



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN  
FOUNDATION** For Freedom.  
East Africa

**WESTERWELLE**  
FOUNDATION  
FOR INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING

**WSH**

WESTERWELLE  
STARTUP HAUS  
ARUSHA

westerwelle-foundation.com



DIGITAL TALENTS PROGRAMME

# STATE OF DIGITAL TALENTS IN TANZANIA

Published by Westerwelle Startup Haus Arusha with funding  
from Friedrich Naumann Foundation East Africa

## KEY TAKEAWAYS

Across Tanzania, entrepreneurship ecosystems are filled with youth who are eager to grow and harness their digital talents. However, there is a clear gap in technical and business education, as well as access to finance and client networks, which hinder the professional growth of digital talents. When properly supported, these digital talents have a large potential to drive entrepreneurship and economic development over the next decade. Digital talents include digital marketers, software developers and content creators to mention a few.

In order to understand the current state of digital talents in Tanzania, the DigiTalents Programme conducted primary research workshops and surveys across five zones and regions of Arusha, Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar, Mwanza and Mbeya



Group photo taken at the research workshop hosted in Arusha by Westerwelle Startup Haus Arusha.

**This report presents the following key takeaways which could inform Entrepreneurship Support Organisations (ESOs) and stakeholders to further develop digital talents:**

- ▶ 68% of digital talents think that there is not enough support for them in the ecosystem suggesting more support is needed for them across Tanzania.
- ▶ "Digital talents" is a broad and growing term, which encompasses many creative professions and niches.
- ▶ Passion for the technical craft and for helping customers drives the digital talents, as the top aspects that they enjoy in their profession.
- ▶ The best way to reach digital talents is through social media, followed by networking events.
- ▶ The digital talents perceive their current status in Tanzania as "low" but "rapidly growing".
- ▶ Answers on the challenges and needs of digital talents were very similar across the regions, but there was a particular enthusiasm for support programmes from Mbeya and Mwanza.
- ▶ There is a severe gender imbalance in digital talents, and we saw many more men than women in the survey, workshop and call for applications.
- ▶ When asked about their support needs, most people thought about monetary support rather than the training, equipment and infrastructure needs driving their growth challenges.
- ▶ Many digital talents are not aware of or do not know how to use online platforms and marketplaces for getting new clients.



## OUR CONTEXT

The Westerwelle Startup Haus Arusha (WSHA) and Friedrich Naumann Foundation East Africa launched the DigiTalents Programme in August 2022 as a pilot project to understand and support digital talents in the Tanzanian ecosystem. The 12-month programme aims to support 50 young digital talents by providing technical training, professional coaching and market connections.



### To Achieve This Objective, We Are Implementing The Following Main Activities:

- ▶ Awareness raising and open call for applications
- ▶ Technical training for 50 young digital talents
- ▶ Business set-up incubation for 20 selected digital talents
- ▶ Learning and knowledge sharing

*In this first document for our DigiTalents Programme knowledge sharing series, we will share the findings of a series of research workshops we conducted across Tanzania to understand the state of digital talents in the country.*



Participants filling the survey at the research workshop hosted in Mwanza, together with SIDO T-LED Hub.

## OUR APPROACH

Since the conceptualisation stage of the project, we became aware of a gap in preparing and educating youth with digital and entrepreneurial skills. While Tanzania has been progressing well in the innovation field, digital training in the local ecosystem often focuses on theory and traditional approaches. As a result, digital talent is lacking compared to the need in the entrepreneurial ecosystem. At the same time, entrepreneurship offers an extraordinary opportunity for employment among youth.

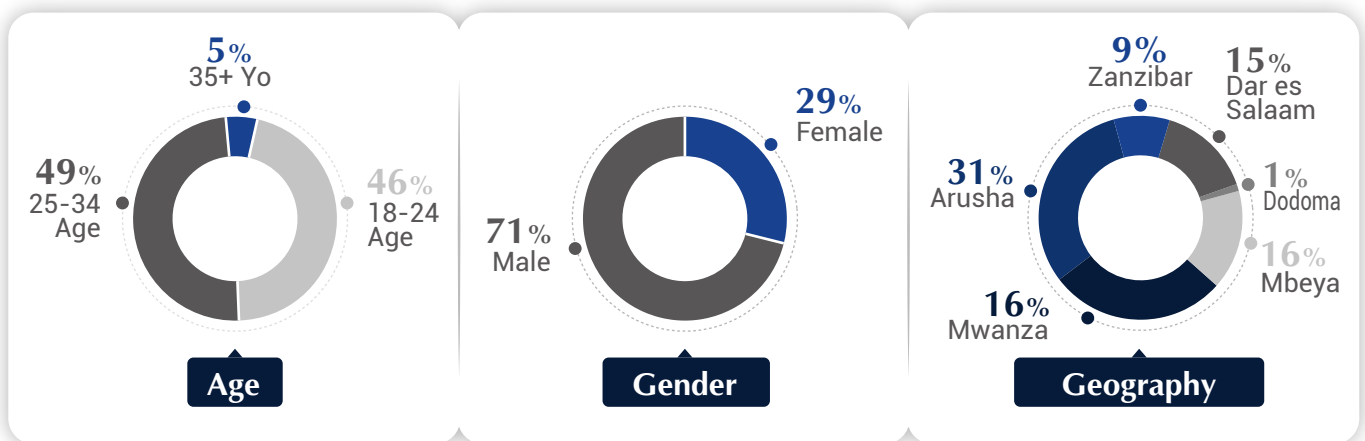
We conducted a series of workshops in five regions across Tanzania with the purpose to understand the definition of “digital talent” and the nature of their challenges and opportunities. The workshops took place within the span of one month, in September 2022. We conducted an in-person workshop in Dar es Salaam, Zanzibar, Arusha, Mwanza and Mbeya, selected for their existing entrepreneurship ecosystems as well as an online survey open to all.

In each location, we partnered with a local hub to gather participants and organise the workshop together. The workshops began with an introduction to the participants and presentation of the DigiTalents Programme. We then facilitated a survey to capture their comprehensive experience, followed by discussions regarding the challenges and opportunities perceived by the local digital talents. The results of the survey and discussions are shared below.

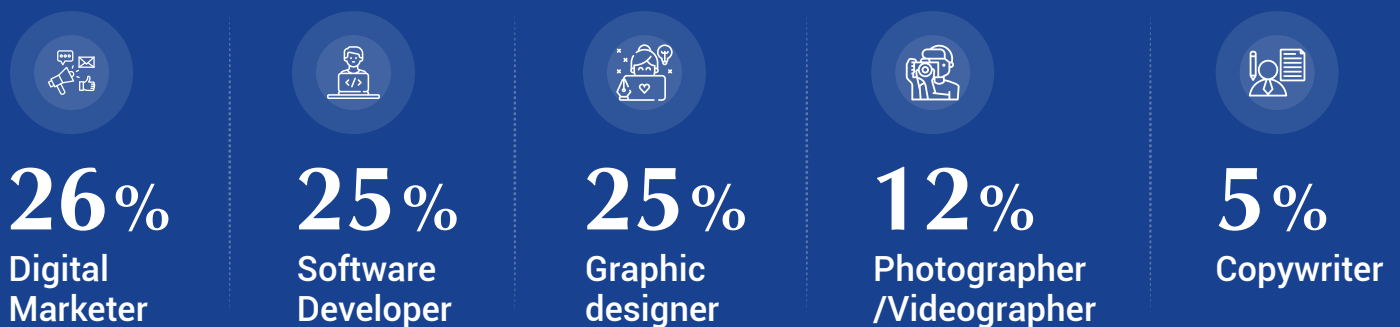
## KEY FINDINGS

### Who Are “Digital Talents”?

Our Survey Had A Total Of 138 Respondents, Divided Into The Following Demographics



### When Asked About Their Profession, The Most Common Responses Included



#### Other Responses Included

Agronomist, architect, biomedical engineer, content creator, digital business facilitator, digital skills trainer, economist, founder, ICT expert, journalist, public relations expert, software analyst, voice artist.

## Gaps In Education

One of the key challenges that digital talents faced was lack of access to training, mentorship and skill improvement. Participants asked for more digital and tech training, but also highlighted interest in capacity building for business topics. These challenges were highlighted despite 70% of respondents having received formal education in their field of digital work from an institution in Tanzania or abroad. For now, the large majority of respondents (88%) turn to the internet for learning, followed by peers (6%) and formal education (6%).



Participants listening to the presentation at the research workshop hosted in Mbeya, together with Mbeya University of Science and Technology (MUST).



## In Business And Administrative Topics, Their Top Challenges Include (In Order Of Relevance):

▶ Sales and marketing

▶ Managing finances

▶ Taxes and compliance

▶ Registering business

▶ Setting business goals

▶ Team management



## In Technical Topics, Their Top Challenges Include (In Order Of Relevance):

▶ Improving Quality Of Work

▶ Using Digital Tools

▶ Learning new skills



## Lack of Access to Finance and Networks

Another key area of support requested by digital talents was access to capital and client networks. Many of the respondents were students, freelancers, entrepreneurs or employees at startups. Most of the digital talents (73%) had another main profession and earned income from freelancing on the side, whereas 18% of respondents depended solely on earnings from their digital talents.

As of now, the participants' main source of clients is social media (50%), followed by word of mouth (23%), direct sales such as door-to-door or cold calling (16%), and gig economy platforms (9%). Many digital talents needed help in accessing client networks, online marketplaces, and skills to help them land offers including proposal writing. A specific concern from some respondents was the current payment systems available, which are difficult to integrate into websites and receive money from regional and international clients. Additionally, clients often delay payments, which lead to further shortages in working capital.

The digital talents requested capital particularly for accessing physical equipment and online tools, as well as funding to offset the costs of setting up and running their own businesses. Photographers and videographers cited cameras, drones and lighting equipment as needs, whereas other digital talents needed access to a computer, reliable internet services, and an office. Digital tools requested included Editing Software.

## DEEP-DIVE

## DIGITAL TALENTS FROM A GENDER LENS

Ensuring equal access to opportunities is a core value of the Westerwelle Startup Haus Arusha (WSHA) and Friedrich Naumann Foundation East Africa, as well as a key component of sustainable development. In order to drive equitable innovation and sustainable growth of the entrepreneurship ecosystem, it is crucial that we consider the nuanced needs of digital talents through a gender lens. Within this section, we will present a deep dive into our findings on the state of digital talents, disaggregated by gender.

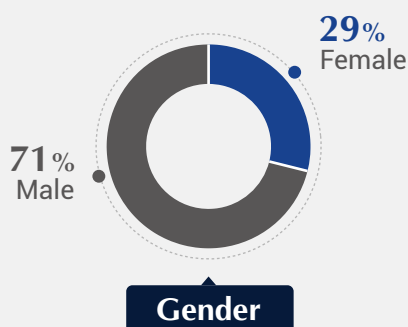


Group photo taken at the research workshop hosted in Zanzibar, together with Cube Zanzibar.



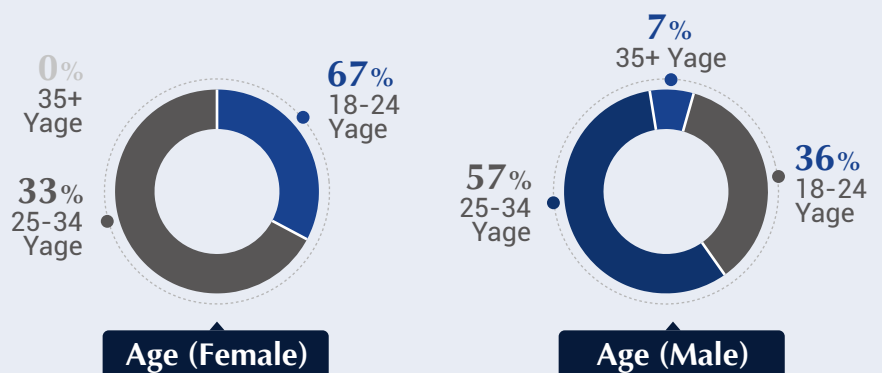
## Gender of Respondents

The majority of respondents were men (71%), reflecting the gender inequality with more men than women studying and being exposed to technology-related subjects in secondary schools, universities and other educational institutions.



## Age of Respondents

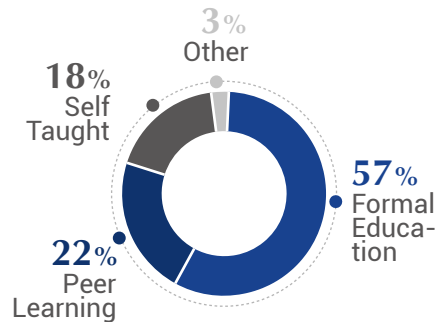
The female participants were generally younger than male respondents. 67% of women were between 18-24 years old, 33% 25-34 years old and no women older than 35 years old. By contrast, the majority of men were between 25-34 years old. This shows that the majority of digital talents are young, suggesting also that younger generations of women may be more exposed and interested in topics of digitalisation.



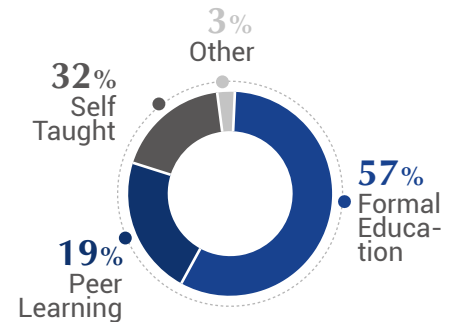


## Initial Acquisition of Skills

The majority (57%) of female respondents acquired their digital skills through formal education, with peer-learning and self-learning lagging at 22% and 18%, respectively. Interestingly, a relatively smaller portion of male respondents acquired the skill through formal education, whereas a significantly higher portion of men were self-taught. More research can be conducted regarding the best format and content for gender-responsive digital education.



Initial Source Of Digital Skill (Female)

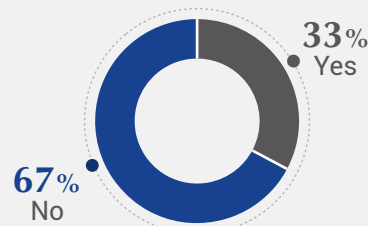


Initial Source Of Digital Skill (Male)

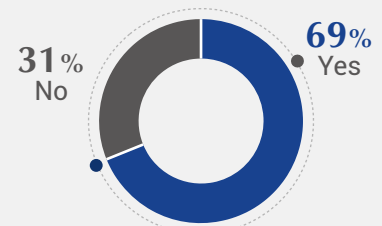


## Awareness of New Opportunities

The majority of female respondents were not aware of new opportunities available to advance their profession, whereas majority of male respondents were aware. This could account for part of the reason why there is not enough representation of female digital talents across our research workshops and survey.



Are you aware of opportunities available to support your profession? (Female)

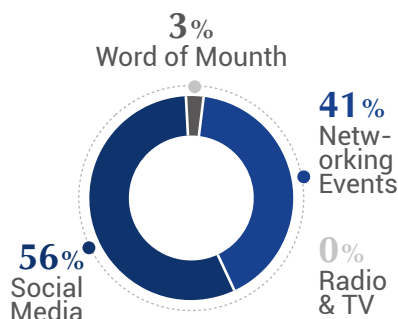


Are you aware of opportunities available to support your profession? (Male)

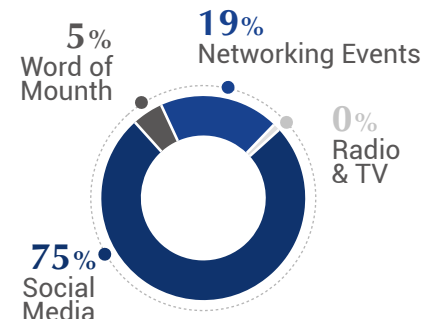


## Source of Information

For women, social media and networking events are the dominant sources of information to find new opportunities for growth in digital professions. The same two channels are popular amongst men, although social media is more prevalent at 75%. More research needs to be conducted on the best way to reach female digital talents and convince them to participate in professional programmes.



How do you find out about new opportunities for growth in your profession (Female)



How do you find out about new opportunities for growth in your profession (Male)

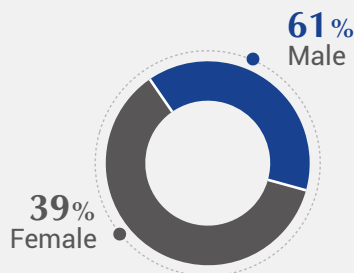




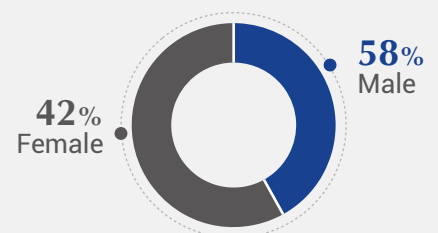
Group photo taken at the research workshop hosted in Dar es Salaam, together with dLab.

## OUR ARCHIVE

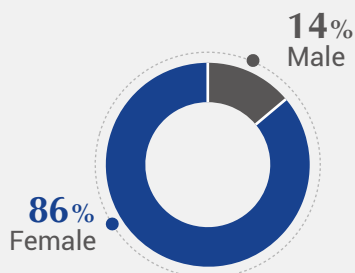
Across all regions, the total number of respondents for our survey was 138 to which only 29% of the respondents were women. This number is reflective of the overall status of digitalents, which becomes even lower when you compare region by region.



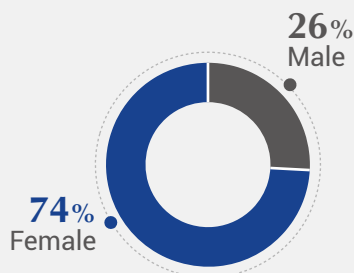
Gender of Respondents  
(Mwanza)



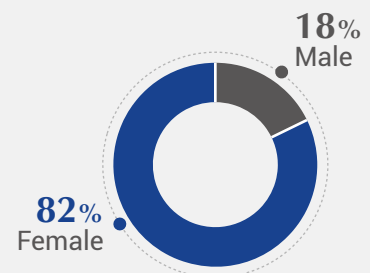
Gender of Respondents  
(Zanzibar)



Gender of Respondents  
(Mbeya)



Gender of Respondents  
(Dar es Salaam)



Gender of Respondents  
(Dar es Salaam)

One of the key reasons for this low percentage is due to the stigma surrounding who is capable of learning and become a digitalent. Most women believe they do not have the capacity and ability to learn and achieve the same results that men do when it comes to the digital technology.

**Moreover,** lack of financial resources and access to opportunities especially for women, contribute to the lower number of them wanting to learn new technical and business skills that will help them grow their businesses.



## Acknowledgments

Westerwelle Startup Haus Arusha (WSHA) would like to thank Friedrich Naumann Foundation East Africa for their support to make DigiTalents Programme possible, the partner hubs for co-hosting the regional workshops and all the digital talents who participated. For further discussions,

**please reach out via [wsha@westerwelle.haus](mailto:wsha@westerwelle.haus)**



## CONTACT US

+255 767 731 319

[www.westerwelle-foundation.com](http://www.westerwelle-foundation.com)

[wsha@westerwelle.haus](mailto:wsha@westerwelle.haus)

Mega Complex, Market Street, Arusha

[WSH\\_Arusha](#) [Westerwelle Startup Haus Arusha](#)

