

Current trends in STI Policies in Africa: Opportunities for engaging women scientists and engineers

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Outline of the Presentation

- What is a policy, and what is an STI policy specifically.
- Current trends in STI policies in Africa
- Opportunities for Women

What is a policy ?

- Policies, whether social or economic, are essential elements in development goals.
- They are tools used by governments to correct market failures in the allocation of resources in the market economy
- These failures can be things such as:
 - inadequate provision of desired good, gender imbalance, and information problems, which can most likely hamper pre-determined development goals and visions.

What are STI policies specifically?

- Specifically STI policies are focused on correcting market or system failures in allocating resources for the efficient production, dissemination and use of scientific knowledge and technologies for socioeconomic development.
- We are referring to policies and not a single policy, because STI in general is made of three distinct, but related things: science, technology and Innovation, with different policies, e.g. science policy, R&D policy, technology policy and innovation policy.

Current trends

Two obvious trends:

- Prominence in development plans
 - After decades of relative neglect in many developing countries, there is some evidence that science, Technology and innovation (STI) is gaining prominence in national development agendas among African countries.
 - Many countries are reviewing their national innovation systems for the purpose of repositioning STI for socioeconomic development, e.g. Nigeria, Rwanda, Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda etc.

Current trends Cont..



- Insistence on evidence and understanding of the policy process:
 - For many years African S&T policies have been informed by best practices from other countries(Policy borrowing).
 - African policy makers are now increasingly recognizing the critical role of local evidence to inform STI policies.
 - Two things are happening as a consequence:
 - STI Policy trainings – UNESCO, AU, SADC, etc.
 - STI Policy Research or Studies.

The STI Policy process

To understand role of research in policy, let us look at 6 stages of the policy process:

- Definition of the policy problem.
- The identification of the causes of this problem
- The identification of the various alternatives for resolving this problem.
- The selection of the most satisfactory alternative
- The operationalization (implementation) of the selected alternative in terms of a particular policy or set of policies.
- Evaluation

STI Policy Research or Studies



- As can be noted from the policy stages above, research is a very important input in nearly all the steps.
- Currently there are initiatives in capacity building in STI policy research or studies, e.g. Africalics, ATPS Network, NEPAD ASTII project on R&D and innovation surveys:
- STI policy studies (Science of Science Policy) is an established academic discipline. It is in the field of social sciences.
 - Currently there are initiatives in building this capacity in Africa, e.g Africalics PhD academies, efforts towards initiation of such courses in African universities.

Current trends and opportunities for Women



- Take advantage of the current reviews of STI policies to mainstream gender in STI at all levels.
- Women should take part in the ongoing trainings on STI policies.
- STI policy research or studies is a new discipline for Africa– even men are not yet there. Women should take advantage of being there first. Especially because these are going to be tomorrow's policy makers and leaders in STI, who can further take on board gender disparities at all levels of STI.



Thank you very much for your attention