CSO WEEK 2023 Tech x Society: Then, Now and Beyond

Research and media has always be central to Hakielimu's efforts in advancing the education agenda

Learning Reimagined

Hakielimu, an organization advocating for education issues for over two decades, has become a household name in Tanzania. What's the secret to their success, and how do they envision technology revolutionizing education? Let's delve into the insights gathered from their session.

Hakielimu's path to success is founded on research and advocacy. They've established their own think tank, ensuring that public campaigns are consistently grounded in thorough research. Mobilizing citizens, engaging with central and local governments, and collaborating with members of parliament are all integral components of their strategy. Hakielimu understands that effective advocacy extends beyond mere advertisements.

Hakielimu has built a robust network of over 40,000 education enthusiasts. This open platform empowers anyone to participate, providing the necessary information to hold the government accountable.

While meetings and social discussions have proven effective in conveying policies, they have inherent limitations in reaching a wider audience due to associated costs.

Abraham Lazaro, when discussing the role of technology, emphasizes Hakielimu's mission to ensure that every Tanzanian child has access to quality education. They initiated their journey with public meetings, magazines and expanded into TV and radio, effectively reaching even those who cannot read or write or have disabilities. Their innovative approach includes radios powered by solar or hand-crank chargers.

> *We've learned that the Tanzanian audience is fragmented; there's no one-size-fits-all media, which is why the need to leverage various technologies to address different needs is crucial. Inclusion is paramount,"*

states **Bonaventura Godfrey.**

Research and media has always be central to Hakielimu's efforts in advancing the education agenda

Interactive Voice Response (IVR) is an easy-to-use technology

Hakielimu utilizes Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology to reach communities without access to print, TV, or radio. This approach also ensures that even those without smartphones can access their services. The voice-based system allows citizens to listen to recorded messages from a menu and provide feedback on various educational matters.

Katja Maetoloa, from Hamky University, underscores the necessity for a blend of technology and traditional pedagogy to enhance learning outcomes. Technology should complement human efforts, not replace them. Her colleague, Carita Cruz, highlights the importance of educators who understand technology and possess in-depth content knowledge. Technology should empower students to think creatively and innovatively.

PEKA Salokannel of 3D Bear Technology Company, based in Helsinki, emphasizes that not everything needs to be taught in a physical setting. AV & VR technology enables students to learn in realistic environments, thereby making education more accessible. Simultaneously, many students can acquire knowledge without the need for physical travel or specialized equipment. This approach effectively prepares young people for high-paying jobs and facilitates workforce upskilling.

Learning from the best: A team from Hamky University is here to share their experiences on how education can benefit from technology.

Climate change poses challenges to various human rights, including the right to health, access to clean and safe water, and the right to work.

Emerging Challenges, Fresh Approaches

Climate change stands as one of the most critical global issues of our time. Despite the persistent efforts of researchers, policymakers, decision-makers, and practitioners, we find ourselves grappling with the consequences of rising temperatures and shifting rainfall patterns, with profound impacts on our economies, societies, and cultures.

During the ongoing CSO Week 2023 forum, the Legal and Human Rights Center (LHRC) unveiled a key report on climate change. This report offers a comprehensive examination of the effects of climate change, with a specific focus on agriculture, animal husbandry, and fishing.

In keeping with the forum theme, *Tech & Society,* Joyce Komanya from LHRC emphasized the significance of existing environmental legislation, including the Environmental Law of 2004 and the environmental policy of 1997. These legal frameworks are in alignment with the national strategic plan for 2026, underscoring the collective effort required at all levels to meet national and global targets.

LHRC has identified critical issues affecting local communities, including the right to food, access to clean and safe water, the right to health, and the right to a sustainable livelihood. These challenges, such as women having to travel long distances to fetch water and income fluctuations, require immediate attention within our communities.

Digital tools are transforming the way we protect and promote human rights.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, global warming has already increased by 1.1°C. In Tanzania, we are witnessing rising nighttime temperatures, a direct result of factors such as agriculture, livestock, fishing, reduced rainfall, and urban expansion.

In response to these challenges, LHRC, in collaboration with SUA University, has introduced innovative technological solutions. These solutions encompass drip irrigation systems, drones, satellites, and mobile apps aimed at effectively mitigating environmental issues.

LHRC firmly believes that only by taking proactive technological steps can we pave the way for the future we desire.

AI For Newbies

Yesterday, we embarked on an exploration of a relatively new and complex topic: Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its potential use by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). Guiding us through this journey was Elias Patrick from *Kitonga AI*.
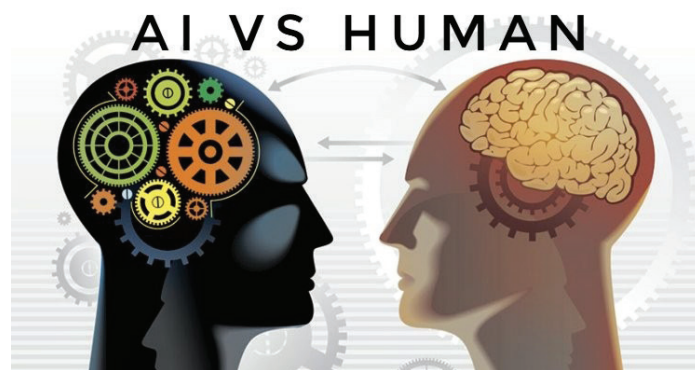
He initiated the discussion by drawing a parallel between the human brain and AI. Just as the human brain serves as the central hub for receiving, processing, and making decisions based on the information it accumulates, AI functions in a similar way. Essentially, our collective knowledge shapes who we are.

Our expert also shed light on the role of the medulla oblongata, a brain component responsible for storing and retrieving information. When faced with multiple choices, the brain processes them with emotions in mind, leading to decisions influenced by the information given priority. Therefore, the outcome of decisions is intricately connected to the type of information that takes precedence.

In contrast, AI mimics the operations of the human brain through programmed algorithms that receive inputs and interpret human behavior patterns. To illustrate, social media platforms scrutinize your initial actions upon waking up and utilize this data to inform their algorithms.

AI, much like the medulla oblongata, acts as a data repository, ensuring easy access and retrieval. It stores and processes data to facilitate rapid retrieval.

There are significant differences between the human brain and AI: AI lacks emotions, while humans are emotional beings. While humans can reason, AI is still learning to think and reason. AI's endurance exceeds that of humans, as it does not get sick or tired, provided it has electricity and an internet connection. AI is inclusive and unbiased, not influenced by factors like gender, location, or economic status.

Participants had the chance to explore Kitonga AI, a domestic AI system that offers a wide range of services. These include converting text to speech, helping with job applications and CVs, providing guidance for organizations, aiding in project proposals, and facilitating applications for international projects like those with USAID.

Elias emphasized the importance of advocating for a transformation in the education system. As CSOs, it is crucial that we advocate for systems that support effective education, equipping our children to compete in an evolving world.

The Digital Inclusion Dilemma

When planning anything, remember to include people with disabilities, considering their challenges and strengths. This will help them participate fully. - FUWAVITA

The intention was to enhance the quality of life for individuals with disabilities by providing them access to knowledge and adapting digital media to their specific needs. However, the group claims that they are still facing barriers to full participation in the digital world.

Advanced technology like AI should improve the overall quality of life for people with disabilities.

Mr. Generius Ernest, Head of the Youth and Women Disabilities Organization (YoWDO), pointed out that there is a significant gap in digital literacy, and documents are often inaccessible to the blind and deaf. He mentioned this during a plenary session on the potential of technology to empower individuals with disabilities and argued that many people with disabilities lack even the most basic digital skills.

He also emphasized the need for the private sector to be more inclusive of people with disabilities. Anneth Gerana from Tanzania Joy Women Entrepreneurship for the Deaf (FUWAVITA) echoed these sentiments, highlighting the financial challenges faced by people with disabilities. She mentioned that technology is costly, and many struggle to afford essential services and internet access due to the high cost of bandwidth. Ms. Gerana also noted that most people with disabilities do not own smartphones, making it even more challenging for them to access digital resources.

She emphasized that people with multiple impairments are at the greatest risk of digital exclusion and recounted incidents where some were swindled at Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) by individuals pretending to help the visually impaired access their accounts and withdraw money.

Summarizing the discussions, Mr. Kanganzi Rutachwamagyo, the Executive Director of Inclusive Development Promoters and Consultants (IDPC), expressed concern about the lack of standardization in meeting the diverse needs of people with disabilities. He stated that the "one-size-fits-all" approach is causing difficulties for this community.

To operate without any obstacle, CSOs are advised to fully comply with legal regulations

Compliance is the key!

FCS has reiterated its steadfast commitment to creating a favorable environment for Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) to operate in Tanzania. This commitment was reaffirmed by Nicholas Lekule, who emphasized the organization's dedication to removing obstacles that impede the progress of CSOs.

Mr. Lekule emphasized the importance of collaborating with the Regional Administration and Local Government to ensure that CSOs can conduct their activities without unnecessary hurdles. He stressed that the goal is to enable CSOs to thrive without relying on subsidies and grants.

Participants at the plenary session were also updated on the ongoing CSOs Week. The performance of non-state actors has been found to vary depending on their financial resources. Alarmingly, around 5,000 CSOs have been deregistered for various reasons, primarily non-compliance.

Mr. Lekule emphasized the need for collaborative efforts to enhance the performance and relevance of CSOs. He urged CSOs to make the most of their available resources to stay afloat.

During the session, Charles Mpaka introduced the NGOs Information System, which includes tools for Mapping, Analysis, and Research. The system provides a wealth of data, revealing that 4,801 CSOs have been deregistered, 7,123 are non-compliant, and CSOs have created 16,007 employment opportunities in Tanzania.

Asha Abinallah, CEO of Tech and Media Convergence (TMC) and the session's

The digitization of NGOs' information systems is a game-changer as it helps the government serve stakeholders more efficiently.

moderator, challenged CSOs to embrace technology and adapt to a changing landscape. She emphasized that dialogues and a shift in mindset are essential for success.

Participants explored innovative strategies to optimize statutory compliance and integrate technology within CSOs, paving the way for a more effective and compliant civil society sector in Tanzania.

Being the light in the dark

During Civic Week 2023, CBM International and Save the Children organized an event focused on digital inclusive education. In this session, CBM shared insights into how their work in the area of disability-inclusive development prioritizes the use of inclusive technology. CBM supports various local organizations in Tanzania in the field of inclusive education and collaborates closely with the government and the Federation of Organizations of Persons with Disabilities.

CBM believes that assistive technologies, such as the Braille system customized for applications and devices like computers, smartphones, hearing aids, and tablets, can empower people with disabilities to lead full and independent lives. The organization advocates for implementing interventions to make this system accessible to all persons with disabilities.

Similarly, Save the Children has a rich history of tirelessly serving vulnerable children, especially in conflict-affected areas. In response to these challenges, Save the Children has initiated projects to assist children living in refugee camps, such as Nduta in the Kibondo district and Nyarugusu in the Kasulu district.

The significance of technology in supporting child education became even more evident, especially with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Just like many other sectors, the education landscape underwent significant changes. To adapt and survive in this new environment, technology emerged as a crucial tool.

During Civic Week 2023, Save the Children showcased their work in using technology to support digital education, a journey that began in 2018. Joseph Mapunda, the Digital Education Officer from Save the Children, explained how they designed digital education programs to address unique challenges within refugee camps. In such settings, many children drop out of school, and teachers often lack exposure to digital content. Both children and their teachers have also been affected psychologically.

Jovita Mlay takes pride in her organization for making a significant difference in the lives of disadvantaged children

To tackle these challenges, Save the Children introduced a program providing students with tablets, allowing teachers full control over the content. Moreover, students gained access to a mobile library filled with educational content and engaging games, enhancing their learning experience.

In 2021, Save the Children introduced a more advanced system. Almost all activities typically conducted in a regular classroom now take place online. This progressive initiative involves active participation from key government institutions, and the curriculum has been harmonized between the country of origin and the host country.

To ensure acceptance of this innovative system, Save the Children invested in training programs for both teachers and parents. Their goal is to emphasize the system's vital role in shaping the future of education for vulnerable children.

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) is a renowned international humanitarian organization with a mission rooted in the principles of the Catholic faith. In Tanzania, the organization has been actively addressing the country's various development and humanitarian needs since 1962. As a rule, CRS partners with local communities, government agencies, and other organizations to implement programs and projects that address issues such as food security, poverty alleviation, social justice, healthcare, education, and sustainable agriculture. Through its dedicated efforts, CRS significantly contributes to building more resilient and prosperous communities.

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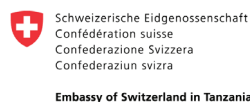A member of Standard Bank Group

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