



EAST AFRICA DIGITALIZATION

CONFERENCE REPORT
8TH - 10TH NOV, 2023

THE LAUNCH PAD digital
Initiatives on Digital Inclusion
Digital Rights

KONRAD ADENAUER STIFTUNG
THE FUTURE OF DIGITAL ECONOMY AND EMERGING TECHNOLOGIES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
GERMAN-TANZANIAN STRATEGY FOR DIGITALIZATION

of internet services
for people

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East Africa is on the fast pace in the growth of digital use. The region has not only embraced the digital technologies but also take chance in innovating digital solutions tailored to meet the diverse needs. The growth observed in East Africa's digital landscape has extended beyond technological adoption, it also reflects the transformation of socio-economic aspect. The evolution has awakened the entrepreneurial spirit to use digital tools to generate income at the same time socio challenges are being solved. From Fintech solution to designing e-learning tools that transforms the education system. The East African region is witnessing the massive digitalization.

Recognizing the pivotal role of digitalization, The Launchpad Tanzania and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) in collaboration with German Chamber of Commerce (AHK) organized a Digitalization conference. This landmark event, held in Arusha, Tanzania, from November 8th to 10th, 2023, aimed to bring together key stakeholders, policymakers, experts, and industry leaders. The conference provided a platform for in-depth discussions on the current state of digitalization in East Africa, fostering collaboration, and exploring strategies to harness the full potential of the digital revolution. As the region continues to lead in digital innovation, such initiatives play a crucial role in shaping the trajectory of its digital future and ensuring that the benefits of this transformative growth are maximized across various sectors.

This three-day event kicked off with an exciting start-up competition hosted at the Westerwelle Start-Up House Arusha on the first day, followed by two days of in-depth panel discussions and workshops from November 9th to November 10th, 2023.

HIGHLIGHTS

Attendees

| 8th | 9th | 10th |
|-----|-----|------|
| 60 | 63 | 50 |

Start Up competition

| | |
|-------------|---------|
| 8 | 3 |
| Competitors | winners |

08TH NOVEMBER

Start-up Competition

The start-up competition, a focal point of the conference, not only highlighted the region's entrepreneurial vibrancy but also provided a valuable opportunity for networking and collaboration.

It showcased the diversity of talent and ingenuity within the East African start-up ecosystem. Contestants presented groundbreaking concepts spanning various industries, from sustainable technology solutions to novel approaches addressing social challenges.

Objective of the Start-up pitch/competition: KAS aimed at bringing together startups, political and business leaders as well as universities, accelerators and other multipliers to facilitate the best new business ideas in Tanzania. The competition focused on Digital and Industrial Solutions in the main sectors of ICT, Green Tech, Logistics & Mobility, Tourism & Agriculture and shed light on current entrepreneurship policies and framework conditions in Tanzania



Judges during Start up competition

The competition was coordinated by the judges from different partners including:

1. Dr. Kathrin Steinbrenner, German Deputy Ambassador, Tanzania
2. Ms Annika Schröder, KAS HQ Representative
3. Laura Althaus, Co-Founder and Head of University Programs, StartHub Africa
4. Antje Steiner, Director Regional Office East Africa, KFW DEG – The German Investment and Development Company
5. Emma Oriyo, Executive Director, European Business Group (EUBG)
6. Gabriel Marks, Director, Promelio / Join the Food Family Ltd.

WINNERS

01

Smart Darasa

Smart Darasa's vision is to revolutionize learning experiences in Africa, particularly in the realm of science subjects, through the incorporation of immersive technologies such as 3D interactive and Augmented Reality (AR). Their innovative approach seeks to enhance education by making it more engaging, interactive, and accessible, addressing the unique challenges faced in the region.





02

Mipango App

A multifaceted financial solution encompassing data analysis, education, money management, and recommendations software tailored for Financial Institutions. It serves as a mobile application designed specifically for the unbanked population. Mipango App empowers users by offering a range of features, including multiple wallet options such as Utilities, mortgage, the ability to transfer funds between wallets, and the option to spend from specific budget or goal-oriented wallets.



Dawa Mkononi 03

a registered company with a primary focus on innovating to enhance the pharmaceutical supply chain. The core mission of Dawa Mkononi is to address and improve the access and availability of medicines in communities across Africa. As a registered entity, Dawa Mkononi operates with a commitment to leveraging innovative solutions to overcome challenges within the pharmaceutical sector, ultimately contributing to the betterment of healthcare delivery in the region.

All winners and participants were honored with certificates of participation, recognizing their contributions to the vibrant entrepreneurial spirit of East Africa. The certificates serve as a testament to the dedication and innovative thinking demonstrated throughout the event.

In a remarkable opportunity for the winners, it was announced that they would receive a transformative experience – a sponsored trip to Germany. This trip is designed to provide the winners with a unique learning opportunity, immersing them in the dynamic start-up ecosystem of Germany.

09TH NOVEMBER Digitalization Conference

Objective: to foster dialogue and cooperation among East African countries to leverage digitalization as a catalyst for economic growth, social development, and sustainable innovation. The conference will provide an opportunity to identify challenges, exchange best practices, and develop actionable strategies to harness the potential of digital technologies in the region.

Guest speakers and what they have presented

The first day of the Digitalization conference aimed at looking at The Future of Digital Economy and Emerging Technologies for Sustainable Development. The day commenced by the opening of the event by Ms. Carol Ndosu, Co-founder and Executive Director of The Launchpad Tanzania who were partners in co-hosting this event and Dr Tilmann Feltes, Resident Representative Tanzania, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.



Ms. Carol Ndosu, Co-founder and Executive Director of The Launchpad Tanzania, and Mr. Tilmann Feltes, Resident Representative for Tanzania at Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, opening a conference.

Activity 1 - Open Remarks

The event proceeded with opening remarks from Hon. Dr. Kathrin Steinbrenner, Deputy German Ambassador, who eloquently emphasized the importance of fostering international collaboration and cultural exchange. In her insightful address, she highlighted the shared values that bind our nations together and expressed optimism about the positive impact that such collaborative efforts can have on global relations. Dr. Steinbrenner's words resonated with the audience, setting an inspiring tone for the rest of the conference.



Hon. Dr. Kathrin Steinbrenner, Deputy German Ambassador, Tanzania opening a conference

Activity 2 - Presentation

To accelerate digitalization in East Africa, it is imperative to grasp how the region can effectively bridge the digital space between the European Union and East Africa. Ms. Jean Kukunda, Vice Chairperson of Startup Uganda and Managing Partner of Circular Design Hub, delivered an insightful and interactive presentation shedding light on this crucial matter. Her presentation dived into key aspects, including narratives of the digital divide, the current landscape of East Africa, the potential for Business Process Outsourcing (BPO), as well as the state of innovation and entrepreneurship in the region.



The EU's digital maturity, with approximately 93% of households connected to the internet, offers a blueprint for East African nations. The region, with its growing internet penetration —exemplified by Kenya's impressive 33% and Tanzania's developing at 32%— is at a pivotal moment."



Activity 3 - Presentation

In seeking better solutions to bridge the digital gap between the European Union and East Africa, especially in terms of accessing funds and grants for diverse start-up ideas, it is crucial to comprehend the priorities of the European Union regarding start-ups and their broader landscape. Ms. Annika Schröder, KAS HQ Representative, guided participants through a presentation focusing on the political environment for entrepreneurs and start-ups in Germany.

Ms. Schröder initiated her presentation by emphasizing the significance of Africa on the German agenda. She underscored Germany's commitment to supporting various facets of the entrepreneurial ecosystem, including Accelerators, Startup-Hubs, Incubators, Entrepreneurs, Business Angels, Investors, Central location with convenient infrastructure, and Tech-Events. This comprehensive approach reflects Germany's dedication to fostering innovation, collaboration, and economic development.



Understanding the European Union's priorities provides a valuable framework for East African entrepreneurs seeking collaboration and funding opportunities.

Only 15% of start-up have cut jobs in German, but 56% have created jobs in the last year -
By 2050 we will see nearly 2bn people on the African continent with a growing middle class.



Activity 4- Panel Discussion

Topic: Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship: Road towards AfCFTA

Moderator: Dr. Kathryn Devos, Co-founder and Executive Director of Underwriting Africa Specialty, served as the moderator. Dr. Devos, a technical consultant for specialist insurance capacity in Africa with an office in Kenya, brought her wealth of expertise to guide the discussion.

Panelists:

1. Fabian Zittlau
2. Dr. Ponsian
3. Dr. Eliaza Mkuna
4. Dr. Mwaitete Cairo
5. Laura Althaus

This diverse panel brought together professionals with varied backgrounds, ensuring a rich and comprehensive exploration of the intersection between the digital economy, entrepreneurship, and the path toward the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). The discussion promised insights from the realms of insurance, technology, academia, and entrepreneurship, fostering a holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities in the evolving landscape of digital entrepreneurship in Africa.



Panel discussion on Digital Economy and Entrepreneurship: Road towards AfCFTA

Activity 5 - Presentation on Policy Frameworks and Incentives

Mark Mwidu Kabirizi, an Investment Planner at the National Planning Authority in Uganda, Mr. Kabirizi's presentation focused on "Policy Frameworks and Incentives to Support the Growth of a Vibrant Digital Economy in East Africa."

In his comprehensive presentation, Mr. Mark delved into the digitalization landscape in Uganda, providing valuable insights into the current state of digital initiatives in the country. His expertise shed light on key pillars and enablers essential for fostering digitalization, including:

1. Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity
2. Digital Services
3. Cybersecurity, Data Protection, and Privacy
4. Digital Skilling
5. Innovation and Entrepreneurship



By addressing critical aspects such as infrastructure, services, cybersecurity, skill development, and fostering innovation, we lay the foundational elements necessary for East Africa to embrace and sustain a dynamic digital future. These key pillars not only serve as building blocks for technological advancement but also contribute to the region's socio-economic growth and resilience.



Activity 6- Honoring The Start-Up Winners

As the first day of the conference drew to a close, a special segment was dedicated to honoring the winners of the startup competition. For those participants who were unable to attend the competition on the preceding day, this was an opportunity to be introduced to the accomplished victors.

During this session, the startup competition winners had the chance to present their innovative ideas and share their expectations with the broader audience. This moment not only celebrated the achievements of the winning startups but also provided a platform for knowledge exchange and inspiration. The diverse range of ideas and the enthusiasm of the winners contributed to a vibrant and dynamic conclusion to the inaugural day of the conference



Introduction of Start-Up Competition participants at the East Africa Digitalization Conference.

10TH NOVEMBER

Digitalization Conference

Objective: to foster dialogue and cooperation among East African countries to leverage digitalization as a catalyst for economic growth, social development, and sustainable innovation. The conference will provide an opportunity to identify challenges, exchange best practices, and develop actionable strategies to harness the potential of digital technologies in the region.

Activity 1: Opening Remarks, Introduction, and Day 1 Recap

The inaugural activity, led by Henry Kulaya, Co-founder/Executive Director of The Launch Pad Tanzania, set the tone for the day's proceedings. Henry Kulaya began by providing opening remarks and introductions, guiding participants through the agenda for the day.

A significant component of this activity involved a comprehensive recap of the first day of the conference. Participants revisited the valuable insights shared through presentations and panel discussions. The focus was on relearning and deepening the understanding of the myriad discussions centered around the future of the digital economy in East Africa. This reflective session aimed to ensure that all attendees were aligned and informed as they delved into the subsequent activities and discussions planned for the day.



Henry Kulaya, Co-founder and Executive Director of The Launchpad Tanzania, opening the conference for Day 3.

Activity 2- Online Presentation on Addressing Data Privacy, Cybersecurity, and Digital Inclusion Challenges in E-Government Initiatives

Conducted through Zoom, the fourth presentation featured Dr. Mercy, a Senior Lecturer from the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM). Dr. Mercy delved into the critical aspects of addressing challenges related to data privacy, cybersecurity, and digital inclusion, particularly within the context of e-government initiatives.

Dr. Mercy commenced her presentation by emphasizing the significance of digital skilling as a catalyst for accelerating innovation and fostering digital solutions in East Africa. She highlighted the pivotal role of education and training in equipping individuals with the necessary skills to navigate the evolving digital landscape, a prerequisite for successful e-government initiatives.

The focus of her presentation extended to the intricate issues surrounding data privacy and the imperative need for robust cybersecurity measures in the digital age. Dr. Mercy provided insights into the challenges faced by e-government initiatives in these areas and proposed strategies for mitigating risks and ensuring inclusivity.

Activity 3 - Innovative Digital Solutions and Transformative Technologies in Various Sectors

In the fifth presentation, Dr. Kathryn Devos, Co-founder and Executive Director of Underwriting Africa Specialty and a Technical Consultant for Specialist Insurance Capacity in Africa with an office in Kenya, provided a deep dive into innovative digital solutions and transformative technologies across critical sectors.

Dr. Devos explored the intersection of technology and sectors crucial to East Africa's development, including agriculture, finance, and healthcare. Drawing on her expertise as a technical consultant for specialist insurance capacity, she shed light on how digital advancements are reshaping traditional practices within the insurance sector, offering insights into the evolving landscape of risk management and financial services.



The intersection of technology and industry, highlighting the potential for growth and the importance of fostering a culture of continuous innovation to stay at the forefront of progress. The transformative power of embracing cutting-edge technologies to drive positive changes and propel industries towards a future of sustained advancement.



Activity 4- Presentation on Innovative Digital Solutions

Dr. Gerald Majella, Director of COSTECH, presented insights into Tanzania's digitalization efforts, emphasizing policies such as the National Vision 2025 and the Long-Term Perspective Plan. These policies aim to reduce dependence on foreign technologies and encourage domestic engineering capacity.

The presentation highlighted government support for innovation and emerging technologies through initiatives like Buni Hub under COSTECH. This support spans ideation, mentorship, prototype development, technology commercialization, and more, providing technical assistance, financial support, and linkages to stakeholders.

However, Dr. Majella acknowledged challenges, including

- Lack of foundries and shared facilities,
- Regulatory barriers, and
- Concerns about sustainable development versus employment opportunities.
- Over-dependence on imported technologies and the
- Absence of Tanzania in the digital equipment production value chain



Investing in local infrastructure not only supports the creation of cutting-edge technologies but also fosters an environment conducive to experimentation, collaboration, and knowledge-sharing among professionals. These infrastructure investments contribute to skill development by offering specialized training programs and workshops.

Activity 5 - Panel Discussion

Topic: Digital Skills and Capacity Building for Innovation and Digital Transformation

The fourth activity featured a dynamic panel discussion on the crucial topic of digital skills and capacity building for innovation and digital transformation. The fireside chat was expertly moderated by Opolot Nicholas Akwang, Programme Officer and Innovation Focal Point at KAS Uganda.

The panel dived into the multifaceted aspects of digital skills development, emphasizing its pivotal role in fostering innovation and driving the digital transformation agenda. Participants engaged in a thoughtful exploration of strategies for capacity building and the importance of cultivating a skilled workforce to navigate the evolving digital landscape.

Under the adept moderation of Opolot Nicholas Akwang, the fireside chat provided a platform for rich discussions, shared experiences, and valuable insights from panelists representing diverse backgrounds. The panel discussion underscored the critical need for continuous learning and skill development to propel East Africa toward a digitally empowered and innovative future.





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Critical thinking is essential; individuals need to understand global trends and the direction Tanzania is heading. To acquire specific skills, they must have a clear understanding of their future placements," emphasized Ismail Biro



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In the private sector, when we discuss digital skilling, we refer to professional qualifications that individuals can apply in their jobs or projects. Unfortunately, less than 40% of young people are considered qualified for roles requiring digital skills in the private sector," noted Dr. Kathryn Devos



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While we face challenges in having an insufficient number of digital tools, simultaneously, you'll find university labs or hubs empty. Numerous free online resources are available, yet they remain underutilized," highlighted Laura Althaus

KEY TAKE AWAYS

- **Digital Growth in East Africa:** The event highlighted the significant pace of digital growth in East Africa, showcasing the region's embrace of technology and innovation across various sectors.
- **Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** A recurring theme was the vibrant landscape of innovation and entrepreneurship, with a focus on digital solutions tailored for diverse needs, from fintech to education.
- **Digital Transformation Beyond Technology:** The observed digital growth wasn't solely about technological adoption but also indicated a broader transformation in the socio-economic landscape of East Africa.
- **Collaborative Platforms:** The conference served as a collaborative platform, bringing together key stakeholders, policymakers, experts, and industry leaders to discuss and shape the future of the digital economy in the region.
- **International Collaboration:** The collaboration with organizations such as Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) and the German Chamber of Commerce (AHK) showcased the importance of international partnerships in fostering digitalization.
- **Start-Up Ecosystem:** The start-up competition and associated activities highlighted the dynamism of East Africa's start-up ecosystem, with Smart Darasa, Mipango App, and Dawa Mkononi standing out for their innovative solutions.
- **Digital Skills and Capacity Building:** Discussions emphasized the critical importance of digital skills and capacity building for individuals, addressing challenges and opportunities in digital transformation.
- **Government and Policy Role:** A key focus was on the role of politics and government in shaping the digital landscape, with discussions around policies, incentives, and support for innovation.
- **Challenges to Address:** Challenges such as limited digital tools, regulatory barriers, and the need for a comprehensive National Quality Infrastructure were highlighted, urging collective efforts to address these impediments.
- **Global Learning Opportunities:** The sponsored trip to Germany for the start-up winners symbolized the potential for global learning and collaboration, showcasing how international exposure can contribute to local digital ecosystems.

CONCLUSION

The East Africa Digitalization Conference concluded with a thorough overview of the dynamic digital landscape of the region, presenting a convincing story of development, innovation, and cooperative potential. The swift speed at which digital transformation is occurring in a number of areas demonstrated East Africa's dedication to adopting cutting-edge technology and utilizing innovation.

The conference was a showcase for East Africa's adaptability, resilience, and steadfast commitment to creating a future where technology propels sustainable and equitable development as the region continues on its digital journey. The relationships made and the lessons learnt at this event set the stage for East Africa's collaborative and revolutionary digital future.

Click [Here](#) To access all the event photographs