

Thematic Session 6: Towards STI Agenda in National Development Planning with UN Development System Support

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The role of African STI think tanks in accelerating the achievement of the sustainable development goals: the case of African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS)

ATPS is an interdisciplinary network of researchers, policy makers, private sector actors and civil societies that promotes science, technology and innovation (STI) for African development, environmental sustainability and global inclusion. ATPS has 27 national chapters in Africa, three diaspora chapters in the USA, Europe and Australia and more than 5000 network members.

The vision of ATPS is to use STI as a means for achieving sustainable development in Africa. The sector priority areas of ATPS are: agriculture, food and nutrition; energy; climate change and environment; health; digital economy and ICT; creative industries and entrepreneurship; and education and technology.

ATPS has been implementing a number of STI policy projects over the last three decades. As an example we will see two recent projects which have direct relevance to the SDGs. The first one is a project that was completed a few months back that aimed at understanding the STI policy and institutional landscape in Africa to enhance youth entrepreneurship and job creation. The project was financed by Mastercard Foundation. It was implemented in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, Uganda and Zimbabwe;

The specific objectives of the project were to:

1. Conduct a review of the STI policy and institutional landscape in these countries with a view to understanding the statuses, what works, what doesn't work and why;
2. Undertake a stakeholder analyses and mapping along the technological innovation value chains in the countries with a view to understanding the key actors, their roles, their capacities and the linkages among them
3. Facilitate knowledge sharing and policy engagement among stakeholders with a view to developing a stakeholder engagement action plan within and among countries.

When we look at the outcomes of the project we find that

- a) It created an in-depth understanding of the STI policy and institutional landscape in the eight countries.
- b) A knowledge sharing and stakeholder engagement action plan was developed with a view to enhancing the bridging of gaps between STI research, industry and policy development.

- c) Linkages are created among the research, policy, and industry actors towards technological innovation development and evidence-based policymaking

The findings and lessons learned from the project will feed into the Mastercard Foundation's Young Africa Works Strategy aimed at providing 30 million young Africans with dignified and fulfilling work.

The second example is an ongoing project to build the capacity of twelve sub-Saharan African countries, including Ethiopia, to effectively measure progress in the implementation of their climate action plans (nationally determined contributions) using tracking tools and indexes. The key objectives and activities of the project include identifying and training strategic climate action plan implementation champions/ focal persons in the selected countries and promoting and advocating for the use of the climate action plan implementation tracking tools and index for decision-making. The project, which is financed by African Development Bank, is expected to increase the capacity of countries to collect and utilize the climate action plan data, using tracking tools and indexes to make informed policy and programmatic decisions. It will also contribute to progressive increased ambitions and compliance to international climate agreements and achievement of the climate action plan targets.

The above examples show the relevance of African think tank's STI initiatives for the SDGs. Therefore, UN agencies should consider collaborating with think tanks like ATPS to get the best out of their investment to push the STI for SDG agenda forward.