



GHANA
DIGITAL
INNOVATION
WEEK

PROJECT REPORT

ROAD TO GDIW 23 - KUMASI EDITION

PREMPEH ASSEMBLY HALL-KUMASI

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Organized and Prepared by



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1.0 Background



The Ghana Digital Innovation Week (GDIW) was established in 2021 as a collaborative initiative by the Office of the Vice President of Ghana, the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ), and the Embassy of Israel. This partnership aims to honor the achievements of Ghana's digital innovation ecosystem and forge a collective vision for its future growth. The GDIW, a nationwide event series, encompasses a diverse range of activities designed to showcase and celebrate the milestones in Ghana's digital innovation sector. It provides a valuable platform for tech enthusiasts, entrepreneurs, policymakers, and industry leaders to converge, exchange ideas, and collaborate on projects that drive digital transformation across various sectors of the Ghanaian economy.

The Kumasi Road To GDIW event in Kumasi lasted for two days, with a stakeholders' meeting on October 18, 2023, and the main event on November 3, 2023. It aimed to promote innovation and digital adoption. The event featured panel discussions, workshops, exhibitions, and interactive sessions, bringing together experts from various sectors to celebrate both local culture and technology. These activities were organized to help people come up with new ideas, learn more, and start using digital technology in different areas, especially for small businesses (MSMEs) and women.

2.0 Objectives of the Kumasi GDIW

The objective of the Kumasi GDIW is to foster innovation, enhance digital adoption, and empower MSMEs and women in Kumasi, Ghana, by providing a platform for knowledge-sharing, networking, and celebrating the fusion of local culture with technology. It aimed to serve as a precursor to generate interest and anticipation for the main event in Accra.

During the program, attendees engaged in various activities, such as speeches by notable guests addressing the workshop's theme, panel discussions, presentations on the Gig Economy, an exhibition featuring MSMEs, in-depth discussions during breakout sessions, and a keynote speech.

3.0 Activities & Recommendations

4.0 *Keynote Addresses*

At the event, **three (3) distinct keynote addresses** were delivered, each shedding light on various aspects of innovation, entrepreneurship, and regional development.

Nana Kwakwa Bene Ababio II eloquently recounted the innovative achievements of the Ashanti Empire, emphasizing their expertise in crafting advanced tools for warfare and their rich tradition of gold mining. This underscores the fact that innovation is not new to Asante considering kente weaving activities in Bonwire and craft works at the Kumasi Cultural Centre. In addition, he highlighted the pivotal role of modern innovation hubs like hapaSpace, Kumasi Hive, and Women's Haven in propelling digital innovation within Kumasi.

David Antwi Danso, the Director for innovation-NEIP, expressed profound appreciation for the opportunity to celebrate their heritage while discussing the crucial topic of entrepreneurship. He underscored the profound impact of digital innovation across diverse sectors, such as education, healthcare, agriculture, and finance, emphasizing the necessity of collaboration among all stakeholders to embrace innovation and foster progress not only in Ghana but also throughout the African continent. David also noted the government's relentless commitment to digitalization and the implementation of policies and rules designed to cultivate a favorable regulatory environment for business development.

To provide a broader spectrum of insights, **Mr. Kofi Asiedu, a representative of the Ashanti Regional Minister**, welcomed participants to the event and encouraged active collaboration with the government to advance the digitalization of the regional economy. He emphasized that the Ashanti region offers a secure environment, essential infrastructure, and a thriving market to support entrepreneurship. Mr. Asedu offered an extensive overview of Kumasi's bustling entrepreneurial landscape. Furthermore, he expressed gratitude for the ongoing collaboration between GIZ, the Embassy of Israel, and the Office of the Vice President, which gave rise to the Ghana Digital Innovation Week (GDIW).

Mr. Asedu shared the inspiring journeys of Kumasi-based entrepreneurs, including notable success stories like Sessi Technology, Dext Technologies, DeafCanTalk, and Farmerline. These entrepreneurs have effectively harnessed technology as a catalyst for growth and innovation, demonstrating the region's potential for fostering innovation and entrepreneurial endeavors. In addition, Mr. Asedu highlighted the challenges faced by local innovators, notably limited access to financial resources and regulatory obstacles that hinder progress. He underscored the necessity for stakeholders to unite their efforts to create a supportive environment for innovation to thrive. Together, these insights form a comprehensive picture of the region's dedication to fostering innovation and entrepreneurship.

5.0 Short Talks

Following the keynote addresses, two short talks were presented to promote the widespread adoption of digital transformation across various sectors of the Kumasi economy.

Dr. John Serbe Marfo: Dr. John Serbe Marfo, a lecturer at KNUST with expertise in Information Systems, delivered an engaging presentation on the theme, "From Gold Mine to Tech Hubs: Revolutionizing the Ashanti Economy through Innovation." He illuminated the digital transformation in Kumasi, highlighting digital transport services, online trading platforms, and digital banking solutions. Dr. John urged aspiring innovators and youth to invest in education and mentorship opportunities, emphasizing the importance of involvement from the donor community, private sector, academia, and policymakers in supporting technology-driven entrepreneurs and fostering infrastructure for growth.

Yaw Adu-Gyamfi: Yaw Adu-Gyamfi, the Director of Policy at the Ghana Hubs Network (GHN), delivered a compelling presentation on the role of Innovative Hubs in expanding the reach of the Digital Innovation Week. He discussed the GHN's support for innovation hubs in Ghana, including capacity-building and resource assistance, which has catalyzed digital innovation. Adu-Gyamfi illustrated the impact through examples of regional digital innovation weeks hosted

by hubs like hapaSpace. He urged local chiefs, government authorities, and the donor community to support entrepreneurs by providing essential infrastructure like workspaces, internet access, financial aid, and training to strengthen the innovation ecosystem.

6.0 *Synergies With Financial Institutions*

During his presentation, **Mr. Kofi Tober-Ansong, Adum Branch Manager at Prudential**, underscored the pivotal role of digital innovation in the profitability and sustainability of banks. He emphasized that Prudential Bank has made significant strides in automating its operations, providing clients with convenient online access to a wide array of services.

Mr. Tober-Ansong also delved into the willingness of banks and other financial institutions to engage in collaborative efforts that support innovative ideas. He highlighted the necessity for industry players to come together in pursuit of mutual growth, recognizing the paramount importance of embracing digital solutions to meet the ever-evolving needs of consumers. Emphasizing the significance of collaboration, he quoted a technology authority on its role in learning, problem-solving, and fostering innovation. In closing, Mr. Tober-Ansong extended an encouraging invitation to SMEs, entrepreneurs, innovators, and others in need of tailored support, urging them to engage with financial institutions to explore the possibilities for their growth and innovation.

7.0 *Launch of the Regional GDIW*

David Roberts, Head of Project GIZ DTC, officially inaugurated the Kumasi Edition of the Road to Ghana Digital Innovation Week (GDIW) 2023 under the theme **"Innovate, Collaborate, Elevate: Shaping a Future of Endless Potential."**

In his address, he placed significant emphasis on the need to unite diverse stakeholders to share their perspectives, interests, and success stories. According to David, the primary objective is to explore avenues for bolstering digital innovation, promoting the adoption of digital products and services, and facilitating the exchange of best practices. He further revealed that this year's Innovation Week is unfolding across multiple locations, encompassing not only Accra but also regions like Ashanti (Kumasi), Eastern (Koforidua), and Northern (Tamale).

Mr. Roberts delved into the concept of digitalization and its far-reaching impact on business models, collaboration dynamics, and the fabric of daily life. He passionately emphasized the critical importance of innovators and entrepreneurs adopting an open-minded approach and actively seeking novel solutions. For Robert, digitalization isn't merely about using new tools to do old things but, rather, a transformative journey. In conclusion, he extended his best wishes to all participants, expressing hope for a day filled with success and valuable insights.

8.0 Panel: Incorporating Gender Diversity in Digital Entrepreneurship



Surveyor Dr. (Mrs.) Ivy M. A. Abu expertly moderated a compelling panel discussion that revolved around the theme of incorporating gender diversity in digital entrepreneurship. The esteemed panel consisted of the following distinguished members:

- Yaa Asamoah (UNCDF)
- Nana Afia Asamoah (Ejisu BRC)
- Betty Boante Abeyie (Kumasi Wood Cluster)
- Diana Owusu-Ansah (Regional Director of NCA)

During this enlightening session, the panel engaged in a profound conversation about the integration of digital entrepreneurship into the business landscape, with a keen focus on women's active participation in this evolving domain. The discussion began by recognizing the remarkable progress achieved in recent years and acknowledging the increasing presence of women in e-commerce and various other digital sectors. Drawing from their personal experiences, the panelists shed light on how digital tools and platforms, including online payment solutions, social media platforms, online transportation services, and online trading platforms, have empowered them to operate efficiently, offer enhanced services, and generate additional income. For example, **Betty** highlighted a training programme organized by hapaSpace (with support from GIZ) to help the Women in Timber Association utilize the power of smartphones to facilitate product sales, payments, and connections with suppliers.

However, the conversation didn't shy away from addressing the hurdles and challenges that women continue to encounter in both the business and digital realms. These challenges include traditional caregiving responsibilities, funding constraints, societal biases favoring men in business, stereotyping, the absence of robust support systems, and a lack of mentorship. The panel collectively stressed the paramount importance of dismantling these barriers and creating more inclusive spaces where women can thrive. Moreover, the panel acknowledged the influential role that male-dominated organizations and institutions can play in promoting and supporting women's endeavors in these fields. They emphasized the value of leveraging the digital landscape for business growth, even in the face of these challenges. There was a strong call for policies and concerted collaboration with industry leaders, educational institutions, and governmental bodies to pave the way for digitalization among women entrepreneurs. The discussion resonated with the idea that breaking down barriers and advocating for technology education are imperative steps to prevent being left behind in the continually evolving business landscape. The panel unanimously agreed on the need for investment in self-improvement, education, and business development to adapt effectively to the rapidly changing technological landscape. The panel expressed their hope to continue championing digitalization and unlocking the full potential of the digital environment for women entrepreneurs. They issued a collective call to policymakers to implement gender-inclusive policies and guidelines while urging women to seize the initiative to create their own opportunities and make their mark in the digital entrepreneurial landscape.

9.0 NCA's Role in Bridging the Digital Divide with High-Speed Internet and Smart Digitalization Initiatives in Kumasi.



Diana Owusu-Ansah, the Regional Director of Ghana's National Communications Authority (NCA), discussed the NCA's role as the regulator and licensing authority for electronic communication services in Ghana. She highlighted the NCA's commitment to ensuring a secure digital environment, monitoring service quality, addressing complaints, and introducing initiatives such as digital audio broadcasting and standardized call rates in collaboration with other West African states. Diana encouraged digital innovators and entrepreneurs to engage with the NCA, emphasizing the importance of innovation in the evolving digital landscape and the government's dedication to the digital economy agenda, offering abundant opportunities for women and youth in Ghana.

10.0 Parallel Sessions: “Empowering Digital Transformation in Kumasi”

To address the specific needs of the participants, a series of three parallel (breakout) sessions were conducted, all falling under the overarching theme of "*Empowering Digital Transformation in Kumasi*." Each session revolved around a distinct subtheme, offering valuable insights and discussions:

10.1 The GIG Economy



Walter Dzimey, GIZ DTEG, led the session, exploring the multitude of opportunities within the GIG economy. He encouraged the youth to seize these prospects for personal and professional growth. Participants expressed concerns about security threats facing GIG workers and the absence of well-defined conditions of service. Nevertheless, there was palpable enthusiasm among participants to enroll in the GIG economy as it presents a valuable avenue for additional income.

10.2 Smart Cities and Digital Infrastructure



Albert Opoku and Reagan Akowua facilitated this session, which delved into the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and machine learning to address societal challenges. Participants passionately urged young individuals, particularly students, to invest their time and resources in AI and machine learning, emphasizing the significant potential of these fields as leading employment generators in the coming years.

10.3 E-government, AI, Financing for digital entrepreneurs

A team from the Ghana Revenue Authority (GRA) shared insights into funding opportunities within the financial sector to support innovation and business ventures. They emphasized the importance of maintaining proper bookkeeping, adhering to tax payment obligations, and ensuring the registration of businesses. These actions were highlighted as crucial prerequisites for accessing funding and resources to drive digital entrepreneurship.



These parallel sessions provided a dynamic platform for participants to engage with and explore various facets of digital transformation while also addressing their specific interests and concerns. The exchange of knowledge and ideas undoubtedly contributed to a richer understanding of the digital landscape and the opportunities it holds for individuals and businesses in Kumasi.

11.0 Showcase of Innovations

Teams from various organizations and hubs, including Built Technologies, EcoPeriod Africa, Women's Haven, Proxy Fidelity Services, Fabulous Hub, Soncis Bag, and IOT Technologies, took center stage to showcase their array of technology-powered innovations and products. These showcases highlighted the impressive diversity of creative solutions and products emerging from the vibrant digital innovation landscape, offering a glimpse into the forward-thinking entrepreneurial spirit of the region.



The participants were captivated by the remarkable and intricate innovative products displayed by students from St. Louis Senior High School, KNUST Senior High School, Kumasi Academy, and Adako Kachie Technical Institutes. These young minds showcased an impressive array of inventive products, including an App-controlled Robotic Forklift, a Smart Urban Garden, a Smart Automated House, a Sensor-controlled and Solar-powered Traffic Light, and a Self-charged Battery-powered Generator. Their ingenuity and technical prowess left the audience in awe, highlighting the immense potential and promising future of these budding innovators.



12.0 Challenges Faced

The following are some of the challenges encountered during the event, along with recommendations for improvement:

- A. **Logistics:** Coordinating various aspects of the event, such as venue selection, technical infrastructure, and food was quite exhausting. Most of the suitable venues were booked. **Recommendation:** *It would be good for planning to commence earlier than the approximately one month allocated for this session.*
- B. **Participation:** Attracting a diverse and engaged audience, including participants, speakers, and exhibitors, took a lot of effort. Similarly, this was due to the short notice that was given to them to plan to attend the event. **Recommendation:** *Stakeholder engagement should start early in the planning process.*
- C. **Content and Program:** Developing a compelling and relevant program with engaging speakers, workshops, and activities requires careful planning and curation. Some of the invited speakers found it difficult to align their content with the theme of the event. **Recommendation:** *Speakers should be part of the planning process.*
- D. **Technology and Connectivity:** Ensuring reliable technology infrastructure, including internet access and audiovisual equipment, is critical for hosting digital-focused events like GDIW. We struggled to find a location with good internet connectivity and PA systems. **Recommendation:** *Early planning would eliminate some of these issues.*
- E. **Inclusivity:** Promoting diversity and inclusion by ensuring equal opportunities for women, youth, and marginalized groups can be a challenge. For instance, despite our efforts, we had 103 women as against 162 men attending. Also, we had only one PWD attending. **Recommendation:** *More engagements with these groups would increase their participation.*

13.0 Key Takeaways

Key takeaways from the Kumasi GDIW could include

- I. **Emphasis on Innovation:** The event highlighted the importance of innovation in transforming the Kumasi economy and driving digital adoption across various sectors.
- II. **Digital Transformation:** Kumasi has experienced a significant digital transformation, with the proliferation of digital services, online trading platforms, and digital banking solutions.
- III. **Education and Mentorship:** Speakers emphasized the value of education, comprehensive training, and mentorship opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs and youth.
- IV. **Support for Entrepreneurs:** The event called for active involvement and support from the donor community, private sector stakeholders, academia, and policymakers to empower technology-driven entrepreneurs.

- V. Role of Innovative Hubs: Innovative Hubs, as discussed by Yaw Adu-Gyamfi, play a vital role in decentralizing digital innovation initiatives and supporting regional growth.
- VI. Collaboration: The event highlighted collaboration efforts among West African states to standardize call rates and reduce the cost of internet and communication in the subregion.
- VII. Government Initiatives: Ghana's government is actively pursuing a digital economy agenda, offering abundant opportunities for women and youth to participate in digital innovations and entrepreneurship.
- VIII. Inclusivity: Promoting diversity and inclusion in the digital innovation landscape was underscored as a critical aspect of fostering growth and development.
- IX. Call to Action: Attendees were urged to actively engage with the National Communications Authority (NCA) and embrace innovation as a necessity in the evolving digital landscape.
- X. Future Prospects: The event positioned Ghana as a pioneering force in digital innovation within West Africa and encouraged attendees to seize the opportunities presented by the transformative digital era.

These takeaways collectively emphasize the importance of innovation, education, collaboration, and support in driving digital transformation and economic growth in Kumasi and beyond.

14.0 Key Data

*Total number of attendees: **265***

*Total number of males attending: **162***

*Total number of females attending: **103***

*Total PWDs in attendance: **1***

12.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, the Kumasi GDIW showcased the transformative power of innovation and digital adoption in the Ashanti region. It emphasized the critical role of education, mentorship, and support from various stakeholders in fostering entrepreneurship and economic growth. The event highlighted collaborative efforts, government initiatives, and the potential for inclusive, sustainable development in the ever-evolving digital landscape. As Kumasi positions itself as a hub of innovation, these insights serve as a roadmap for harnessing opportunities and driving progress in the digital era.