Andilamena, Madagascar. He is one of Onja's talented developers, and part of our first wave of students. Before joining Onja, Tantely had just finished high school with no hope of attending university. Instead, he started farming with his parents, with the primary goal of meeting the family's needs rather than making money, as their land was small.

Things changed when Tantely was selected among other talented students to join Onja's training programme in 2019. He got the opportunity to continue his study, and a promise of a stable job. After 2.5 years of hardwork and dedication, Tantely was ready to enter the professional world and landed his first job as a Frontend developer in 2021.

Today, Tantely has a total of 3 years+ of experience under his belt. He is now actively contributing to the back-end team of his current company at 90POE. In 2024, he got an internal promotion to 'Mid Level Developer' and moved into his 3rd year within the company!

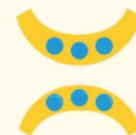
*'I've improved a lot since I joined Onja. I've developed many skills that I probably wouldn't have gained if I hadn't been at Onja, such as speaking English, critical thinking, and professionalism, just to name a few.'* – **Tantely**

Meet Tantely!



## Great feedback from partner companies

3 years following their training period, our first wave of students are shining! We're proud of their hard work and commitment, and forever grateful for the teachers and mentors who also played a crucial role in this success. Read some of the best highlights of 2024 below:



*"Daniel is progressing well, demonstrating a strong commitment to learning and actively enhancing his skills. He is contributing effectively to several projects, showing both initiative and adaptability. His professionalism is evident in all interactions, and his communication is consistently clear, fluent, and positive."* **Juan Arevalo** - **Managing Director at Randbee**

*"My view on Noeline's performance is very good, she's reliable, she doesn't need much guidance and I'm overall very satisfied; if I hadn't had her in the team, the overall performance would drop significantly."* **Eda Veleba** - **Lead Developer at Neuron Soundware**



# Organisational and leadership changes

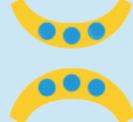


## New Board members

In 2024, we renewed Onja’s board with individuals who better reflect the vision of our organisation. They were instrumental in bringing Onja to life and were among its first team members.

From leading our first wave of students, to shaping Onja’s mission and growth vision, they are dedicated members who know our organisation and key stakeholders well.

With a blend of local and international members, they offer a unique perspective on leading Onja.



*Sam Lucas – Founder and Board member*



*Rina Ralaidovy – Alliances/Recruitment Manager and Board member*



*Mitantsoa Solofoniary – English Course Designer Manager and Board member*



# New departments to support our growth and expansion

Growth is an exciting stage and also comes with necessary compliances and adjustments. To fulfill these requirements, we created 3 new departments in 2024: Business Transformation, Legal and Human Resources.

## Business Transformation

In 2024, we introduced a Business Transformation department to help align to our value of business excellence. The team developed a risk management framework including an organisational risk register, policy for monitoring and evaluation and risk appetite statement. This is crucial to our organisation's maturity as a social enterprise as we seek to integrate risk management principles into decision making, core activities and business processes in carrying out our mission.

The team also conducted a comprehensive quality review of Onja's existing policies and processes. This resulted in the addition of further policies including in relation to workplace health and safety as well as authority to sign, and the compilation of a master list of Onja's suite of policies with a standardised policy review system.

The Business Transformation team is currently working on a project to help us understand our impact as an organisation. This is crucial to embed now on the verge of growth, so that we have a good framework in place to measure the difference we're making for our developers, our local staff, their families, and Madagascar as a whole.





## Legal department

In 2024, we consolidated our legal team and built the Legal department. Having talented team members focused on this aspect helps Onja operate within a solid legal framework.

In 2024, we successfully relocated to Jersey (Channel Islands) with registered entity, Onja Limited. We have gained status as a Prescribed Non-Profit Organisation and are registering as a Jersey charity. This new entity will allow us to operate much more easily, especially as we look to expand our work into different countries.

We also started a modern slavery engagement with Herbert Smith Freehills (United Kingdom) to have our model evaluated for alignment under international human rights standards. This is a standard practice in the United Kingdom, and something we wanted to do to provide additional assurance to our partners. We have since introduced various policies for our student training period and drafted a Modern Slavery Statement which we intend to share on our website.

## Human Resources

In 2024, we assessed the need for a distinct HR department to accommodate our growth. In November 2024, we successfully hired our first HR Officer.

From there, the team worked on key projects including the enhancement of internal rules and regulations, end of contract processes and the development of internal procedures to support our workplace policies.



# Partners and contributors

## 3rd year of partnership with World Data Lab!

Our partnership with World Data Lab began in 2022 when Natacha joined the team as an intern. We've already renewed this wonderful collaboration twice, and are now entering our third year.

World Data Lab is a fast-growing, impact-focused organisation with a vision aligned with Onja's. They analyse data on poverty, demographics, and consumer trends, turning it into actionable insights for policymakers, businesses, and other organisations.

Natacha has become a core part of their team, often getting strong feedback and recently progressed with an internal promotion to Associate Front End Developer.

We're extremely grateful for this partnership and look forward to many more years of collaboration!



## Celebrating a brand new partnership with Wasabi!

In December 2024, we celebrated Peta and Clopedia's first three months at their new jobs with US-based company Wasabi. Based out of Boston, Wasabi has approximately 500 employees and is on a mission to be the cheapest, fastest, most secure and reliable cloud storage in the world.

Peta and Clopedia have quickly become valuable contributors at Wasabi, working to refine user-facing features, resolve bugs, and enhance the performance of web applications.

While their work is heavily centered around React, they've been expanding their knowledge of Angular and integrating modern testing frameworks into their workflow. Collaborating closely with cross-functional teams, they've been making a strong impact in delivering high-quality, maintainable code and excellent user experiences.

We couldn't be more excited about this partnership with Wasabi and look forward to sharing more updates on Peta and Clopedia's progress.



## A successful partnership with Close the Gap

Access to good quality hardware is essential for our students to learn, and our developers to work remotely with their international teams at the campus in Toamasina.

Thanks to our partnership with Close the Gap, an international social enterprise that aims to bridge the digital divide, we acquired high quality and cost effective new IT equipment for our next wave of students at discounted prices.

This includes 158 monitors, 172 laptops, 3 printers, 4 servers, and 1 projector. We're incredibly grateful to Close the Gap for their generous contribution to Onja.

This partnership will help us train the next generation of talented, underprivileged young people in Madagascar into world class software developers.



## Looking ahead

2025 is shaping up to be a big year of change. We've laid strong foundations for our growth. This year we'll focus on recruiting students for our large Wave 2 cohort.

In the meantime we will be running our trial waves which will help us hone our courses ensuring they are ready for the large cohort to follow.

To support these exciting projects, we're ready to get more people on board and embark on this life-changing journey together!

We are so grateful to all the partners and supporters that make all our progress in 2024 possible, and to those who continue to support Onja into the future.

