TECH TALK PARTNER FORUM

Creating a Digital Sustainable Eco-System

MZUZU ENTREPRENEUR HUB

Table of Content

Creating a
Digital Sustainable Eco-system.

At Tech Talk Partner Forum (TTPF), Mzuzu E-Hub gathered a total of 20 diverse organizations across Malawi.

- Discussed how to leverage digitalization and equip staff members and beneficiaries with modern technologies

- Explored a path to make technology-led activities long-lasting

- Create a platform to share success stories, lessons learnt and opportunities with participating organizations

2

Why TTPF?
Mzuzu E-Hub believes in the power of digital technology and partner eco-system

Our commitment to the Digital Malawi Project

We implement the Digital Skills for All project through:

- Media Information Literacy Education (MILE) program for cultivating digital skills
- Bizcubation program for developing ICT entrepreneurship

The underlying Digital Malawi project aims to enhance youth and women's participation in the digital economy through skills development, enterprise support and access to digital technologies in Malawi.

MILE and Bizcubation have to date supported thousands of beneficiaries across the country, especially in the Northern Region of Malawi.

We have grown with the partners for 5 years

2022/2023 marked 5 years of Mzuzu E-Hub's operations in Malawi, with tremendous growth registered. This achievement has only been possible through the continuous collaboration and engagement with various players in different sectors. Creation of partnerships with such organizations has accorded a platform for Mzuzu E-Hub to position itself as a key player in the entrepreneurship, innovation and technology sectors.

Yet, we understand making a change takes time

The use of technology and collaboration can only be effective when implemented in a sustainable, long-lasting manner.

Eco-system

Increase mutual understanding amongst partner organizations about their activities.

Sustainability

Create a platform for stimulating cross-organizational and long-lasting collaborations.

Digitalization

Increase mutual understanding amongst partner organizations about their activities.

MALAWI'S CURRENT STATE ON DIGITALIZATION

More than
50%
Of age <18 populations

More than
80%
Of rural populations

Only about
25%
Of internet penetration rate (*5M internet users*)

Sources: PopulationPyramid.net, The World Bank - Data, Digital 2023: Malawi

TECH TALK PARTNER FORUM THEMES

INNOVATION
DIGITALIZATION
PARTNERSHIP
SUSTAINABILITY

6

DIGITALIZATION

Distinguishing between Digitalization and Digitization

Digitization concerns performing tasks by the use of information and communication technology (ICT), shifting from conventional manual methods. For instance, using Zoom for meetings instead of traditional phone calls, online school registration, or using mobile apps for food orders. In contrast, digitalization is about the process of converting manual processes into digital ones, and it poses many challenges outside of the technology itself, such as partnership and sustainability as TTPF highlights.

DEFINING INNOVATION

Innovation emphasizes on creating something that has the potential to transform lives entirely and is sustainable, not just a one-time occurrence. The challenge lies in grasping the true essence of innovation, often mistakenly equating it with repeating the same actions. This could include merging technology and business education.

This knowledge transfer becomes truly innovative when it translates into tangible actions. It's essential to understand that innovation doesn't necessarily entail invention; it must, however, significantly impact someone's life or make work delivery much easier.

PARTNERSHIP

DEVELOPING MEANINGFUL PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership, for us, involves shared understanding and common goals between two collaborating entities, with mutual benefits being the core objective. Its significance lies in enhancing project efficiency, reducing costs, and maximizing impact. However, there are potential drawbacks, such as the risk of competition among partners. Nevertheless, partnerships help establish relevance, minimize redundant efforts, and ultimately increase overall impact.

DIGITIZING SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability hinges on resources, especially in impactful areas. While capacity building is essential, it often leaves beneficiaries lacking necessary resources. Involving beneficiaries in project planning is vital for long-term sustainability. Sustainability requires a practical approach, ensuring digital solutions address specific problems effectively. Outdated digital solutions hinder sustainability; tailor-made, relevant projects are crucial. A dependence syndrome exists, necessitating a shift toward localization and community involvement. The absence of a robust regulatory framework, including data privacy and cybersecurity policies, contributes to sustainability challenges. Holding governments accountable is crucial to prevent the misuse of resources meant for communities.

S.W.O.T
ANALYSIS ON DIGITALIZATION

S

- Institutional digital transformation
- Organisation willingness to uptake digital technologies
- Presence of robust technology infrastructures i.e Mzuzu University, NXTGen Labs
- Utilization of digital media for information dissemination
- Institutional collaboration in implementing digital technologies

W

- Limited tech related resources in both rural and urban areas
- Resistance and mindset change to uptake digital technologies
- Financial resources to strengthen digital technologies
- Insufficient human capital in ICT skills within organizations
- The proliferation of unnecessary competition amongst digital institutions
- Weak implementation of policies and laws governing the digitization space

O

- A wealth of organizations willing to engage in digital technology
- Existence of the Access to Information Act
- Willingness within communities and youths to learn about digital technologies
- Abundant human capital in tech-related fields, especially within higher learning institutions
- The emergence of policies, such as the National ICT policy, provides a supportive framework for our initiatives

T

- Resistance to change with many individuals hesitant to embrace digitalization
- An economic downturn, starting with the depreciation of the Kwacha
- Lack of infrastructure such as network in some areas
- Policies not promoting the adoption of technologies
- A tax-dependent economy, resulting in heavy taxation on digital technology
- Rapid changes in technology development, making it challenging for people to keep up

SPEAKER HIGHLIGHTS

"Our primary focus is on supporting farmers and the central questions we aim to address are how to uphold the quality of support to farmers and how to retain the accumulated experience over time. The answer lies in digitalization and in the past two years, we have made substantial investments in digitizing our programs and specialized areas."

HASTINGS NHLANE
Chief Executive Officer
ACADES

• • •

"The primary focus is ensuring that we not only establish partnerships but also sustain them. Finding a partner may be relatively easy, but maintaining a partnership is a different challenge altogether. If you're thinking about sustainability, you cannot implement projects effectively without forming partnerships. Partnerships are instrumental for resource pooling, access to expertise and expansive networks. They also allow you to leverage on the strengths of others in areas where you may be weaker."

ELIJAH LUMBANI MKANDAWIRE
Chief Executive Officer
mHUB

GROUP ACTION PLAN ON DIGITALIZATION

STANDARDIZATION

- Utilization of digital tools such as videos to ensure consistency in delivery of various programs
- Substantial investment in digital tools catering for all various forms of programming
- Development of applications for tracking data and history within program implementation

IMPLEMENTATION

- Reaching more individuals with limited resources based on digital tools created and rolled out
- Growth in operations for individuals and organisations with a one stop centre for digitalization
- Human resource improvement in efficiency and capacity with many people up taking digitalization as part of their career

PRINCIPAL GOAL

The goal is to transform all processes into digital formats and ensure that service delivery becomes digital for all aspects that can be digitized

COLLABORATION AND IMPACT OF DIGITALIZATION

Stage 1

Establishment of collaborative partnerships among organisations by engaging policy makers for effective policy development and implementation.

Identifying key areas and personnel who lack skills in ICT and collaborating with Tech organisation in encompassing system digitalization, shifting from competition to co-binding in achieving Agenda2063.

Stage 2

Development of an application where there is content encompassing various sectors including health education and agriculture. This will empower youth advocacy by providing easy access to evidence-based information.

Stage 3

Enable youths to access technology hubs and labs, providing training in tech and innovation. Empowered youths can promote digitalization skills among their peers, creating more employment opportunities.

Launch awareness campaigns to empower youths to engage with technology and involve them in the development of visions and policies.

Mitigating partnership challenges

- Establish regular meetings and engagement to maintain a healthy and sound collaboration

- Build and maintain trust and respect for each partnership

- Be flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances and environmental shifts by opening to new ideas

- Keep your focus on partnership sustainability

- Base partnerships on mutual understanding and common interests

- Continuous engagement om defined roles and responsibilities and supporting areas of weakness

- Leveraging organizations that promote ecosystem players in dealing with partnerships

- Access to data and resources, such as expertise, to leverage each other's strengths

Partnership challenges

- Inadequate communication skills

- Legal complexities in drawing up partnerships

- Pre-defined timelines and lack of exit strategies

- Geographical positioning of partners

- Lack of cooperative efforts among partners i.e operating in separate and uncoordinated setups

- Lack of commitment within partnerships

- Tendency for organizations to prioritize individual efforts over collaborative ones

- Differing expectations within the partnership

15

FEEDBACK FROM PARTICIPANTS

" I surely appreciate and are proud for all the support and being introduced to a high profile event organised by Mzuzu E-Hub, our partner. I had the privilege to interact with different organisations. Surely, that contributed to my personal growth and increased collaboration and networking of FOCUS. Looking forward to participate in more other events with you."

Goldman Mwasangoko
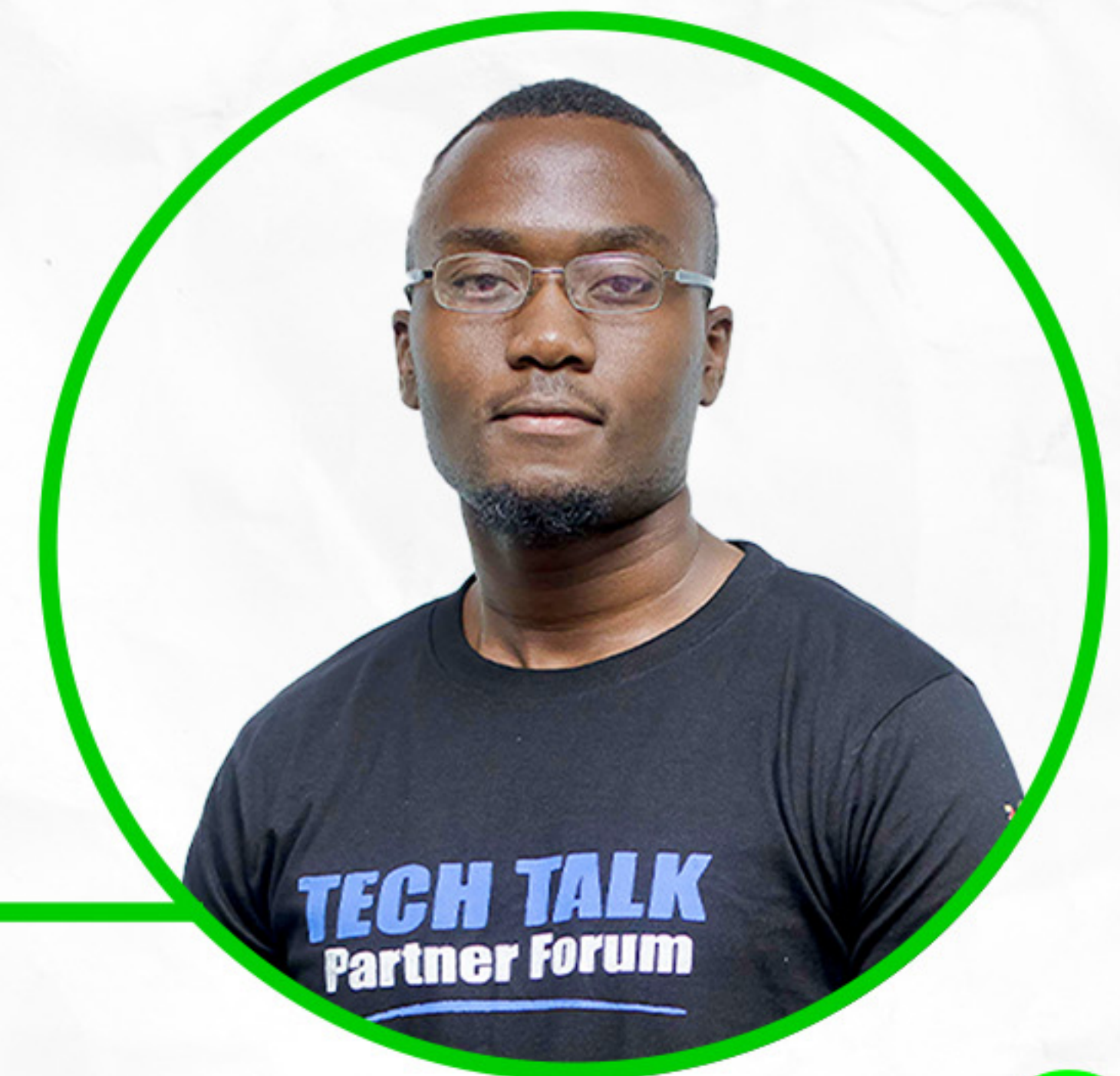*Director of Partnerships*
FOCUS Organisation - Karonga

" It was great to represent Ntha Foundation and share our insights on digitalisation, ecosystem building and sustainability, as well as take part in the interactive sessions, listen to the insightful presentations and panel discussion .The event was very warm and open which gave us the freedom to interact and share ideas. Thank you once again for organising this Fantastic Forum."

Victor Caesar Gondwe
Chief Operations Officer
Ntha Foundation – Lilongwe

Participant List

Name:
Pemphero Jekete

Position:
Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

Organization:
Computer for Enhanced Education
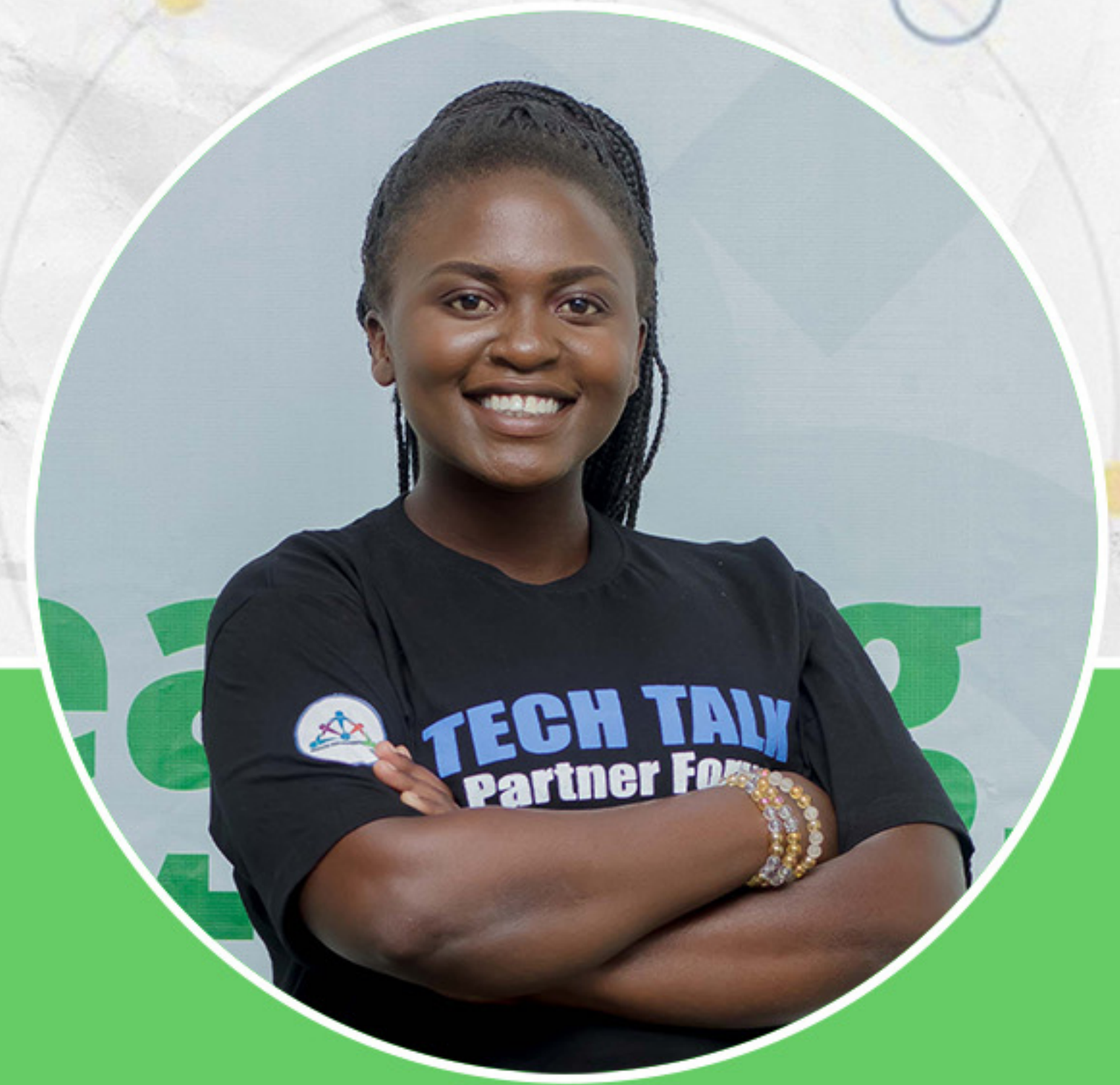
Email Address:
pemphero@ceemw.org

Name:
Goldman Mwasangoko

Position:
Director of Partnership

Organization:
FOCUS Organization

Email Address:
goldmanmwasangoko@gmail.com

Name:
Dorothy Elsie Nkowani

Position:
Peer Educator

Organization:
Youth Innovation and Creativity

Email Address:
yicmw09@gmail.com

17

(Random Order)

Name:
Elijah Lumbani Mkandawire

Position:
Chief Executive Officer

Organization:
mHub

Email Address:
elmkandawire@mhubmw.com

Name:
Hastings Nhlane

Position:
Chief Executive Officer

Organization:
ACADES

Email Address:
hastingz.hastingz@gmail.com

Name:
Victor Caeser Gondwe

Position:
Chief Operations Officer

Organization:
Ntha Foundation

Email Address:
victor@kwathucentre.org

(Random Order)

Name:
Daniel Msiska

Position:
Gender and Social Inclusions
Program Coordinator

Organization:
Youth and Society

Email Address:
dandmsiska@hotmail.com

Name:
Emmanuel Banda

Position:
Lecturer

Organization:
Mzuzu University

Email Address:
banda.e@mzuni.ac.mw

Name:
Amos Kudzala

Position:
Head of Innovation

Organization:
NXTGEN Labs

Email Address:
amos@nxtgenlabs.mw

(Random Order)

Name:
Sam Masikini

Position:
Founder/Managing Director

Organization:
Computer Clinic

Email Address:
sammasikini1@gmail.com

Name:
Peter Gondwe

Position:
Executive Director

Organization:
Life Concern

Email Address:
lifeconcernorg@gmail.com

Name:
Ezekiel Namacha

Position:
Head of ICT

Organization:
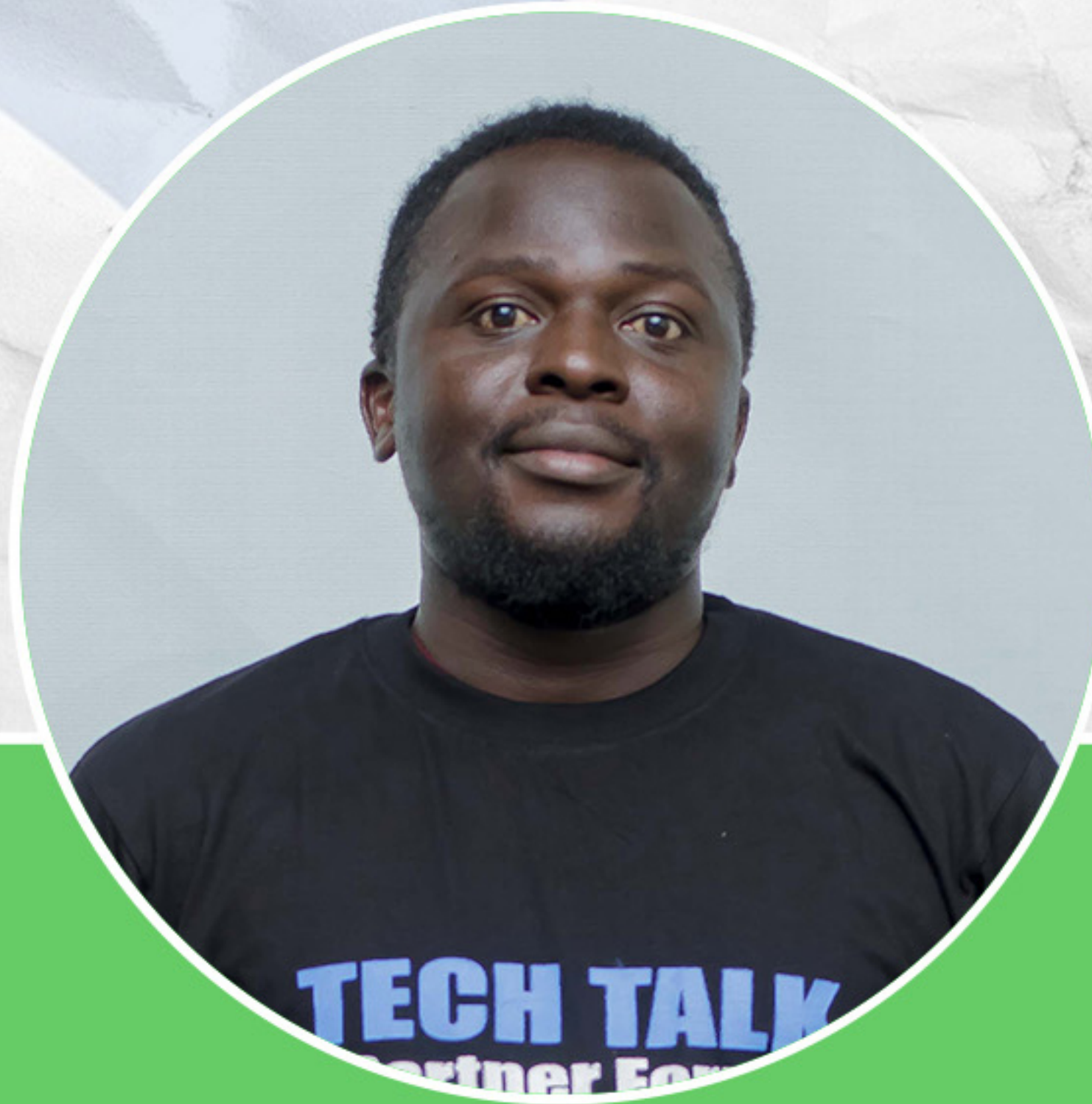Mzuzu University

Email Address:
namacha.e@mzuni.ac.mw

Name:
Allen Kumwenda

Position:
Executive Director

Organization:
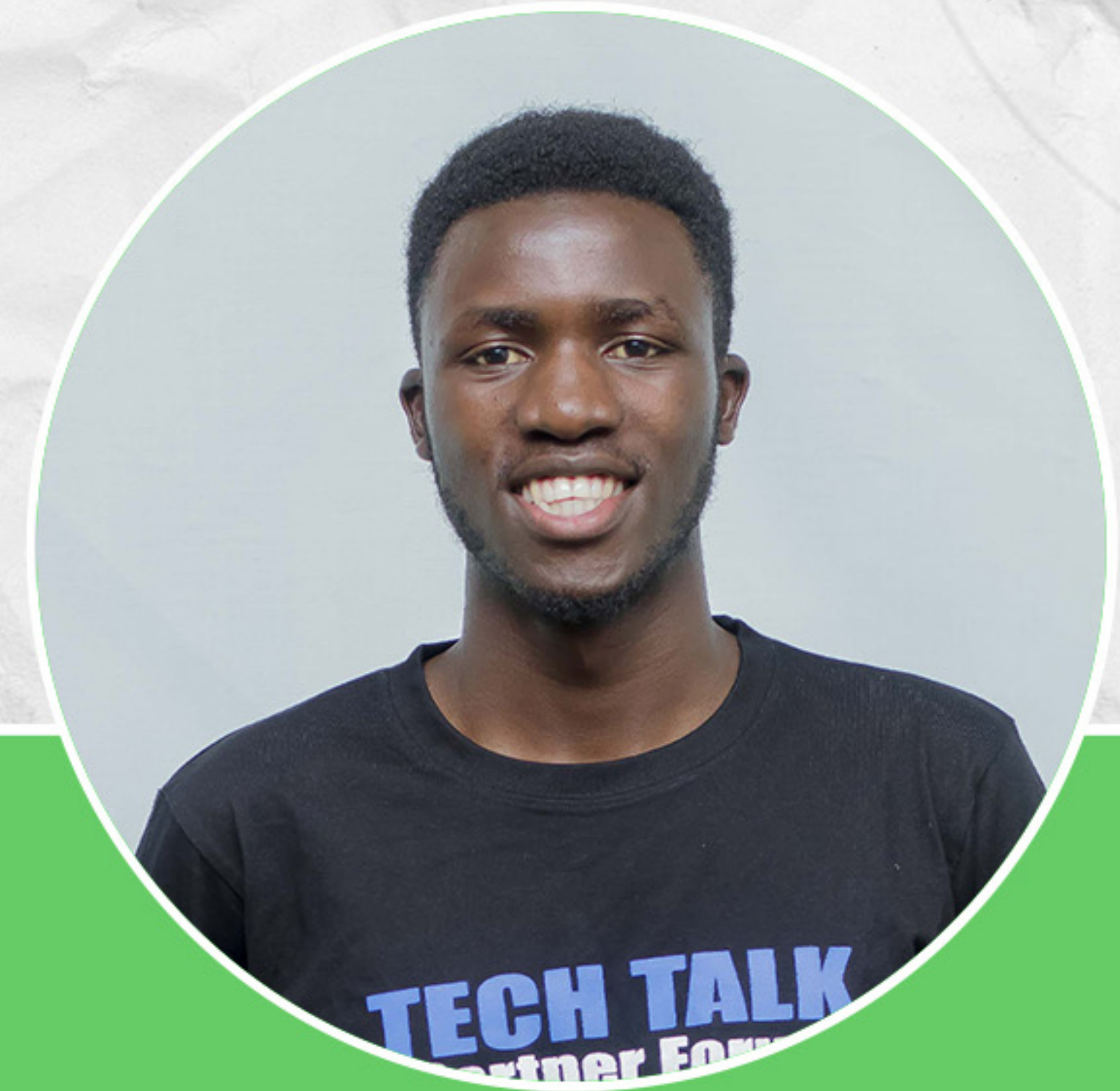Sprodeta

Email Address:
sprodeta@gmail.com

Name:
Emmanuel Njikho

Position:
Project Officer

Organization:
Temwa

Email Address:
emmanuelnjikho.temwa@gmail.com

Name:
Sopani Ng'ambi

Position:
Public Relations Officer

Organization:
Citizen Impact Organisation

Email Address:
sopaningambi7@gmail.com

(Random Order)

Name:
Nthangwanika Kondowe

Position:
Executive Assistant

Organization:
Maloto

Email Address:
kondowe.ntha@gmail.com

(Random Order)

22

OUR PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

Mzuzu Entrepreneur Hub

ENTREPRENEURSHIP TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION HUB

P.O Box 20094, Mzuzu
Kwawala house, Second floor

(+265) 888 860 810 | (+265) 884 600 034 | (+265) 994 348 129

hello@mzuzuehub.org | mzuzuehub@gmail.com

www.mzuzuehub.org