

# UVUMBUI NEWSLETTER



## This Issue

Kenya Innovation Week, a time to focus on the country's Innovation Agenda  
PAGE 02

Assistive Technology: Newest category in the National Innovation Awards  
PAGE 02

KeNIA CEO Reaffirms commitment to ensure Scaling of Innovations.  
PAGE 03

KeNIA holds second Technology Transfer and IP Commercialization training  
PAGE 03

Events, and Updates  
PAGE 04

# Kenya Innovation Week, a time to focus on the country's Innovation Agenda

Even though President Uhuru Kenyatta admits that "innovation is the engine that drives entrepreneurship and entrepreneurship opens up opportunities for the young people and creates jobs that sustain and reward them as well," Kenyan innovators have for a long time lacked the support to upscale their innovations.

However, for the first time in the history of the country, Kenya is set to have a week-long national innovation event dubbed Kenya Innovation Week (KIW), signifying a great milestone in enhancing the country's innovation system.

Under the theme "The Innovativeness of Kenyans," The inaugural forum coordinated by the country's innovation agency, Kenya National Innovation Agency (KeNIA) is scheduled to run from the 6th to 10th of December, 2021 and has the prospects of advancing the national priorities of the Big 4 Agenda, Vision 2030, Agenda 2063 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Education Cabinet Secretary Prof. George Magoha says the event will be a boost for the Education and Research sector, noting that it will in a great way enhance socio-economic development.

"Kenya Innovation Week will be a flagship forum in line with the reforms trajectory of Education and Research, improved institutional sustainability and socio-economic development," Prof. Magoha says.



Startups Kenya trajectory will focus on startups from across the country with an aim to showcase and link the most promising startups to investors and funders.

Tech & the 4th Industrial Revolution track will aim to promote the modern intangible technologies such as IoT, mobile devices, 3D printing, smart sensors, big data and analytics, augmented and virtual reality as enablers of innovation.

And Research and Commercialization track will focus on strengthening best practices and systems for good research and commercialization of innovations.

## Focus on Innovation

The man at the helm of the country's Innovation Agency, Dr. Tonny Omwansa observes that innovation is so important a subject that the whole country should be focusing on, at least once every year.

"We want to get the entire country revolving around the Kenya Innovation Week at that particular time. We celebrate days like Mashujaa day and the whole country focuses on that. I don't see why the country shouldn't be focusing on the innovation agenda."

"We're going to have workshops, seminars, boot camps, hackathons, training forums, and there is a reason why we want to focus on the people, because it is the movement that comes out of the people that then create solutions."

Dr. Omwansa knows very well the benefits of an Innovation forum, having been the brain behind the formation of the Nairobi Innovation Week (NIW), and is very much aware of the role every citizen has to play to ensure the country make a significant improvement in the innovation ecosystem.

"Each of us is creative; each of us is innovative. It's only that our style and our intensity at a personal level are different. When we say the innovativeness of Kenyans, each of us should feel they are a part and parcel of it," Says Dr. Omwansa.

Ranked at position 85 in the 2021 Global Innovation Index (GII), there is a growing need to improve the country's innovation ecosystem and Kenya Innovation Week 2021 will achieve this by convening the local governments, private sector, development partners, media and civil society in order to capitalize in as much shared value as possible, hence enabling the country climb the GI ladder.

## Thematic areas

The agency responsible for co-ordination, promotion and regulation of the National Innovation ecosystem has identified four tracks that the 2021 Innovation Week will focus on; Skills for Innovation, Research & Commercialization, Startups Kenya, Tech & 4th Industrial Revolution, and will leverage on the Counties, Innovation hubs, Universities, TVETS, and Research Centers to ensure the success of the Innovation Week.

Skills for Innovation track will explore sharing and disseminating information on how to enhance innovativeness of society through skills development from early childhood to career levels.

## Assistive Technology: Newest category in the National Innovation Awards

This year the National Innovation Awards, included another award category; assistive technology. This award aims to recognize and award innovations that are rehabilitative, assistive and adaptive for people living with disabilities or the elderly population.

According to the 2019 census, 2.2% (0.9 million people) of Kenyans live with some form of disability. Whether an adult with a disability continues to live at home or joins a community as a productive member depends largely on his or her ability to manage everyday tasks. This means that innovations that are in line with assistive technology are key to ensuring the minority group are able to comfortably contribute to the growing economy of Kenya.

The Kenyan government has been key in promoting and advancing the inclusion of people living with disability through enhancing their skills by ensuring ease of learning, ensuring government services are available to them through specialized systems and even provision of assistive equipment.



Assistive technologies can enable a person with a disability to engage in many activities. There are currently many changes in schools to ease the lives of persons with disabilities, including Braille, large print, and audio books.

In the recent past Kenya has seen emergence of more and more assistive technology. As the Kenyans work to accept people living with disabilities in Kenya, it gives way for people to come together and try to come up with ways to help integrate to society better.

## QUOTE

“Innovation is seeing what everybody has seen and thinking what nobody has thought”  
-Dr. Albert Szent Gyorgyi

## KeNIA CEO Reaffirms commitment to ensure Scaling of Innovations

During his address at the University - Industry Conference, KeNIA CEO, Dr. Tony Omwansa stated that the Innovation Agency would continue to support innovations get to the market. He acknowledged the existence of prototypes that never made it to the market and assured innovators that such is the very reason for the formation of KeNIA. As part of its core mandate, the agency facilitates taking of ideas and innovations to market. The University - Industry Conference 2021, was hosted by Kenyatta University in its efforts to support innovations coming from the institution.

Dr. Omwansa informed the attendees that in the past months, KeNIA has been working on increasing its capacity and it now has a solid team that is dedicated to enabling innovations in Kenya. He outlined a plan that would see the change for the better.



**“Innovation is change that adds value. That gives everyone a chance to realize that anyone can be innovative...”**  
- Dr. Tony Omwansa, KeNIA CEO

First, changing innovation policies and regulation through creating a legal framework that would outline the roles of each institutions and how they will be held responsible. In this, he outlined that KeNIA has set up the Innovation Academy that will see the training of institution in regards to those matters and eventually work towards changing of attitudes on our own innovations.

Second, KeNIA will work to strengthen the interaction of players in the innovation ecosystem. In his address, the CEO mentioned that is the motive behind the Kenya Innovation Week (KIW). The innovation week will bring innovators, investors, policy makers, institutions and all other key players together for a chance to network.

Third, Dr. Omwansa promised that during his term as the KeNIA CEO he would ensure the scaling of innovations by scouting for the innovations, recognizing them and ensuring they have access to funding, mentorship and networking opportunities.

KeNIA is also creating a digital market place, a platform where innovators will display and sell their innovations.

The CEO urged institutions to take their position in the innovation ecosystem and through collaboration, we together, change the economy of Kenya.

## KeNIA holds second Technology Transfer and IP Commercialization training



Kenya National Innovation Agency has today, October 4, 2021, commenced a second training on Technology Transfer and Commercialization of Intellectual Property.

The three-day workshop at Machakos University has attracted participants from Government Agencies, research institutions, TVETs, Universities, Research Hospitals, and consulting firms across the country. Under the umbrella of KeNIA Innovation Academy, the program aims to build innovative capacities of interested individuals and support the integration of innovative practices into institutions.

The agency is targeting to build an integrated community of passionate individuals interested in developing innovative and actionable solutions to existing challenges that would transform their organizations; and prepare to challenge the status quo and deliver new disruptive policies, products, services, and processes.

When officially opening the three-day workshop, the agency's CEO Dr. Tony Omwansa challenged the delegates to shift their focus from research to commercialization. "We have for a very long time focused on Research, the narrative and talk should now shift to Commercialization," said Omwansa.

The training encompasses Technology Transfer, Technology licensing and commercialization, technology valuation and marketing, selecting and assessing technology for commercialization, and strategic partnering.

Many Government agencies, institutions of higher learning, and Research institutes in Kenya have been struggling with how to create economic value from their research outputs.

The agency aims to bridge the gap and will deliver more relevant training aimed at spurring innovation and commercialization of research in Kenya, and targets to expose principles and practices of Commercialization to over 300 delegates by the end of the year 2021.



**Agnes Nyamvula, Manager Innovation Commercialization**

## Introducing KeNIA's Newest Manager

We are pleased to introduce Agnes Nyamvula who has recently joined KeNIA as the Manager Innovation Commercialization. She will be in charge of scouting and nurturing innovation technologies and establishing innovation drivers and foresight projects. She will see through KeNIA's mandate to provide potential innovators with adequate business support for successful commercialization.

Prior to joining KeNIA she has worked in other institutions of higher learning such as The Technical University of Mombasa(TUM). She has exceptional background in spearheading grants management processes, examining donors' rules and regulations for getting funds, filing applications and managing multiple grants.

# Pictorial



KeNIA CEO during the launching of Zetech University Innovation hub.



Kenya University Vice Chancellor Prof Paul Wainaina, KeNIA CEO during the Kenya University Industry Conference 2021



A presentation during KeNIA's IPR Workshop.



KeNIA's first in many workshops on Development of effective Intellectual Property policies.



KeNIA CEO Engaging with Leadership at Kabarak University on Innovation, strategy and points of partnerships.



P.S. Amb. Simon Nabukwes, KeNIA CEO and other leaders from the MOE during a tour of innovative classroom at the Texas A&M University.



KeNIA team hard at work



KeNIA CEO with JKUAT Industrial Park Team



KeNIA introducing the Kenya Innovation Week to delegation from The Jomo Kenyatta University.

# Upcoming Events

**nia** **kiw** Kenia

National Innovation Awards

**CALL FOR BIG 4 INNOVATIONS**

Do you know of an innovation doing amazing things in the Big Four sectors?

Nominate an outstanding innovation creating solutions in the categories of Affordable Healthcare, Affordable Housing, Food Security, and Manufacturing for a chance to be feted and awarded at Kenya Innovation Week 2021.

Nominate at [nia.innovationagency.go.ke](http://nia.innovationagency.go.ke)

**EXTENDED**  
Deadline 31<sup>st</sup> October, 2021

Extension of National Innovation awards  
Deadline: 31st October 2021

**Kenya Innovation Week**

6 - 10 December 2021

The Kenya Innovation Week  
6th -10th December

Kenya National Innovation Agency Ground Floor, NACOSTI Building, Off Waiyaki Way  
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