

Dear Katherine,

Greetings from Accra!

We want to share an update from our recent event here, and request that you share our news with the Wikimedia Foundation, our communities, and the entire Wikimedia movement.

Wiki Indaba is the regional conference for African Wikimedians across the continent, in the diaspora, and other Wikimedians with an interest in Africa. It was first held in 2014 by Wikimedia South Africa, who conceived the idea of an African gathering. [Indaba](#) is a Zulu word which means meeting or conference. We are proud to be affiliated with this name as we continue to showcase the work of our African communities.

After the first Indaba several user groups were born on the continent, several initiatives were started, and continental collaborations were ignited. These achievements led the Ghanaian team to host the second edition of the conference in late January 2017. The conference was organized through Open Foundation West Africa, an NGO dedicated to improving knowledge about the open movement.

Wiki Indaba 2017 was organized around the theme “Building sustainable Wikimedia communities for the benefit of Africa”. This theme was further split into three thematic areas which include; **building capacity of participants, connecting Africans within the continent and in the diaspora** and **fostering growth through continental collaborations**. There were 49 participants from 18 countries spanning 3 continents. Discussions yielded diverse angles of discovery, themes of focus and prompt action items, one of which is this very letter you are reading.

We want to share the feedback we received, the emerging patterns, and general points of views the attendees had. We will therefore present the two main forms of feedback we collected under the headings *“the things that participants loved and/or learnt at the conference”* and *“the things that participants need help with or wish to have”*.

“The things that participants loved and/or learnt at the conference”

The overall sentiment from conference participants was overwhelming encouragement and motivation for ongoing collaboration in Africa. Participants also highlighted specific attributes and activities that inspired the best of the conference.

- Participants commended the structure of the conference and celebrated opportunities to choose from a wide range of sessions and presentation options. They also commented on the fact that, even when one missed a session, the conference was structured such that some sessions could be joined later or even revisited through the final talks by the

close of day through the recap plenary session where most of it was discussed again for newer inputs.

- Participants called out spontaneous dialog and impromptu conversation that occurred at the end of the conference as a welcome addition. This not only demonstrated the openness and transparency shared by the community, but also highlighted the importance of addressing the many topics discussed and the willingness to have a sense of continuity.
- Let us pause and acknowledge how diverse our movement is! This needs to be celebrated and we are all in agreement of this. It is magical! Despite the differences in background, culture and ability to respond to issues, when brought under one roof we worked together to attain a common goal. It is enough proof that our differences do not tear us apart but rather make us stronger.
- Lastly, participants could not hide their excitement for the strong contingent from the Wikimedia Foundation. For them it was evidence for the growing support from the WMF and the seriousness they attach to matters of the continent. It also gave participants clearer insights on some peculiar issues and “expert advice” where needed.

“The things that participants need help with or wish to have”

From the feedback we gathered, there were three main recurring interests. These include **building capacity**, **support** from the foundation/peers, and securing **partnerships** in their respective countries.

- People are willing to learn new things and to widen the scope of their understanding of the movement, projects and tools to ensure effectiveness on the ground. These bring questions such as: “Are there not enough forums to promote this, or do people need more opportunities to learn?” Maybe people don’t just know about these opportunities, their leaders have no idea what they wish to learn or perhaps they are just not interested in such a topic. Other relevant requests that were posed include learning more about MediaWiki, Wikidata and Wikisource, training on search queries and statistics, using communication tools and learning how to communicate better, crafting useful surveys and more training and technical support on how to manage GLAM projects.
- Support was at the heart of the feedback collected. Participants asked for support in various forms, some which required identifying peers and mentors from the foundation who could help with a particular problem. A representative from Kenya strongly questioned how Kenya can reboot their community and start from their ashes in the right way. Other pressing questions on support included identification of the available

communication channels, the possibility to have live video coverage of future conferences and who we can ask for mentorship on queries for statistics and data.

- Even though partnership was the highlight of the conference and extensive work was done on the subject, participants still want to learn more widely from experiences and wish to be assured of support from the foundation should they require expertise to enhance the quality of their discussions.

A more detailed summary of the feedback collected is available on our [meta page](#).

We are excited about the achievement of Wiki Indaba 2017 and we look forward to what the future holds for us in Africa. We hope that the Foundation will continue to take a particular interest in Africa and appreciate the fact that Africa poses unique opportunities and challenges. We also realise that the current ways of working may not apply, since the specific conditions in Africa may require reasonable diversion from the known, to experiment along certain calculated lines.

We hope this letter finds you well. We believe in your vision, and the support you have already shown to our region is warmly welcome. We look forward to your feedback.

Medaase (Thank You in Twi).

On behalf of the African Community
Felix Nartey, Dumisani Ndubane