



PENPLUSBYTES ANNUAL REPORT 2018



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Executive Director's Message

2018 presented a great year for Penplusbytes. We saw some exciting innovations in newsrooms all the way through to government agencies. Undoubtedly, Ghana is making some great strides in the growth and utilization of ICTs in all aspects of our national development.

Given this background, we are excited to report that, Penplusbytes contributed in no small way in developing the capacity of journalists and supporting civil society organizations with new digital tools to become powerhouses in advocacy. Our work helped a number of civic actions and resulted in the effective mobilization and pushing for different laws and policies to be adhered to or passed. Our technology ensured that different actors could provide greater oversight of Ghana's oil and gas sector especially in the prudent use of revenue from the sector.

In the year under review, Penplusbytes reaffirmed its support for Ghana's democratic growth by working with the Government Assurances Committee of Ghana's Parliament; providing digital tools that enable citizens to engage with the Committee in an interactive and open manner.

Our work was highly visible and our team members made appearances on a number of local and international media as well as presented at numerous conferences both in Ghana and abroad.

I am happy to report that in 2018, Penplusbytes performed favourably on the key performance indicators of promoting effective governance using technology that enhances participation. This report will provide ample evidence of how we have achieved this and I invite you to enjoy the read.

I would like to acknowledge and give special thanks to our board of directors who gave us direction for a successful year and our great team of staff who put in extra efforts to make year 2018 a great year. I will like to take opportunity to indicate the end of my tenure as Executive Director of this great organization and to thank all of our partners and collaborators for the keen relationships we have had over the past eighteen years.

These relationships have allowed me to lead the organisation into this level of sustained influence and I think Penplusbytes is positioned for growth and helping make further change happen in the coming years.

Thank you.



Kwami Ahiabenu II
(Executive Director)

The Year 2018

Like many others in the not-for-profit sector, Penplusbytes set out to adapt, survive, perform and innovate in 2018. Largely, we hit those targets and delivered to varied degrees of success, our mandate and obligations to stakeholders.

We took a different approach to sourcing funding and partnership and quite memorably joined with local CSOs to advocate, campaign and even picketed on a number of different issues including the Right to Information bill, and the need for a real zero level tolerance for corruption especially in the public sector. We were invited to join the CSO platform on SDGs, The Media Coalition Against Galamsey as well as the Economic Governance Platform.

Our work was recognized as increasingly valuable and this is evidenced by the enormous amount of travel our team did to honour invitations to share papers, presentations and panelist views in countries such as Benin, Germany, Guinea, Nigeria, Namibia, South Africa and across the length and breadth of Ghana.

Penplusbytes' finances did not much improve, nevertheless we delivered major value for money for our partners and donors and increased efficiencies across our operations and know that this will certainly get us more goodwill in the coming year.



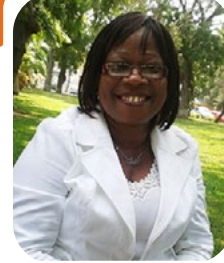
Board of Directors



Andrew
KWESI KAFE



Bryan
PEARSON



Charity
BINKA



Kwami
AHIABENU II



Ethan
ZUCKERMAN



Dr. Joseph
SIEGLE



Kofi
MANGESI



Nhenna
NKWAKANMA



Dan
GILMOR

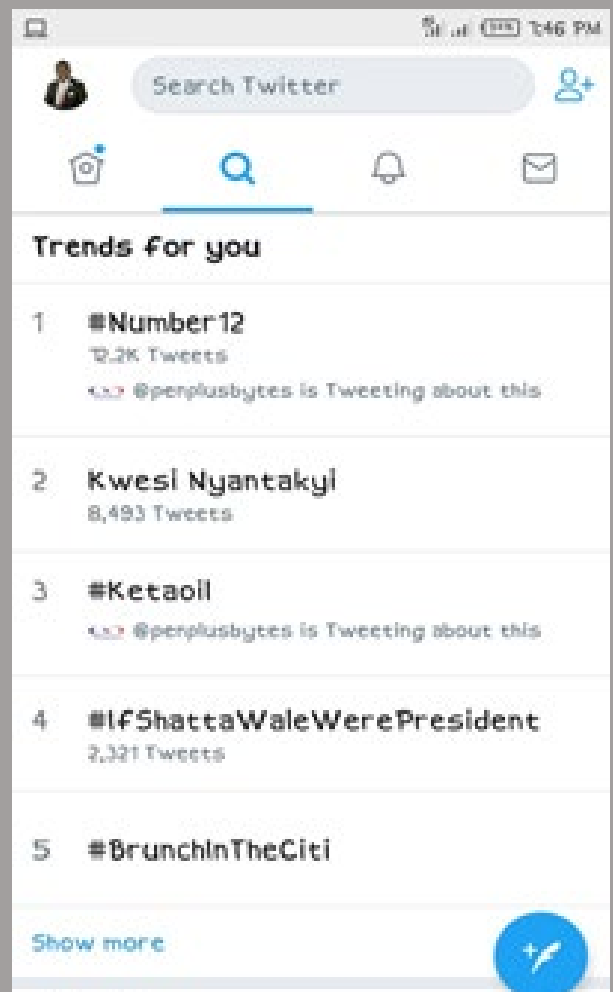
Technology and Knowledge: Crucial to Enhancing Good Governance?

New Information and Communication Technology most certainly adds value to the processes that give identity, form and relationships that characterize good governance. Their association has the power to transform economies and societies. Penplusbytes has always known this, hence our focus on the deployment of technology and sharing of knowledge contributing to shaping policies that provide good governance in Ghana’s extractive sector.

In 2018, Penplusbytes selected and worked with ten (10) journalists to get into the depths of investigative journalism, which is hinged on evidence-based research in exploring the issues within the extractive sector. This cohort of journalists unearthed fourteen (14) big stories and went into small and large scale investigations; the ExxonMobil deal, the real amount expended on the Ghana-Cote d’Ivoire maritime disputes, interrogating the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) capacity to monitor offshore petroleum activities among other stories aimed at contributing to improved oil and gas sector governance.

In all, about 120 stories were produced for radio, print and TV and showcased how a truly engaged media can play effective oversight of the oil and gas sector; an informed citizenry and an increase in the quantity and quality of oil and gas sector issues in the public discourse. Subsequently, Richard Abbey of the Business and Financial Times and a trainee won the coveted Best Financial and Economic Reporter of the same award in 2018 at the fifth Flamingo Awards, organized by the Institute of Financial and Economic Journalism (IFEJ). He acknowledged Penplusbytes’ bursary and technical support in developing his award-winning story

With support from GOGIG/DFID, Penplusbytes collaborated with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to bring more meaning to public hearings and to take the format beyond the usual town hall meetings as they discussed the Keta oil delta block in the Ketu South and Ada East municipalities. As a value addition, Penplusbytes deepened citizens’ understanding of ongoing issues by developing visualizations. 258,000 citizens were directly reached due to Penplusbytes’ intervention. In some instances, private radio stations and online platforms like the voltaonlinegh and national daily newspaper, Daily Graphic depended on our feeds for their stories. We even trended at number three on Twitter on June 6 with the hashtag (#ketaoil).



A News Story Developed by A Private Online News Site



Due to Penplusbytes' digital coverage of public hearings, an online archive of the entire event has been created which serves as a reference source to the EPA in their reports and journalists for their stories. Periodically, Penplusbytes' media team was contacted to confirm live streaming Uniform Resource Locator (URL) as we were informed that, potential investors were monitoring event overseas. In addition, an online platform was built to serve as a knowledge repository and quick reference of information on the petroleum sector. The learning platform serves as a quick resource in developing story ideas, peer review and networking. The results are shown in the improved ability of the users of this platform to have easy-to-reach materials that support their stories to improve quality (<http://reportingoilandgas.org/learn>)

Penplusbytes' intervention also resulted in the government taking action to improve Ghana's online petroleum register, which was non-interactive.

This was achieved through a widely disseminated

press release, copies of which were sent to the ministries. The press release among others specifically recommended that a "site search engine" be added to the register. It is gratifying indeed to note that, this feature has indeed been added to the register and has improved data mining for users. (See <https://www.ghanapetroleumregister.com/>, <http://www.gbcghana.com/1.11739714> and thebftonline.com/business/energy/17-petroleum-agreements-published-in-new-register/ paragraph 14).

In March, Penplusbytes joined the 'Media Coalition Against Illegal Mining' (Galamsey) and was given steering Committee member status to contribute to the fight against illegal mining and promote sustainable mining using digital tools. To achieve this task, we built an online platform (www.stopgalamsey.com) for the coalition. The platform is the first of its kind being used purposely as a tool for social accountability. It was designed to bridge the communication gap between citizens and duty bearers in the quest for better public service delivery and good governance.



Participants writing collaborative articles

“Our work will continually transfer knowledge and skills to journalists and citizens at large”.

The interactive platform serves as a repository of various policy documents, provides news update on the latest happenings of mining activities especially its community engagements. The platform also has functions that allow for the evaluation of reports received from communities and from the projects’ online assets (website, SMS, WhatsApp and social media).

Our work will continually transfer knowledge and skills to journalists and citizens at large. We will keep pushing government to be more open in their interactions with civil society, provide access to information in the natural sector by leveraging on the opportunities that technology provide so that with an informed citizenry, Ghanaians will be in a better position to exercise their rights, play roles and carry out responsibilities towards sustainable growth.



How has championing progressive laws that promote the rapid development of a knowledge society helped improve our world?

Knowledge and information have significant impact on people's lives; they influence what they see, how they think and how they engage with the world around them. Knowledge societies usually build on four pillars: freedom of expression; universal access to information and knowledge; respect for cultural and linguistic diversity; and quality education for all.

It is a tall list, but consistently our projects have sought to answer or at least acknowledge one or more of these pillars.

Penplusbytes' New Media and Innovations work in 2018 sought to create inclusive knowledge societies and empower citizens by increasing access to and sharing of information and knowledge in new media trends and challenges.

Viewed at a global level, civil society is flourishing. Technology, geopolitics and the markets have created opportunities and pressures, spurring the creation of millions of civil society organizations around the world, giving rise to exciting models for citizen expression both online and offline, and generating increasing involvement in global governance processes. This was the backdrop of our online engagements for 2018.

Of particular interest was Penplusbytes' role as the social media lead for the 2018 edition of the World Press Freedom Day held at the plush Kempinski Hotel in Accra. The event that has over the years received global attention was indeed a memorable one with the event hashtag **#worldpressfreedomday** **#pressfreedom** being a top trend for the entire week.

A moment of great pride for the team was when Penplusbytes' board member, Nnenna Nwakanma of the Web Foundation acknowledged and lauded the social media team of Penplusbytes for our work that day in creating awareness and giving up-to-the-minute information on happenings at the gathering.



Nnenna Nwakanma giving the plenary address at the opening of WPF in Accra, May 3, 2018

Another moment of significant pride for the New Media Team was the launch of our month long research findings on Fake News prevalence in Ghana (www.penplusbytes.org/fakenews). The team began an online campaign on the issue and this attracted a lot of media attention. It was of no surprise that the then Minister of Information, Mustapha Hamid, hammered home the need for Ghana to develop a legislation to combat the rise of Fake News.

Deliver!

Quality Media Amplifying Vulnerable Citizens' Voices



Poverty persists when poor people have little control over the forces that affect them, and lack the knowledge, opportunities and confidence to speak up for themselves. Penplusbytes' New Media Innovations Team set out to venture into a new area of work this year; working at the grassroots level to empower vulnerable people – especially persons with disabilities (PWDs) – to know and act on their rights, have their say and hold to account those in authority. This we did with our **“Deliver! Quality Media Amplifying Vulnerable citizens’ voices”** project with support from STAR Ghana.

Key activities undertaken this year included the development of curriculum to train media persons on how to report on disability issues, off-site trainings for female journalists from all over the country, launching a media fellowship to provide on-going support for media persons to report on persons with disability issues and building an interactive online platform with web accessibility features to aid in bridging the feedback gap between vulnerable citizens and duty bearers.

Of keen interest to the team was our delivery with the training of the female journalists. Twenty-five (25) journalists from eight out of the ten regions in Ghana were equipped with skills and knowledge in reporting PWD issues as well as gender equality and social inclusion (GESI) issues. This was done in two (2) separate trainings in the Eastern and Volta regions of Ghana.

A key impact of these trainings was the level of interest these journalists have gained and displayed in pursuing stories on PWDs. Most have set out to be advocates for the rights of PWDs and use their media to push such agenda.



Mukayatu Mukayaba - "The Girl in the Cage"

Ohemaa Maade of Beyond FM in Nkwanta in the Northern part of Volta Region is one such person. She set out to pursue a story of a girl with a disability (Mukayatu Mukayaba) in one of the areas of her community who has been neglected in an appalling state for all her life (26 years). Ohemaa, through the help of trainers from Penplusbytes at the training held in Ho in the Volta Region, shaped her story better using a story pitch template amongst other tools for reporting.

She went back and started her advocacy work using her media as well as social media (Facebook) as a conduit. She aired the story of Mukayatu which she dubbed "The girl in a cage" and filed the said story under the child protection category in the Volta Regional Ghana Journalists Awards. Ohemaa won this award, as her story was truly impactful. She is currently imploring for help for Mukayatu from government agencies and benevolent persons.



Ohemaa with her award for Best Reporter - Child Protection

Ohemaa is one of the many who Penplusbytes has empowered to pursue the cause of persons with disabilities using the skills and knowledge acquired from our trainings.

PEOPLE FOR HEALTH



People for Health Project Knowledge Fair

Thursday, 27th September, 2018 New Media Hub, Osu.



www.people4health.org

As a civic tech non-governmental organization, a notable element of our work is to develop innovative digital tools to address governance challenges. We develop basic digital tools for citizens' voices to be heard while at the same time, we influence those in power – such as governments, traditional leaders and the private sector – to be more responsible, responsive and accountable.

This is the basis of our work under the USAID funded “People for Health” (P4H) Project. Penplusbytes is the technology lead in the consortium of three (3) members including SEND Ghana and Ghana News Agency.

Under the project, Penplusbytes has built and operates an interactive digital platform for information sharing on maternal and child health, Family Planning and Reproductive health, malaria, WASH, nutrition and HIV/AIDS service delivery at local and national levels.

The P4H dashboard (www.people4health.org) is infused with WhatsApp and SMS features and is managed collectively by trained personnel from the Ghana Health Service and Penplusbytes Digital Innovations team. It is developed on Penplusbytes’ “Kakum” citizen engagement resource tool and is intended to facilitate citizens’ access to health information especially the Patients’ Charter and provide an avenue for citizens to report their experiences in accessing healthcare. It also has an API system that is linked to the CHRAJ Discrimination reporting platform for human rights violations to be forwarded straight to the appropriate bodies for redress.

The team’s highlight for the year 2018 under this project is the hosting of a first of its kind Knowledge and Exhibition Fair at the New Media Hub in Osu, Accra.

The event brought together government agencies and CSOs in Health, Health professionals, Technology savvy individuals and the media who were thrilled at how much technology can change the face of health service delivery in Ghana with a clear example of Penplusbytes’ work under the P4H project.

This year, a major driving force of the New Media Innovations work has been to champion the cause of the vulnerable and give a voice to the voiceless using simple digital tools and all our activities have been aimed at affecting lives and enhancing quality of work of our key stakeholders, the media.

Overall, we have inched towards the achievement of Penplusbytes’ ultimate goal of being a leader at promoting good governance using technology in Africa.



Penplusbytes’ Project coordinator, Kwabena Tabiri taking participants through exhibition display

Will building a vibrant community of technology-savvy advocates affect democracy and good governance?

Around the world, new digital technology is increasingly becoming interlinked with all aspects of everyday life in the past couple decades. Digital technologies play significant role in all spheres of life right from accessing health and education services to political engagement.

The prevalence and availability of new digital tools such as mobile (SMS/WhatsApp) and other online assets including social media has not only led to the improvement of lives of ordinary people but has enhanced civic participation and engagement in the governance process right from the elections continuum to empowering ordinary citizens to engage in the policymaking process and hold political or state actors responsible for their actions and inactions using the power of new digital technologies.

It provides a plethora of opportunities to drive innovations and develop new applications that enhance the life of ordinary people as well as serve as an enabler in promoting good governance.

However, despite the numerous opportunities provided by new digital tools, there remain key challenges. This can be seen from the disconnect between the use of new digital tools to gather citizen feedback and government willing to use the feedback to develop, change or implement policies that seeks to serve the interest of citizens.

To overcome this challenge, the Tech and Governance arm of Penplusbytes in 2018 strived to harness the power of ICTs and mobile technology to drive greater accountability in all spheres of governance especially in enhancing citizens' participation in social accountability, citizens' involvement in fighting corruption and connecting citizens to parliament.

Over the year, we developed and deployed new digital tools that informed and educated citizens about social protection policies under our "Tech Driven Social Accountability for Results" project. This social accountability project enveloped and aggregated citizens' feedback on health and education service delivery, amplified citizens' voices through trans-media tools, which made use of both online and offline platforms.

We were very successful in designing a cyclical approach that closed the feedback loop between the demand (citizens) and supply (government) side of governance. This was done by engaging over 3 million citizens by making available the necessary information through online (Mobile, SMS and social media) and offline (traditional media and face-to-face forums) modes which effectively provided relevant feedback, aggregating citizens feedback into policy briefs and creating the platforms such as citizens forums and stakeholder engagements to solicit responsiveness and accountability from duty-bearers.



Penplusbytes diffuses Kakum online platform in West Africa



Jerry Sam, Programmes Director sharing Penplusbytes experience during an OSIWA learning workshop in Conakry, Guinea

During the year, we reached the stars in seeking accountability from duty-bearers by building effective networks, developing and diffusing the ground-breaking Kakum online application for citizen engagement in Ghana and three (3) other West African countries – Benin, Togo and Ivory Coast with the aim of promoting the use of new digital technologies as a tool for monitoring and promoting good governance across the West African Sub-Region. Through our work, we have created a vibrant community of technology-savvy advocates using new digital tools to impact democracy and good governance and proved the concept that technology backed by appropriate offline mechanism can contribute to supporting citizens in their quest to hold duty-bearers to account. In all, Penplusbytes signed 12 MoUs with CSOs across the sub-region to adapt the Kakum platform in their existing projects.



Group Picture taken during Penplusbytes multi-stakeholder engagement on social accountability.

Does developing research capabilities in technology and governance support our stakeholders' aspirations?



Mr. R. Quayson, Dep. Commissioner of CHRAJ launching the Metogu Anti-Corruption report

In our quest to sustain good governance and ensure citizens benefit from the dividends of Ghana's burgeoning democracy, we transformed the traditional approach to the principles of good governance where civil society plays an intermediary role. In our "Metogu" (Keep the Pressure on!) project, we designed engagement mechanisms that saw citizens take the lead in the fight against corruption by demanding openness, accountability and responsiveness from elected officials through an adapted community scorecard on anti-corruption.

This was achieved through the publication and launch of the Penplusbytes' "Metogu" Anti-Corruption National Report. The launch was a key milestone chalked by Penplusbytes in the fight against corruption, provided the needed impetus and contributed to the body of knowledge on the fight against corruption by civil society and academia. The research serves as an evidence-based report needed by ordinary citizens to leverage on to persuade government to end corruption by delivering on its promises and pass progressive laws that will open up spaces for transparency and accountability in governance.



Regional Launch of the Metogu Anti-Corruption Report



Red Flag Movement: A sustained strategy to end corruption

In our quest to end corruption or reduce it to the barest minimum, the team in addition to our research work around anti-corruption, has conceptualised and collaborated with Law Enforcement Agencies mandated to fight corruption by developing the “Red Flag Movement” platform that aims at promoting a new approach in the fight against corruption anchored on the humanisation of corruption, a real-time information and knowledge dissemination system that tracks and traces alleged corruption acts in the public sphere. The Red Flag platform has harnessed and animated various exciting work of all stakeholders at both the public and private sector levels in order to sustain a meaningful discourse on corruption cases.

Our work under the Red Flag intervention included contributing to writing a petition to the Presidency to enforce laws that will curb corruption. We also participated in a silent demonstration to highlight the adverse effects of corruption on national development.



Penplusbytes a co-convenor in undertaking a silent march against corruption

Over the year, we have championed the use of new digital technologies for good governance, we have collaborated with all arms of government to influence policy and empowered citizens and civil society to hold to account those mandated to ensure the national purse solves the needs of citizens.

How have we enabled the Media, Civil Society and other stakeholders to use new digital tools?

Ghana has experienced significant gains in the health status of its population since independence. However, health outcomes in the following areas have not reached expected levels according to MDGs and other national targets: maternal deaths, stillbirths, child nutrition status, malaria infections and death, utilization of family planning services, HIV infections and discrimination/stigma against key population's access to quality healthcare continuum.

According to UNAIDS' 90-90-90 policy, all countries are implored to achieve the following goals by 2020:

- **90% of people living with HIV diagnosed;**
- **90% of diagnosed people on antiretroviral treatment; and**
- **90% of people in treatment with fully suppressed viral load.**

However, in the case of Ghana, the incidence of discrimination and abuses at the facilities goes unreported, which poses a great challenge to key populations (KPs), persons with disabilities (PWDs), pregnant women, children among others in their quest to access health. Additionally, such persons are unable to voice out or share their concerns, experiences, complaints and suggestions at the health facilities/posts due to societal myths and misconceptions about them.

It is against this backdrop that the P4H Consortium (Penplusbytes, SEND Ghana and Ghana News Agency) with funding support from USAID is implementing the P4H project. The aim of the project is to reduce inequities in the delivery of health services through the promotion of good governance practices of accountability, transparency, equity and participation.



- We have worked in 4 regions in Ghana: Northern, Eastern, Greater Accra and Volta, a total of 20 districts

Collaboration with state investigative body-CHRAJ

This year, the Ministry of Health together with its implementing agency – Ghana Health Service that seeks to improve the health status of Ghanaians collaborated with the team to help it advertise the Patients Charter, which seeks to promote the rights and responsibilities of patients in their access to healthcare. With the sector fraught with reported cases of human rights abuses -

- refusal to admit patients due to “no-bed” syndrome;
- discrimination against key populations (KPs);
- personnel misconduct or maltreatment of patients at health facilities among others - this was a hugely important work.

We developed and deployed an interactive platform linked to the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice's discriminatory reporting platform (www.chraj.gov.gh) to complement CHRAJ's discrimination reporting system and to ensure that infringement on an individual's right to healthcare is brought to CHRAJ's attention and dealt with in partnership with other sanctioning agencies.

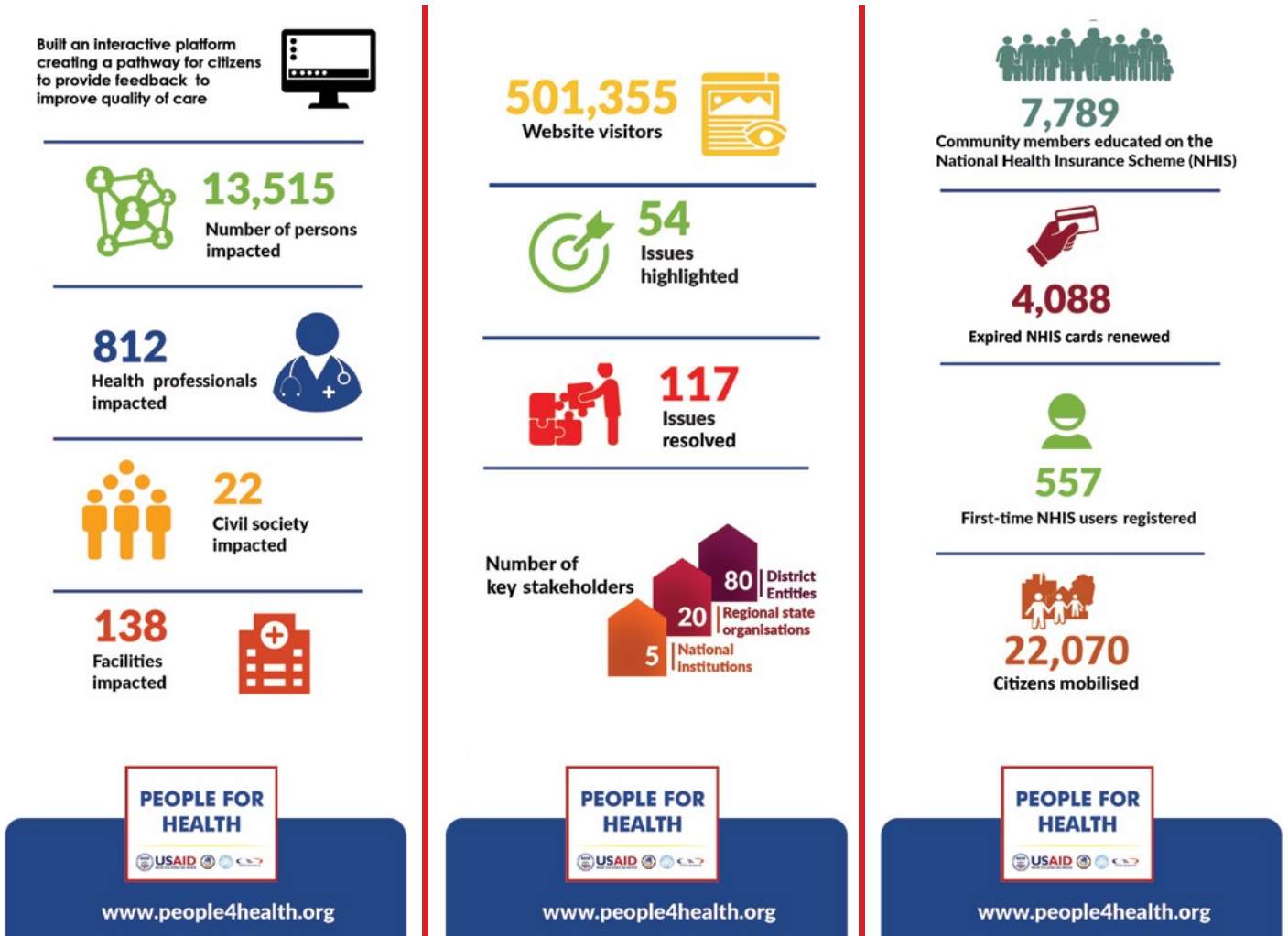
So far, the following have been achieved:

- **427 feedback received from clients**
- **29 issues were transmitted/escalated to duty bearers for investigation and redress**





Deputy Commissioner of CHRAJ, signs P4H MoU



Penplusbytes holds first Health Tech Fair in Ghana

Penplusbytes through the “People for Health” project organized the first ever technology in health knowledge and exhibition fair in Ghana. The fair brought together various stakeholders including state, non-state actors, media, civil society and the general public to showcase how P4H project is using ICT to maximise the health rights of disadvantaged groups in Ghana particularly the 20 implementing districts. The programme also leveraged on the opportunity to share successes and challenges encountered during the course of the project execution and lessons learnt.

The fair offered participants the opportunity to ask questions and seek more clarification on the project, scope, objectives, reasons behind the five (5) selected policies, the selection of the project districts and regions among others. Participants to the event included Ghana Health Service, Ministry of Health, Ghana Aids Commission, National Aids Control Programme, Allied Health Professionals Council, Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice (CHRAJ), Am-persand Technologies, Healthcare facilities administrators, Ghana Federation of Disability Organizations (GFD), NAP+, GHANET, DCMCs members, Key Population (KPs) ,Brothers’ Keeper, Friends for All, SEND Ghana, Strength for All, World Vision, Positive Minded Foundation, Young Heart, Concerned Health, Ghana Coalition of NGOs in Health, Hope Alliance Foundation, Ghana News Agency, JANOR, iSpace, Impact Hub, and the general public.

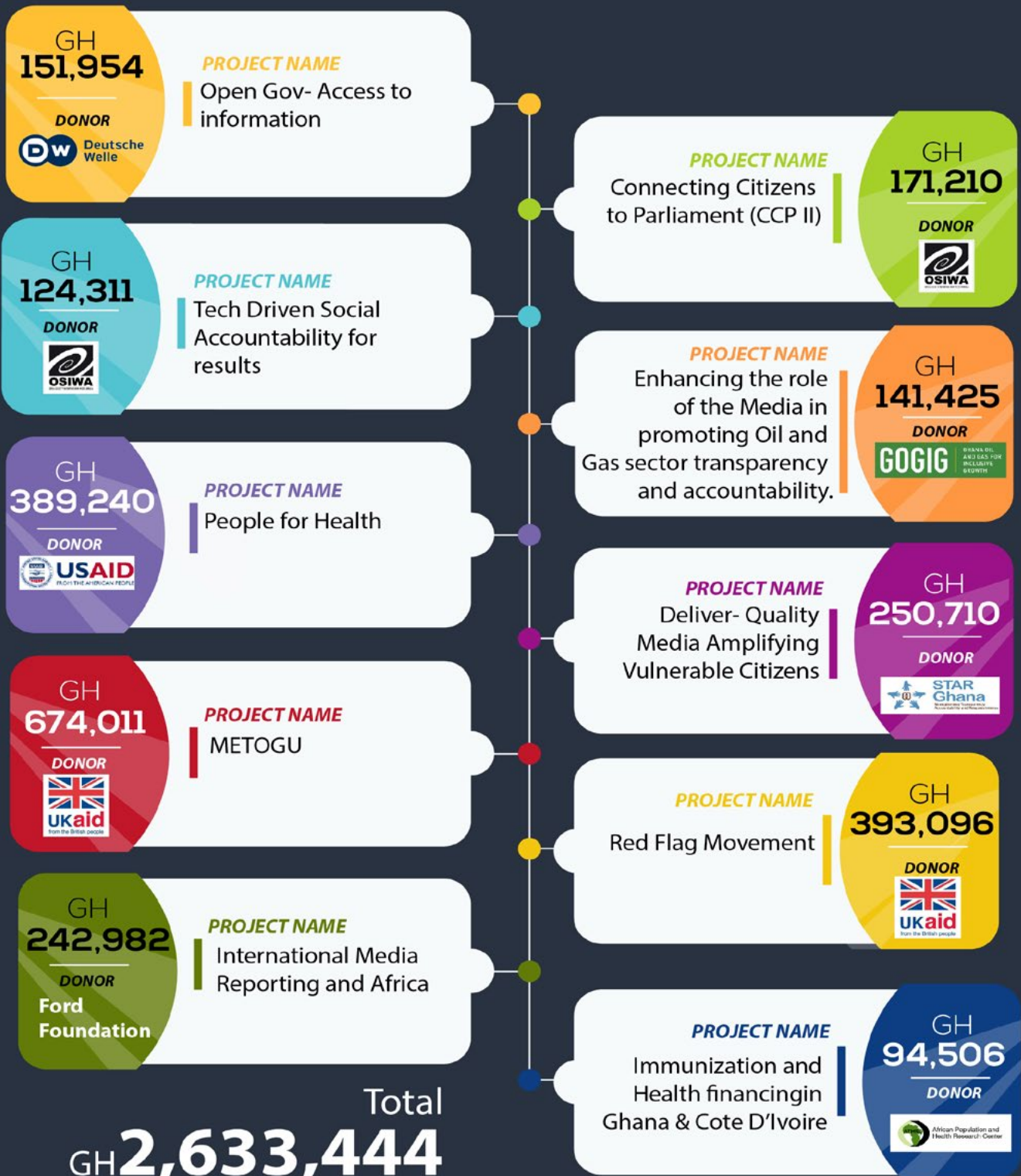
Participants took turns to try their hands on the functionality and efficacy of the project’s digital tool, P4H dashboard (www.people4health.org)



Participants being taken through P4H dashboard

Financial Overview

For the 2018 Financial year, Penplusbytes' projects were financed by eight (8) donors. The following represents how much we spent on direct project delivery :





Thank you



Thank you to our invaluable donors for their support in making the year a great success. We could not have done any of this without you and we encourage more donors to come support the good work we are doing in the coming years.

