[**https://www.perplexity.ai/search/i-am-the-co-founder-of-simppl-z2za.XJBT\_qECqMICZxGag**](https://www.perplexity.ai/search/i-am-the-co-founder-of-simppl-z2za.XJBT_qECqMICZxGag)

# SimPPL advances youth-led AI innovation to rebuild digital trust in the Global South

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**Please provide details of nonprofit registration, including location and equivalency. \***

Application pending with IRS for independent nonprofit, fiscally sponsored by the One Fact Foundation (EIN 88-2145154) and now Hacks / Hackers (EIN: 45-5351484)

**In which global region is your organization headquartered? \***

New York, USA

**Where does your organization make its primary impact?** Note country(ies) or city(ies) **\***

India: Mumbai, Delhi, Jalgaon; Bangladesh: Dhaka; Germany; USA: New York, Cambridge; Mongolia

**Are you currently participating or have you participated in other incubators or accelerator programs? \***

**If yes, please share names and dates. \***

UNICEF Tech Innovation 2025;

MIT Delta V 2024;

MIT PKG IDEAS 2024;

Prototypes for Humanity 2024;

Future Founders Startup Bootcamp 2023;

Mozilla Responsible Computing Challenge 2024;

Google exploreCSR winners 2023 and 2024;

AI2Amplify Fellowship 2022

**Please share information on any planned, ongoing or past strategic partnerships, coalition memberships, and/or significant engagements with other organizations or companies. \***

**2025:** Working with Joe Biden's 2020 advisers at Harvard to support youth voices in policymaking.

Received offers to collaborate (partner for a funded pilot) with Meta (India) and Cohere (US/Canada).

**Since 2024:** Working with India's largest Hindi newsroom, Jagran News (also top 15 in the world), serving 68 million readers.

Working with UN agencies including peacekeeping operations in conflict ecosystems to foster trust in information in East Africa.

Incubated with UNICEF and incoming partners for Indian Council on Medical Research to advance digital literacy interventions.

**Since 2022:** Working with Mongolia's largest fact-checking organization NEST Center, and Germany's largest public broadcaster Deutsche Welle (also one of world's largest broadcasters), on public trust in media and fact-checking.

**Please explain the problem you are aiming to solve. What is the scale and impact of the problem, and what makes it difficult to solve? \***

Nearly 33 million students graduate from 10000+ educational institutions each year, across India. Most institutes mandate a final-year project for students contributing to their Bachelor’s thesis. Due to a lack of computing resources, low teacher-student ratio, inadequate faculty mentorship, and a lack of initiative, at a majority of these institutions that are underserved, the project ends up being a low-impact, rushed, limited-utility system that neither contributes to student development nor external impact, resulting in 75% unemployability rate among the outgoing graduates.

We focus these educational challenges towards the rebuilding of digital trust; our goal is to target the educational training we provide towards the most pressing social issues and aligning with the World Economic Forum's assessment of the misinformation problem, we believe its manifestation is the lack of trust in online information that causes significant offline harm and creates a space for bad actors to exploit vulnerable populations. Pew Research states trust in institutions and democracy is at a 20-year low across the world, especially in India with the COVID-19 pandemic further eroding trust.

**Please explain your organization's sustainable solution. How does it work? \***

We use the lever of education to move the needle on trust in the online information ecosystem. Specialized educational programs targeted towards rebuilding digital trust could kill two birds with one stone: using the time students spend on their "final year projects" (thesis projects) on self-identified projects with external organizations. With the school's buy-in, we reinvent the final-year project by providing external support for computing resources, dedicated weekly mentorship, and support the students' search for external partnerships focused on sustainable AI-led innovation. We recruit teams of students, train them to identify social problems they are interested in as related to the rebuilding of digital trust in different sectors. These teams of students then find and interview potential partners that help scope out the specific issues underlying their lack of trust in online information, following which the students adopt a human-centered design approach to develop technological solutions to the identified issues. These partners may involve newsrooms not trusting how AI might benefit them, or consumers not trusting the information provided by social media accounts. Addressing the core issues, student groups direct their theses towards responsible computing research and development of real-world solutions for civil society, nonprofits, and intergovernmental agencies. This idea is motivated by training several hundred CS/IT undergraduates in Tier II, III, and other underserved educational institutions in India since 2017. Now, we train them to build responsible computing tools for course credit, (ideally) as part of their curriculum. Our goal is to organize these student efforts to contribute to technology that allows us to rebuild digital trust in a fractured, socially polarized society, given the need for public interest technology and community action. In doing so, students unlock their own economic opportunities with direct impact to society, creating a sustainable feedback loop, and positive reinforcement for incoming students.

**What other products or services do your potential clients use as a substitute for your offering? How does your approach differ from the status quo and from other approaches to the problem? \***

There are numerous approaches to education that have complemented the classroom education provided to students. Typically these are in the form of workshops, summer classes, or expert sessions that are provided to students as an addendum to routine academic programs. The challenge with this is engagement is low, attrition is very high because these programs do not offer students a chance to select the problems they will be working on nor an ability to validate their hypotheses about potential solutions. They replace traditional classroom programming with an equally rigid, externally curated curriculum. What we do is to painstakingly curate projects within a student team's area of interest, identify whether the initial proposals are viable, assess the potential to find external partners, and train them to conduct their own user research and customer discovery to understand whether there is any appetite in the market for a solution that they are pitching to build--even before starting to build it. This forces students to reconcile their ideas and skills with "what is practical", aligning closely with the industry requirements of their skillsets upon graduation. We have been the first program inculcating responsible AI education into traditional tech degrees at underserved institutions because our team brings a unique blend of social and behavioral science research, AI and Data Science product development, and lived experience dealing with the same problems as our learners.

**Please share relevant details about your environmental and/or social impact including key impact metrics, impact to date, and potential impact at scale. \***

Rebuilding digital trust is a multifaceted problem that we tackle through increasing the trust in our technology by those who access information through it. Our student-led B2B solutions have directly supported over 5 million individuals through audience analytics and newsroom tools, leading to hiring decisions in two newsrooms. Our monitoring systems identified 400,000 X (Twitter) accounts involved in coordinated inauthentic behavior, facilitated the takedown of 600 public groups and pages by Meta (engaging over 100 million users), and tracked disinformation campaigns on Truth Social (60,000 accounts, 2 million posts) and Telegram (4,500+ channels reaching 50 million views).

Our educational programs have successfully delivered 17+ top-tier workshop and conference papers by mentoring over 250 undergraduate, 35 graduate, and 3 Ph.D. students through internships and fellowships. Additionally, we’ve trained over 1,500 students through workshops in India and the U.S., with our founders’ lectures reaching 10K+ YouTube viewers. We deployed responsible computing tools with over 15 external partners in 8 countries including the United Nations. One team created a spinout incubated as a societal-benefit innovation at MIT's flagship startup incubator program, launched pilots reaching 350+ families in India and Bangladesh advancing health literacy for expectant mothers and menstrual health literacy for adolescent girls, who rated a significant increase in trust in online information.

Another set of undergraduate fellows are now \*mentoring\* MIT Sloan's MBA students (MIT A-Lab) and NYU’s Data Science (CDS) graduate students to expand these innovations! And in the last year, two of seven innovations--an AI patient for medical students in physiotherapy to practice diagnoses on, and an english speaking improvement tool for non-native English speakers--have won commercial contracts with businesses and hospitals, demonstrating the potential of this program to result in sustainable growth of public interest technology led entirely by undergraduate students.

**What are your organization's top three near-term strategic priorities? How do you believe engaging with the Collaborative might help you advance them? \***

Three near term priorities are Scaling to a larger sample of learners; codifying the current practices including documents and guidelines with shared accountability between learners and external partners; and identifying alignment between a variety of opportunities to ensure we prioritize partnerships that yield maximum value towards our mission. We are eager to learn about the best practices when it comes to project management, staffing, and improving operations for a social enterprise and that is what we hope to take away from the Collaborative.

**Please expand on the scalability of your solution. What are your organization's greatest challenges and opportunities with scaling your solution? \***

We are creating a scalable program by aligning our focus and the set of products we create along the value chain of online information: starting with the spread of misleading information and threat actors that promote it and leading on to the people who are exposed to it, influenced by it, and countermeasures to combat the loss of trust due to misleading information. This has allowed us to coalesce efforts from "disparate projects" into "unified product suite" that links into each other. While we do need deeper institutional integrations, so far, student mentees turn into mentors for future iterations. Demonstrable economic gain via commercialization of technology as spinouts motivates future student participation resulting in our program launches across students from 20 institutes in India, and now in Pakista, Morocco. SimPPL has partnered with 10 organizations across six countries, with featured work reaching over 100M people. The global nature of our partnerships is a massive opportunity to scale our work in regions across the world dealing with similar challenges from a lack of digital trust and literacy. However, its reliance on a small core team limits scalability. Founders manage multiple roles, and only a few full-time engineers support operations, leading to overreliance on interns and slower progress on ambitious milestones. To address this, SimPPL is actively seeking non-dilutive funding and expanding its team to ensure consistent oversight and program delivery.

**Please explain how your solution is systemic in approach. In your answer, please touch on how it interacts with other stakeholders in the space and how your solution aims to disrupt existing systems. \***

SimPPL's approach reimagines existing educational models to solve a challenging social problem. Our model works within the established educational framework by transforming mandatory final-year projects into meaningful real-world problem-solving opportunities, engaging multiple stakeholders across the digital trust ecosystem.

At the institutional level, we partner with universities to integrate responsible computing into existing curricula, providing the external resources and mentorship that underserved institutions lack. This transforms education from isolated theoretical learning to collaborative, applied innovation. Our growing network spans 22+ institutions across India, Bangladesh, and beyond, creating an interconnected community of practice around responsible technology development.

Our approach disrupts traditional educational paradigms by shifting power from faculty-dictated projects to student-identified challenges that address real-world trust issues. We engage crucial stakeholders across the information ecosystem—newsrooms, fact-checkers, healthcare providers, and intergovernmental agencies like the UN—creating unprecedented connections between underserved students and organizations at the frontlines of combating misinformation.

This multi-stakeholder model creates systemic change by simultaneously addressing both educational inequality and information integrity.

**What are your organization's top three near-term strategic priorities? How do you believe engaging with the Collaborative might help you advance them? \***

Our first priority is expanding our flagship Sakhi platform, which delivers verified health information to rural communities via WhatsApp. Currently serving 350 families, we aim to reach 5,000 families by mid-2025 through partnerships with local healthcare providers and nonprofit organizations. This expansion represents a critical step in our mission to combat health misinformation while demonstrating a sustainable model for digital trust-building at the grassroots level.

Our second priority is transitioning our social monitoring technologies from grant-funded projects to sustainable products that serve newsrooms, fact-checkers, and intergovernmental agencies with affordable, accessible tools to combat misinformation. We need to create pricing models to remain accessible to smaller organizations while generating sustainable revenue.

We want to scale to a larger sample of learners; codifying the current practices including documents and guidelines with shared accountability between learners and external partners.

Previous Collaborative winners like Teesas demonstrate how Morgan Stanley's support can help organizations at our stage transform ambitious visions into scaled solutions with lasting impact. Joining the Collaborative would provide a platform to elevate our work addressing digital trust as a foundational element of sustainable development and democratic resilience.

**Please expand on your organization's business model. What are your primary sources of funding? \***

We are a tech nonprofit and primary funding is through grants and revenue from our products being deployed with partners. Our business model is to incubate technology, train young innovators to lead product development, cultivate employable skills, generate product revenue, and if successful, then spin it out so we can generate licensing fees while licensee organizations can advance the technical development--if needed, beyond the mandate of the nonprofit (education and responsible AI). We have raised $170K in revenue through projects and $200K in grants from Google, Mozilla, Wikimedia, NYC Media Lab, and MIT, with a full list provided below including fellowships and contracts.

**Do you charge clients/customers for a good or service? If so, please expand. Who are your customers? What good or service do you offer, and how do you charge? What proportion of your operating budget comes from fees for goods or services? \***

Yes, SimPPL charges clients for services as part of our sustainable revenue model, complementing our grant funding. Our clients include newsrooms (Deutsche Welle, Jagran News), fact-checking organizations (NEST Center in Mongolia), UN agencies, nonprofits, and intergovernmental organizations working to combat misinformation and rebuild digital trust. We offer three primary service categories: social listening and research services for tracking misinformation campaigns, newsroom audience analytics that help media organizations understand engagement patterns, multimodal social listening and search, and digital health literacy tools that provide verified information to underserved communities.

We have four products (demos available on this deck: https://bit.ly/simppl-demos) and this one (https://bit.ly/sakhi-demo) for digital health interventions.

Our revenue model employs a tiered, client-specific pricing structure based on organizational size and needs. For large international partners like UN agencies and global media organizations, we operate on contract-based pricing for customized tools and services. For smaller newsrooms and nonprofits, we offer more accessible subscription options for our monitoring tools. We also generate revenue through specialized training and workshops for newsroom staff and fact-checkers, teaching them to identify and counter misinformation. 40% of operating budget comes from services.

**Please break down the percentages of your operating budget that come from grants and from donations. Please share information about funders, amounts and whether the funding is targeted or unrestricted. \***

Grants: 60%, Revenue: 40%.

The only remaining amounts with us are unrestricted funding. Most of our grants are listed below:

2025 Deutsche Welle Contract EUR 6800

2024 Google (exploreCSR), with Prof. Pranit Bari USD 75,000

2024 MIT Delta V Accelerator USD 20,000

2024 MIT PKG IDEAS Challenge USD 13,500

2024 Google PaliGemma Award USD 5,000

2023 Google (exploreCSR) USD 32,000

2023 Google Research Innovators Program

2023 Mozilla (Responsible Computing Challenge) USD 25,000

2023 Algovera AI USD 3,000

2023 NYU Tech Venture Workshop USD 1,000

2023 Belfer Fellowship USD 40,000

2023 Goethe Institut EUR 14,000

2023 Wikimedia Foundation ’WikiCred’ Grant USD 10,000

2023 Deutsche Welle EUR 4,950

2022 Goethe Institut AI2Amplify Fellowship USD 10000

2022 Google Cloud Research Credit Award USD 9,000

2022 Amazon (AWS) Research Credit Award USD 5,000

2022 JournalismAI, The Sunday Times USD 4,000

2021 UK Research & Innovation Grant (w/ Oxford TVG) GBP 23,000

2021 NYC Media Lab AI + Local News Challenge USD 7,500

2021 Google Research India INR 85,000

**Does your organization rely on volunteers? If so, please share information including number of volunteers and role of volunteers in the organization. \***

1 medical doctor and 1 clinical manager volunteer their time but that is because they are friends/spouses. They serve as consultant and advisor to our efforts at developing healthcare intervention tools where they provide verification of information that is included in our database of verified medical information. They spend a few hours a week with us, depending on their schedule and our needs.

**In your organization's development, please describe what systemic barriers you may have experienced in accessing capital. \***

Our work on rebuilding digital trust exists in a challenging funding landscape where such topics are deprioritized despite the obvious societal impact of a lack thereof. As a youth-led organization focusing on digital trust and democracy in the global south, SimPPL has encountered several systemic barriers in accessing capital. Traditional venture capital has been largely inaccessible due to our status as a nonprofit and focus on social impact over profit generation (e.g. Sakhi, our healthcare product, could very well be sold to private hospitals for a much higher amount, and dealing with much less red tape than trying to work with nonprofits and the state govt.). 100% of our funds raised to date come exclusively from grants. We have not accepted donations yet. Geographic inequities present significant barriers, as funding mechanisms heavily favor Western-based organizations. Despite our operations spanning India, Bangladesh, Mongolia, and beyond, we've observed that similar initiatives in Silicon Valley or London receive substantially more capital with less proven impact. Additionally, as young founders from Tier II educational institutions in India, we've had to overcome credibility challenges that our Western-educated counterparts often don't face. The multidisciplinary nature of our work—spanning technology, education, and democracy—creates structural challenges with funders who typically operate in siloed issue areas requiring us to continually reframe our narrative.

**Does your organization have a board? If so, please share member names and high-level background information. \***

Mukund Sudarshan - Tech Entrepreneur, Ph.D. (US)

Stacey Peters - Local News Veteran (US)

Rebecca Harvey - Online Harms and Trust and Safety, FCDO (UK govt.)

Christian Schroeder de Witt - Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Oxford (UK)

Chirag Raman - Professor, TU Delft (NL)

Sandra Khalil - Partnerships and Trust and Safety Lead, All Tech is Human (US)

Karan Dhabalia - Serial Tech Entrepreneur, Stripe (US)

Mansi Panchamia - Developmental Economist, World Bank (US)