



# MALAWI CITY INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY *Meet Up.*



AfriLabs



mHub

Date:  
**5th April 2024**

Location:  
**mHub**

Audience:  
**50 participants**

## Background to the Meet Up Event



AfriLabs partnered with Mzuzu E-Hub, a technology and innovation Hub playing a key role in promoting innovation and entrepreneurship in Mzuzu to organize a meetup that hosted ecosystem stakeholders for shared knowledge and collaborations.

The meetup provided a platform for participants to learn about the latest trends and developments in the tech industry, discuss challenges and opportunities, and explore ways to leverage technology to drive economic growth and social development in Malawi.

The event also brought together technology and innovation stakeholders in Malawi to discuss the current state of technology and innovation in the country, share ideas and explore opportunities for collaboration expanding on Policy, Funding, Infrastructure, Skills Development, Research and Development.

## Event's Agenda

Time	Activity
10:00 A.M.	Registration and Networking.
10:20 A.M.	Welcome Address - Wangiwe Joanna Kambuzi, M.D. - Mzuzu E-Hub.
10:35 A.M.	About Afrilabs and Afrilabs Annual Gathering - Mayssa Mrabet, The director of community, Afrilabs.
10:45 A.M.	Keynote Speech - Vincent Kumwenda - Technology and Innovation Expert, Tony Blair Institute for Global Change, Malawi.
11:15 A.M.	Panel Discussion Topic: <b>The State of Technology and Innovation in Malawi.</b> - Bram Fudzulani (Angle Dimension) - Rhoda Kamwaza (Ntha Foundation) - Martin Masiya (Scly's Energy)
12:30 P.M.	Lunch Break and Exhibition

Time	Activity
1:30 P.M.	Workshop: <b>"Technology and Innovation in Malawi: Challenges and Opportunities"</b>  Participatory breakouts session - Policy - Funding - Infrastructure - Skills Development - Research and Development  Facilitator: Takuya Kitazawa
2:50 P.M.	Q&A Session
3:20 P.M.	Closing Remarks
3:30 P.M.	Networking

# Panelists



**MARTIN MASIYA**  
SCLLYS ENERGY

Martin is a young entrepreneur from Malawi, dedicated to providing affordable solar energy solutions to underserved communities. He is the Founder of Scllys Energy, a growing last-mile solar distribution business.

Martin's global advocacy and youth leadership have been recognised by the United Nations, UNICEF Africa, and the International Renewable Energy Agency - IRENA.

His focus areas include Energy Access, Entrepreneurship and Meaningful Youth Engagement. Martin is considered a rising leader in Africa's renewable energy sector, having won awards such as the 2020 Distribution Prize and being named one of the "Top 50 Climate Innovators in Africa 2022" by UNDP Innovates. He serves as a Member of the RES4Africa Youth Task Force and is an Executive Committee Member of Commonwealth Sustainable Energy Transition Youth Action Group (CSET Youth), where he serves as Projects Lead.



**RHODA KAMWAZA**  
NTHA FOUNDATION

Rhoda has more than 6 years' experience in Financial Accounting, Administration, and Management and currently serves as the Managing Director for Ntha Foundation.

She holds a diploma and certification in financial accounting under ICAM (The Institute of Chartered Accountants in Malawi) and is completing her Bachelor of Commerce – Accountancy at the Catholic University of Malawi.

She is also the Project Lead for Muzi ecosystem initiative under the GIZ project.



**BRAM FUDZULANI**  
ANGLE DIMENSION

Bram Fudzulani is a prominent figure in the intersection of technology and policy, spearheading initiatives to shape the digital landscape in Malawi and beyond. As the chairperson of the Malawi Internet Governance Forum and a member of the Open Government Partnership Malawi-Digital Governance Thematic Area, Bram coordinates efforts to address critical technical and policy issues driving ICT development in the country.

Bram's influence reaches international forums, including his appointment by the UN Secretary-General to the Multi stakeholder Advisory Group (MAG) for the Internet Governance Forum (IGF). He is the current Vice chairperson of the Africa Atlarge Organization (AFRALO) at the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN). With a commitment to advancing tech policy agendas, Bram Fudzulani stands as a beacon of leadership, driving initiatives that foster innovation and digital inclusivity on a global scale.



Keynote Speaker

**VINCENT KUMWENDA**

TECH DELIVERY ADVISOR

Vincent Kumwenda is a seasoned technology, innovation and entrepreneurship enthusiast with over 15 years of experience.

He served as a Tech Delivery Advisor for digital transformation programs and as a CEO of a technology and innovation hub in Malawi, where his passion lies in utilizing technology to address social issues, mobilize youth, and drive economic development.



Workshop Facilitator

**TAKUYA KITAZAWA**

ICT Advisor, Mzuzu E-Hub

Takuya Kitazawa is an ICT Advisor at Mzuzu E-Hub. Over the last decade, he has worked on software development, machine learning, data science, and product management for diverse businesses in Asia, Europe, Africa, and the Americas at different scales ranging from independent to start-up to Big Tech. At the intersection of technological and social aspects of data-driven applications, he is passionate about promoting the ethical and sustainable use of information technologies through his mentoring, business consultation, and public engagement activities.

# The State of Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Malawi



## Technology

- Poor ICT infrastructure significantly limits access to telecommunications and participation in the digital economy
- The cost to purchase and operate a mobile phone is prohibitively high for the average Malawian
- Creation of a legal and regulatory environment for digital development, growth and adoption



## Innovation

- Malawi still has no clear shared vision on supporting, enhancing and adopting local innovations
- Local Innovators are yet to develop and deploy a local digital innovation that is adopted widely
- Malawi still has potential to leverage its existing digital space to enhance innovation and creativity



## Entrepreneurship

- Malawi has a big potential for entrepreneurship and innovation, despite being now a “sleeping giant”
- Malawi has the potential of becoming an entrepreneurial and innovation hub with a high youth population, increased level of graduates, huge interest in entrepreneurship and development of the private sector.

# SWOT analysis of the Technology, Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Malawi

## Strength

- Reasonably high expenditure on education with significant contributions from development partners.
- Low to moderate outcomes in education quality.
- Secondary schools, tertiary education sectors have pockets of excellence
- Curriculum review with interests to include digital skills at the lowest level of learning

## Weakness

- Malawi's education system suffers from a low rate of transition through levels of schooling. This is reflected in how attendance and completion drops off rapidly from primary to secondary and secondary to tertiary education.
- Low ranking literacy levels as compared to other Sub-Saharan African countries.
- This has implications for availability of skills, STEM and implications for the labour market but most importantly for the prospects for young Malawians - the biggest demographic in the population. Moreover, exclusion from the education system due to gender, disability or poverty is another significant challenge

## Opportunity

- Digitization of education has significant potential for scalability.
- Supporting cost-effective access to training through digitally delivered micro-credentials.
- Supply of devices to schools will allow learners to access e-learning programmes, digital tutoring and tele-education that are aimed at improving the quality of education.
- Improving the efficiency of the labour market matching mechanism through digital solutions

## Threat

- Lack of teacher training and digital skills Low levels of internet coverage and electricity access means that technical solutions and devices may not be deployed at scale
- Access to devices such as tablets or PCs at school is limited due to income constraints.
- Affordability of data bundle is a significant barrier to the youth meaning that enabling digital financial services cannot be deployed at scale.
- A lack of scalability due to infrastructure constraints means that the ecosystem cannot expand beyond pockets of existing access

## Limitations in the Tech, Innovation and Entrepreneurship Sector

- Limited business development/pitching skills of entrepreneurs and founders.
- Information asymmetry regarding existing financing, support, investment, etc.
- Lack of mentoring and guidance from professionals to mature the business idea. Most support programs are too short and not impactful.
- Lack of sufficient working premises, access to land and internet access.
- Heavy regulatory burdens that prohibits testing innovative business models in different innovative segments (Fintech, EdTech, AgriTech etc.)
- Lack of general business and entrepreneurship courses in universities.



## Mitigating innovation, tech and entrepreneurship limitations

**Leveraging the Digital ID:** as a linking tool and a unique identifier for all digital services, seamlessly.

**Technology Entrepreneurship:** Projects or organisations providing support to technology start-ups and Small and Medium Enterprises, including competitions, funding, business training, and incubation. Structured and at scale with focus on rural areas (80%).

**Drones:** Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) used for imagery (aerial surveillance, mapping) or carriage. Locally made in Maker Spaces across the country.

**Digital Finance:** Products, services, technology or infrastructure that enables individuals and companies to have access to payments, savings, and credit facilities.

**Data Gathering and Citizen Reporting:** Platforms which allow for the gathering and aggregation of data from the field.

**Data Analysis and Decision-Making:** Tools and services for the analysis of data to support decision-making.

**User-focused Information and Content Systems:** Platforms used for the pushing out of information to users.

**Local Freelancing and Business Process Outsourcing:** Put the digital skills to use by providing quick online jobs to skilled individuals can also export skills online.

# Workshop: Technology and Innovation in Malawi — Challenges and Opportunities



Takuya Kitazawa, Facilitating the workshop

- ▶ Mzuzu E-Hub's ICT Advisor, Takuya Kitazawa, first highlighted the importance of contextualizing and sustaining our approach to technological innovation. That is, we must optimize and prioritize our actions for Malawi contexts and work collectively for the long-term. The statements echo what's been discussed in the former keynote and panel sessions.
- ▶ This is a systemic challenge — Takuya introduced five key thematic areas and demonstrated how these areas can be dependent on each other in the context of technology and innovation. For example:
  - **Innovation** is often driven by **technology**
  - The use of **technology** needs **skills development**
  - To develop **skills**, we need proper **infrastructure**
  - **Infrastructure development** needs guiding **policies** from the authorities
  - A strong **policy** is established only by solid outcomes from **research and development** in academia and industry
  - **R&D** needs **funding** i.e., money
  - **Technology** comes with costs

## Workshop: Technology and Innovation in Malawi — Challenges and Opportunities

- ▶ Thus, we need to think of it as a system. To identify the opportunities for Malawi to grow in the systems, Takuya, the facilitator, split the participants into groups and assigned one of the five thematic areas to each group. The groups were then tasked to discuss and answer the following key questions:
  - What is an essential problem we have to collectively tackle?
  - What is the most critical metric we need to optimize?
  - Who are the stakeholders that must be involved from the beginning?
  - What are their roles? What can YOU do?
- ▶ This was an exercise to think long-term by facing reality, unpacking “Malawi contexts,” and revealing various stakeholders’ motivations in the systems for discovering the most impactful course of action.

## Key Lessons from the Groups

Topic	<i>The reality</i> — Key stakeholders and essential problems they need to collectively tackle	<i>Recommendations</i> — Long-term, more impactful directions
<b>Policy</b>	Among the <b>government, hubs, and international organizations</b> , coordination and collaboration under one big umbrella are missing.	Focus not only on implementing policies but on enabling populations to adapt to the policies, by tracking efficiency and effectiveness of the policies along with the material provisions and making capacity -strengthening efforts on the topics addressed by the policies. Meanwhile, each of us should actively demand policies, advocate the importance, and be accountable for the process.
<b>Funding</b>	<p><b>Governments</b> and <b>hubs</b> have too much dependency on grants, where their eligibility and flexibility are bounded by <b>donor</b> requirements.</p> <p>The <b>registrar general</b> does not set standards for evaluating, incentivizing, and sustaining innovations driven by the funds.</p>	We need to establish sufficient funding outside of grants, such as equity investment, and implement a mechanism for evaluating projects in terms of their scalability, viability, and sustainability. We then improve the awareness of innovators about sourcing funds. To do so, we should set up an association of Malawian hubs as a centralized place to work together toward common development goals in the country.
<b>Infrastructure</b>	The current infrastructure is very much <b>government</b> -owned and traditional, which is not innovative enough to accommodate Malawi's rural-centered population. Misaligned interests: <b>Service providers</b> develop infrastructure for revenue generating, whereas <b>regulators</b> (e.g., MACRA, MERA) aim to streamline the infrastructure.	<p>We need a new definition/approach for infrastructure development that fits to Malawi contexts e.g., infrastructure that can be adapted by the rural population who don't own smartphones.</p> <p>Invest in localizing, maintaining, and sustaining the infrastructure development projects in the long run.</p>

## Key Lessons from the Groups

Topic	<i>The reality</i> — Key stakeholders and essential problems they need to collectively tackle	<i>Recommendations</i> — Long-term, more impactful directions
<b>Skills development</b>	<p><b>Government officials</b> lack digital skills.</p> <p><b>End users</b> are failing to adapt to new technology (software and systems).</p> <p><b>Developers</b> are failing to come up with the solutions Malawians users can actually use.</p>	<p>Focus on the adaptation to the technology (i.e., true effectiveness and usefulness) when training people, not just maximizing the number of trainees. The skills must be adaptable and usable for locals, and this can be done based on the existing structure — like working with churches and local influencers to educate community people with their context in mind.</p> <p>We also need a platform for testing new technological solutions and enabling Malawian developers to go beyond “prototype” for innovation.</p>
<b>Research and development</b>	<p>Research funds and activities are concentrated too much around <b>academic institutions</b>, and hence research outcomes are not commercialized enough by collaborations between <b>public and private sectors</b>, as well as <b>hubs</b>. With no particular agency/ministry that can lead the efforts in the digital space, data/information dissemination is very limited in Malawi.</p>	<p>Establish a think tank of various players to collect what we have in the digital space and host relevant data/information for further collaboration. They can play a crucial role in linking research outcomes to practical use cases and making more research-backed recommendations to the stakeholders.</p>

## Quotes from the Panelists



**BRAM FUDZULANI**  
ANGLE DIMENSION

“Our problem lies heavily on the infrastructure needs. We have the right skill sets so we need infrastructures that also could build and help young graduates understand the industry’s expectations in terms of the skill sets that are there right now.”



**RHODA KAMWAZA**  
NTHA FOUNDATION

“There should be an initiative for ourselves as tech organizations to go and introduce ourself to other organizations and the government: to go sell ourselves. There are still some people that do not know about us. So for us as ecosystem builders, there is need for us to put out an awareness for ourselves and the people we are collaborating with.”



**MARTIN MASIYA**  
SCLLYS ENERGY

“We need to look at the actual cost of some of these businesses that we are willing to venture into. And then, ecosystem builders must build up the capacities of youth to deliver on that stage rather than lowering the threshold.”

## Guest List for Afrilabs Malawi Technology and Innovation Meet Up

Name	Institution
Chomora Mikeka	Min. of Education
Tawonga Chalanga	Green Impact Technologies
Michael Kazembe	Mahara Tech
Bright Chidzumeni	Save the Children
Vincent Kumwenda	Tony Blair Institute
Doreen Kayoyo	DISCOM
Geoff Anamphi	ENTREFINA
Janet Kapito	RFLMW
Rhoda Kamwaza	Ntha Foundation
Chripine Botha	Save the Children
Vigilant Vijimbo	Computer for Enhanced Education
Kondaine Kauwo	Computer for Enhanced Education
Shadreck Ngulube	CTN
Litness Chaima	Mzuzu E-HUB
Wangiwe Kambuzi	Mzuzu E-Hub
Bram Fudzulani	Angle Dimension
Andrew Chiudza Banda	AFRICAN ENTERPRISE
Emma Katengeza	SYNERGY
Dorothy Malipa	SYNERGY
Kerrina Nkhoma	SYNERGY
McDonald Nyoni	UNDP
Rumbani Sauti Phiri	Computer for Enhanced Education
Pride Musemwa	Ntha Foundation
Martin Masiya	Scillys Energy
Sarah Khudze	MUBAS
Tawonga Chunda	UNDP

Name	Institution
Rodwell Mlumbe	Citizen Organisation
Agatha White	
Kelvin Mateyu	NXTGEN Labs
Sithembile Banda	NXTGEN Labs
Maxine Nkhono	NXTGEN Labs
Alfred Kankuzi	STATUS
Lusayo Mwakatika	ALEA
Andrew Mwase	JUPITER
Annexious Chimo	Ministry of Tourism
Fainess Chitsime	Ministry of Tourism
Dennis Imaan	KUWALA
Peter Chiwanda	MHUB
Ben Chidyaonga	MHUB
Kenneth Manyenje	MHUB
Ranken Chipote	MHUB
Emmanuel Mamboya	Digital Footprint
Richard Mamboya	Digital Foot Print
Victoria Kamuona	MHUB
Alefa Harry	MHUB
Sauda Kauma	MHUB
Elias Mhango	MHUB
Banji Sinoya	MHUB
Miriam Somozani	MHUB
Aze Kandiero	MHUB
Daniel Mvalo	MHUB
Cedric Jafarpour-davatgar	World University Service of Canada

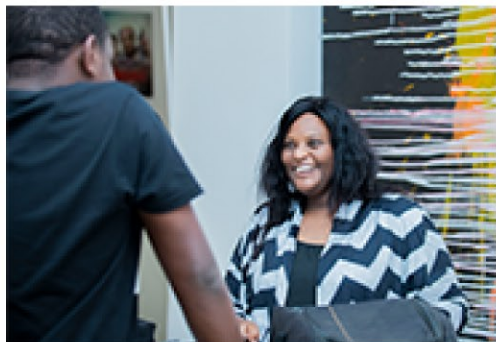


## Picture Highlights





# Picture Highlights





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