

The Rise and Fall of Andela

Andela began with lofty dreams in 2014 as an African startup aiming to train software developers and connect them to jobs with top tech companies around the world. Founded by Nigerian entrepreneur Iyinoluwa Aboyeji along with Jeremy Johnson, Christina Sass, and Ian Carnevale, Andela branded itself as a mission-driven company that could boost tech talent and employment across Africa.

The company grew rapidly, raising over \$180 million from investors like Mark Zuckerberg and securing partnerships with Google, Microsoft, and other tech giants. By 2019, Andela had recruited over 1,500 students from across Africa and launched offices in Nigeria, Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda.

However, problems began brewing under the surface. Andela's business model relied on finding remote jobs for its developers at international companies, who paid Andela to source and manage the talent. But this proved increasingly challenging, with remote work restrictions and companies looking to cut costs.

In September 2019, Andela shocked its staff and investors by suddenly laying off 400 employees in Nigeria, Kenya and Uganda. The company claimed it was refocusing on more

junior developers and shifting strategy. But it was the beginning of Andela's decline.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated Andela's woes as economic fallout hit hiring. In May 2020, Andela cut a further 135 staff. By September 2020, after multiple reorganizations and strategy pivots, Andela ceased direct job placements altogether. Instead, it repositioned itself as a recruiting freelance marketplace, essentially just a middleman.

Andela's ambitions to become a transformational force for African tech talent had effectively dissolved. From a peak of 1,500 staff and technicians, barely 250 remained by 2021. Its founders have moved on to new ventures.

The rapid rise and collapse of Andela underscores the challenges facing visionary but ultimately unsustainable startups. For a time, it appeared Africa had its own homegrown McKinsey reshaping global talent. But those grand dreams and promises shattered as idealism met reality.