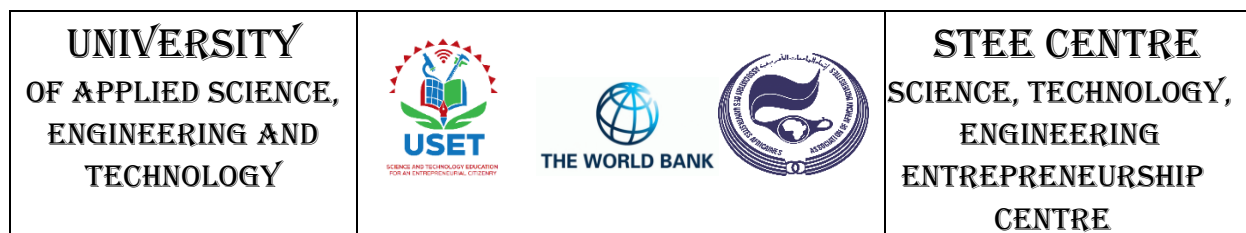


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REPORT ON USET INNOVATION WEEK 2025

Date: February 24–28, 2025

Venue: USET Kanifing Campus

Organized by: The Gambia University of Applied Science, Engineering, and Technology (USET)

Partners: The World Bank, AAU, DMU, KNUST, and other key stakeholders

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1. Introduction

The USET-STEE Innovation Week 2025 was successfully held from February 24 to 28, 2025, at USET Kanifing Campus. The event aimed to foster innovation, entrepreneurship, and collaboration among students, faculty, and industry stakeholders. The theme for this year's Innovation Week was **“Empowering Innovation for Sustainable Development.”**

2. Objectives

The main objectives of the Innovation Week were:

- To provide a platform for students and researchers to showcase innovative projects.
- To encourage industry-academia collaboration.
- To enhance skills through workshops and hands-on training.
- To facilitate networking opportunities among innovators, entrepreneurs, and investors.

3. Key Activities

Day 1: Awareness Campaign

The first day of the innovation week began with an awareness campaign designed to introduce the students to the underlying rationale behind the weeklong series of innovation activities. The campaign kicked off with communication being sent out across the campus, accompanied by the distribution of posters and flyers to ensure broad visibility and engagement. Additionally, the USET Innovation Committee made efforts to involve the three ACE Impact implementing partners (Ministry of Higher Education Research Science and Technology), collaborating with them to coordinate and enhance the activities for the week.

To further facilitate the next day's events, the committee took proactive steps in preparing the USET Innovate Lab, located at the USET Kanifing campus, to serve as the pitch preparation space. This venue would host the upcoming pitch preparation sessions for the students (participants), setting the stage for an engaging and productive start to the innovation activities.

Figure 1 below illustrates the flyer that was used to announce the call for submissions for innovative project ideas for the Technology Innovation Pitching Competition. This call for submissions was launched several months prior to the commencement of the actual innovation week to give participants ample time to develop and refine their ideas. The flyer, which was widely circulated through various communication channels, provided key details about the competition and its objectives, encouraging students to submit their innovative project proposals.

As a result of the call, seven project proposals were submitted by students from the USET College of Science and Engineering. These participants, motivated by the opportunity to showcase their creativity and problem-solving skills, each presented their ideas, setting the stage for the competitive pitching sessions that would follow during the innovation week.



Figure 1 USET Innovation Week 2025 Flyer

After the submission deadline for the call, a total of seven project proposals were submitted by the students. Table 1 provides a detailed list of the project topics along with the corresponding team members for each proposal.

Table 1 Students Project Topics

Sr. No	Project Title	List of Project Team Members
1	Generating Electricity from waste	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ousman manneh 2. Fatou Bintou Trawally 3. Modou Lamin Jammeh 4. Saikaty Jadama
2	Smart irrigation The Smart Stick	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Muhammed Salim Jaiteh 2. Modou Lamin jammeh 3. Abdou a ndimballan 4. Yama jobe
3	GMT (Change Master)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Muhammed Camara 2. Fatima Ceesay 3. Muhammed Manjang 4. Ebrima S Jallow 5. Muhammed Jadama 6. Abdoul Aziz Sanyang 7. Princewill DC Manjor
4	EcoBuild Gambia	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Kebba Jallow 2. Alieu D Baldeh 3. Modou Lamin Manneh

		4. Ndey Sainey Sallah 5. Muhammed Jallow 6. Abdourahim Barry 7. Ousman Koro Sey 8. Ousman k Janneh 9. Musa Bah
5	Electrically- powered groundnut roasting machine	1. Isatou AB Jallow 2. Saloum Jarjue
6	Plastic shredder	1. Awa Badjie 2. Kawsu Nyang 3. Sally AB Manneh 4. Babucarr Baldeh
7	Genius Garden Smart Irrigation	1. Abdou Khadir Sowe 2. Muhammed Lamin Gaye

Day 2: Pitch Preparation

Day 2 of the innovation week was dedicated to pitch preparation activities, marking an essential phase for the participants who had submitted their project ideas for the pitching competition. During this session, it became clear that for most of the participants, this would be their first experience participating in a pitching competition. Recognizing the significance of proper preparation, the participants expressed a strong need for training and guidance to refine their presentation skills and effectively communicate their innovative ideas.

To address this need, the USET Innovation Committee took proactive measures by hiring two experienced experts (Bio in Annex 1) in the field of pitching and public speaking. These experts were invited to conduct a comprehensive pitching preparation training session for the participants. The training focused on essential aspects of delivering a compelling pitch, such as structuring the presentation, engaging the audience, effectively conveying the problem-solving potential of the project, and confidently answering questions from judges. This session provided participants with the tools and confidence they needed to present their ideas in the best possible light during the upcoming competition.



Students presenting their project proposals during the pitch preparation training.



An expert trainer guiding the participants through the process.

During the training session, participants were first invited to present their project ideas to the expert trainers. This exercise allowed the trainers to assess each student's current level of preparation and identify areas where they could provide targeted support. Additionally, it served as a benchmark for the training, giving the trainers a clear understanding of the students' presentation skills and content, while also offering the participants an opportunity to receive initial feedback on their ideas.

After the students' presentations, the expert trainers took the floor to deliver an in-depth presentation on how to craft a compelling pitch. They introduced a structured and standardized presentation template that covered key elements essential for a successful pitch. These included crafting attention-grabbing titles, clearly identifying the problem and the opportunities it presents, articulating a strong value proposition, outlining the business model, and developing a clear go-to-market plan. This segment of the training was particularly insightful for the students, as it highlighted significant gaps in their proposals that they had not previously considered. Many students were unaware of how crucial these components were to making their pitch more convincing and impactful.

By the end of the session, the expert trainers shared a structured pitching template with the students, providing them with a useful resource to help refine their proposals. The students were encouraged to use this template as a guide to improve their presentations, ensuring that their final submissions were more comprehensive and compelling. This session proved to be a transformative learning experience, helping participants elevate the quality of their project ideas and prepare them for the upcoming pitching competition.

Day 3: Refining proposals

Participants were strongly encouraged to revise and enhance their proposals by applying the valuable insights and skills they had gained from the pitch preparation training. This allowed them to refine their presentations, ensuring they incorporated key elements such as a clear value proposition, a solid business model, and a compelling go-to-market strategy. While the participants focused on refining their proposals, the USET Innovation Committee worked diligently behind the scenes to prepare for the actual pitching activities.

The committee took steps to set up the designated hall for the pitching sessions, ensuring it was equipped with all necessary technical and logistical resources to facilitate a smooth event. This included arranging seating, preparing presentation equipment, and ensuring that all materials for the day were in place. The committee also handled various logistical details, such as coordinating with the judges and ensuring the smooth flow of the competition. These preparations were crucial to creating an organized and professional environment for both the participants and the audience on the day of the actual pitching activities.

Day 4: Panel Discussions and actual Pitching

Day four of Innovation Week was marked by several significant events. The day featured inspiring speeches from key individuals, including the Vice Chancellor of USET, the Acting Director of IIE, the Director of Research and Grants, and the Chairman of the Innovation Committee. These speeches set the stage for a panel discussion on the theme 'Breaking Barriers in Technology and Business through Innovation,' which followed the presentations. This session was later followed by the actual pitching of student's project.



Panelists and participants engaged in a dynamic discussion during the panel session.

The Innovation Showcase & Exhibition provided an exciting opportunity for student project teams to present their innovative solutions to a panel of esteemed judges (see Annex 2). Following the presentations, a Q&A session took place, during which the judges provided constructive feedback and critiqued the proposals. The evaluation was based on the Pitch Content criteria and a detailed scoring system, ensuring a thorough assessment of each team's concept and presentation.



Students presenting during the pitching session.



Students presenting during the pitching session.



Students presenting during the pitching session.



Panel of judges critiquing students project proposals.

Since the pitching session was a competition, the judges used a comprehensive scoring system to evaluate various aspects of each project. The criteria included the clarity of problem identification, the methodology and feasibility of the proposed solutions, the target market, product cost, social impact, and the project's competitive advantage over similar products or services. These criteria helped the judges assess the practicality and potential of each proposal. After the pitching session, the judges tabulated the results and provided their rankings. The session concluded with a review of the day's activities, summarizing key insights and outcomes.

Day 5: Closing Ceremony and Awards

The final day of Innovation Week was marked by the highly anticipated award ceremony and closing event. The day began with a recap of the previous day's activities, providing a comprehensive overview of the key moments and highlights. Following the recap, students were given the opportunity to ask questions on a variety of topics, engaging in insightful discussions and seeking clarity on various aspects of the event.

This was followed by valuable advice from the distinguished members of the high table, who shared their expertise and perspectives on the importance of innovation, digitalization, and entrepreneurship in today's world. They emphasized how these fields have the potential to drastically transform lives and open doors to new opportunities.

The leadership of USET also took the opportunity to announce that this event will now become an annual tradition. They encouraged students to continue their hard work, develop new projects, and return next year to showcase their progress. The message was clear: the Innovation Week was just the beginning of an ongoing journey, and the students should remain committed to their innovative pursuits.

The event culminated in a grand closing ceremony, where exceptional participants and contributors were formally recognized for their outstanding efforts throughout the week. The ceremony featured the presentation of awards for the Best Innovative Projects, honoring the most impactful and creative ideas showcased during the event.

Three of the presented projects stood out, earning seed funding as part of their recognition: the first-place project received D40,000, the second-place project was awarded D30,000, and the third-place project was granted D30,000 as well. In addition, the remaining four projects, which also demonstrated great potential, were each awarded D5,000 to support their continued development and innovation.

A heartfelt vote of thanks was delivered by one of the students, expressing gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the event. The closing remarks were then given by the Acting Director of the Institute of Innovation and Entrepreneurship (IIE), who highlighted the significance of the week's activities and emphasized the importance of maintaining the momentum gained during the event. The Acting Director also encouraged the students to continue exploring and developing their innovative ideas as they move forward in their academic and entrepreneurial endeavors.



Group photo with faculty members and students on the final day.



USET Students Group picture



Conclusion and Recommendations

The Innovation Week significantly contributed to USET's vision of being a hub for **innovation and technology development**. To further enhance the impact of future Innovation Weeks, it is recommended that:

- More funding opportunities be made available for innovative student projects.
- Industry participation be expanded to facilitate more collaborative projects.
- Follow-up programs be established to support startups and research initiatives emerging from the event.

The **USET Innovation Week 2025** demonstrated the university's commitment to driving innovation and sustainable development in The Gambia and beyond. The event's success lays a strong foundation for future initiatives aimed at empowering young innovators and fostering technological advancement.



Annex 1

Detailed Bio

Muhammed Danso – Program Coordinator, Startup Incubator Gambia

Muhammed Danso is a passionate entrepreneur, business coach, and Program Coordinator with nine years of experience at Startup Incubator Gambia, where he leads programs that support young entrepreneurs in transforming their business ideas into viable ventures. With a passion for youth empowerment and sustainable development, Muhammed plays a critical role in driving the organization's mission to foster job creation, innovation, and business growth among young entrepreneurs.

In his role as Program Coordinator, Muhammed oversees the delivery of incubation programs, business coaching, and mentorship initiatives that support startups at different stages of their entrepreneurial journey using internationally recognized methodologies such as Lean Startup methodology, Design thinking and the SIYB program.

Muhammed's expertise lies in program management, business development, and innovation ecosystem building, where he supports startups to transform business ideas into scalable ventures. He has facilitated strategic partnerships with key stakeholders, including development partners, corporate institutions, and government agencies, contributing significantly to the growth of the Gambian entrepreneurship ecosystem. Through his work at the Startup Incubator Gambia, he has empowered over 1000 entrepreneurs and supported 100's of startups in securing funding through grant financing and investment pitching.

Beyond his role at the Startup Incubator Gambia, Muhammed is a 2024 Builders of Africa fellow, an Alumni of the Young African Leaders Initiative Network West Africa and a mentor for the Tony Elumelu Foundation entrepreneurship program. Muhammed is passionate about working with youths and creating an environment that promotes inclusion and social cohesion. His vision is to see more young innovators leverage technology and entrepreneurship to solve some of the country's most pressing challenges, contributing to inclusive and sustainable development.

Bio BabuCarr Njie

Bubacarr is a certified project Manager with 7 years of experience in Business Administration and entrepreneurship development. Babucarr specializes in helping startup businesses develop viable prototypes and secure funding to bring their ideas to market. He is a certified Management Strategist with demonstrated skills and expertise in conducting entrepreneurship and business development coaching for entrepreneurs in the Gambia to drive business growth. He is committed to delivering exceptional results and fostering professional development opportunities. A member of the local consultants of the first National Sport Policy 2024 to 2034 scaleup document targeting high-growth sporting to attract funding through investment in modern sport as a source of wealth and mental health. He also previously served as the head of the pitching contest for the Youth Entrepreneurship Summit, where young Gambian entrepreneurs pitch their ideas and secure funding to scale their ventures.

Annex 2

Panel of Judges

Judging panel Day 1.Moderator: Dr Fofana

Mr Modou Touray
Mr Yusupha Keita
Mr. Mustapha Conteh
Mr Samba Sowe
Professor Akinlabi
Dr. O.O. Mohammed
Mr. Mohammed Danso (Starup Incubator-Chair person)
Dr Bintou Dibba

Judging panel Day 2: Mr Darboe

Mr Yusupha Keita
Mr. Mustapha Conteh
Professor Akinlabi
Dr. O.O. Mohammed
Mr. Mohammed Danso (Starup Incubator-Chair person)
Dr Bintou Dibba
Dr.Ozioma Ikonne
Dr. Seedy Fofana
Mrs Linda T. Tetteh

Annex 3

Panel discussion members

1 Mr Modou Touray
2 Mr Yusupha Keita
3 Dr.Bintou Dibba
4 Mr Mustapha Conteh

5 Sowe Dr.O.O.Mohammed
7 Dr,Ozioma Ikonne

Moderator Dr Ozioma Ikonne

3100817 Touray2002@yahoo.com
3740266 yusupha.keita@intracen.org
3856350 bdibba@utg.edu.gm
2385000 protechgambia@gmail.com
CC: info@protechgambia.com

Moderator of panel discussion

Annex 4

USET- STEE Innovations and Entrepreneurship Committee

Sr.No	Name	Designation
1	Prof. Akinlabi Oyetunji	Chairperson
2	Dr. Seedy B. Fofana	Secretary
3	Dr.Ozioma Ikonne	Member
4	Mr. Omar O. JOBE	Member
5	Mr. Modou Lamin Darboe	Member
6	Dr. Mohammed Olatunji	Member