Science Granting Councils Initiative in Sub-Saharan Africa

Framework and action plan for Mainstreaming Gender Equality

February 2018

1. Background

Achieving gender equality is a key development objective envisioned by the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs-Goal 5[1]). It is now widely recognized that achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls will require more vigorous efforts, including legal frameworks, to counter deeply rooted gender-based discrimination. Since the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, development actors have shown greater commitment and leadership, by experimenting with several policy instruments and implementing approaches that integrate more deliberately considerations of sex and gender in policies and programs. Despite considerable gains, achieving gender equality remains a challenge in certain domains, including in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI), where women researchers and consideration in research of gender differences remain underrepresented.

Recent data from UNESCO shows that women comprise less than 30% of researchers globally, with the largest share of women researchers in Africa coming from South Africa, Namibia, Egypt and Mauritius. The underrepresentation of women in science is not only detrimental to development, but also impacts adversely the type of research that is funded and conducted. Science Technology and Innovation (STI) can only lead to better, transformed lives for all when the concerns, abilities and needs of both males and females, and gender diverse groups, are taken into consideration throughout the research and innovation process. From a policy perspective, the need to increase the participation of women in STI has been highlighted by continental and regional organizations as a key area of improvement for Africa's science. Indeed, policy documents, such as African Union Commission (AUC)'s Agenda 2063, Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa (STISA 2024), and overarching gender policy instruments by Regional Economic Communities (RECs) provide a framework for appropriate actions on the gender dimensions of STI.

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[1] Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Publicly funded Science Granting Councils (SGCs) are central to funding and catalyzing research and innovation. They play a significant role in disbursing funds to support both human capital development in science, and research and innovation activities at research performing organizations including universities and research institutes. Councils are also involved in setting and monitoring research agendas and priorities, and advising governments on science policies. As key intermediaries in national science systems, Councils can be important catalysts in the participation of women in STI, and increased consideration of the gender equality dimensions of research and innovation through, for example, deliberate policy actions.

Launched in September 2015, the Science Granting Councils Initiative in sub-Saharan Africa (SGCI) is strengthening the capacities of Science Granting Councils in 15 sub-Saharan African countries in order to support research and evidence-based policies that will contribute to economic and social development. The Initiative represents a joint investment of CA $13.9M over 5 year by United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID), Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF).

> Countries participating in SGCI: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

The SGCI's specific objectives are to strengthen the ability of SGCs to: i) manage research; ii) design and monitor research programmes based on the use of robust science, technology and innovation (STI) indicators; iii) support transfer of knowledge to the private sector, and; iv) establish partnerships with each other and with other science system actors. The capacity strengthening activities are being implemented by a group of Collaborating Technical Agencies (CTAs) through in-country on-site training and regional workshops to staff members of Councils. In-country training allows Councils' partners such as universities and research institutes to participate. The Initiative also promotes peer-to-peer learning among Councils.

With a focus on organisational strengthening, the SGCI is uniquely positioned to contribute to enhancing gender parity in STI research and innovation by incorporating dimensions of gender equality and inclusivity in the design and implementation of its capacity strengthening activities. This note presents the rationale for gender mainstreaming in SGCI and proposes deliberate action to encourage greater gender inclusivity in its work with Councils.

2. The need for a gender mainstreaming framework

According to the United Nations Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women[2], *gender mainstreaming refers to the process of assessing the implications for women and men in any planned action, including legislation, policies or programmes, in all areas and at all levels*. It is understood as a strategy towards elimination of gender inequality.

The report of a survey commissioned by Research Councils UK (RCUK and the Science and Engineering Research of India (SERB) as a contribution to the Global Research Council (GRC) Annual Meeting in New Delhi (India, May 2016) found that Councils from various regions of the world recognize the importance of gender equality in research and the value of achieving it within the research and innovation environment. However, that survey also noted great diversity across regions in how gender equality is translated into policies and practice. Countries with well developed science systems such as those in Europe and North America tend to have more comprehensive policies on gender and inclusivity[3]. The report came up with a number of recommendations including developing stronger policies on gender and inclusivity, key indicators to assess progress, mechanism for sharing of good practices and data, and funding specific programs on gender. As members of the GRC, several of Africa's Councils committed in 2016 to redoubling their work on "Equality and Status of Women in Research" through the participation and promotion of women in the research workforce, and the integration of the gender dimension in research design and in the analysis of research outcomes.

Gender mainstreaming entails bringing the perceptions, experience, and knowledge and interests of women as well as men to bear on policy-making, planning and decision-making. **ECOSOC Conclusions 1997/2**

The 2016 annual review report of the SGCI noted gender and other forms of inclusion as key gaps and recommended "a formalised approach to gender be documented; including both how the Initiative will ensure inclusivity in its training and support and how the Initiative could support Councils' approaches to gender." While the ongoing work of Collaborating Technical Agencies includes varying approaches to incorporate gender dimensions, a common framework would be useful in expressing a shared understanding and drawing commitment by all stakeholders to programming that is initially gender responsive and ultimately gender transformative. The framework offers general guidelines, allowing the CTAs and the Councils the flexibility to enrich it with their own organisational approaches.

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[2] http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/e65237.pdf

[3] For example in Canada the government and its research funding agencies are committed to Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) which aims to include women, men and *gender diverse* groups. *Intersectionality* is also a key component, for instance examining how different inequalities (such as age, ethnicity, class and ability) may interact with and compound gender differences. See http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca/gba-acs/guide-en.html. While the primary focus here is on gender, the aim is to support Councils to address a broader range of inequalities through their support of STI.

3. Purpose and objectives of the framework and action plan

The overall purpose of the framework for mainstreaming gender is to contribute to gender equality by encouraging greater participation by women in STI and research, and ensuring that research addresses gender differences. The specific objectives are:

i) To provide a shared understanding of and enhance commitment to gender mainstreaming among all actors in the Initiative specifically the Initiative Management Team (IMT), Councils and CTAs;

ii) To increase knowledge and capacity of Councils and CTAs on gender mainstreaming;

iii) To suggest strategies to enhance participation by women across the 4 SGCI Themes; and

iv) To propose an action plan for the implementation of the framework.

4. Opportunities for gender mainstreaming and women's participation in SGCI

The following section describes the efforts that are being undertaken by SGCI to encourage participation by women, and also identifies other opportunities to be explored.

4.1. Training curriculum design and delivery

The activities under Theme 1 (Research management) and Theme 2 (Use of STI indicators) consist of face-to-face training workshops, in-country mentoring and technical support and, on-line training in Objective 1. SARIMA and NEPAD will be asked to systematically incorporate gender considerations in curriculum design, purposefully drawing attention to the capabilities and needs of women and gender equality. In SARIMA's training on peer review for example, the issue of ethics and eliminating different forms of bias including gender bias is addressed. Gender-related questions were included in SARIMA's benchmarking questionnaire to ensure that the needs of both men and women are taken into account. NEPAD training recognises that women are generally under-represented in STI and hence the need to ensure gender dimensions in the data collection approaches by Councils. Disaggregating data in terms of sex is already included in NEPAD's training.

4.2. Selection of training participants

The Heads of Councils have the prerogative to select staff to participate in SGCI events. Already, some, such as the Research Council of Zimbabwe, have shown commitment to gender balance in staff training opportunities. However, this effort will be stepped up through sensitisation of the Heads of Councils. So far, the CTAs have made "gender balance" a criteria in selection of participants by the Heads. While there is some progress to this end, more work is required to gain commitment from the Heads. While the SGCI encourages selection of women to participate at the various events, the CTAs will need to facilitate their meaningful involvement, for example, by assigning them roles as speakers or moderators.

Theme 4 of the SGCI on networking among Councils and other stakeholders involves convening of Annual Forums and regional meetings. The SGCI has in the past intentionally allocated roles to the women participants. Sustained effort will be required to increase the number of women in leading roles during meetings.

4.3. Incorporating gender dimensions in research projects supported by SGCI

Theme 3 of the Initiative involves co-funding of research projects to promote knowledge transfer from public research institutions to the private sector and to support joint research calls amongst other areas of collaboration between the Councils. Research projects supported under this Theme strive to observe gender equality throughout the project cycle from design and implementation to analysis in all research and capacity strengthening activities. In addition, Councils will be supported to undertake baseline studies of how their research granting policies support national goals on gender equality and inclusivity.

4.4. Policy dialogues and special sessions

SARIMA held a policy dialogue on gender and diversity for Science Granting Councils alongside its May 2017 Annual Conference (Windhoek, Namibia). This conference included a plenary session on excellence in research and innovation through gender equality and diversity. SARIMA also organized a focus group discussion for representatives of Councils, SGCI funders and others. The SGCI will continue to work with the CTAs in order to identify similar opportunities to engage with Councils and other stakeholders on gender and inclusivity issues.

4.5. Reporting by Collaborating Technical Agencies

The CTAs are expected to reflect and report on gender participation in their bi-annual interim technical reports. This has mostly covered the number and share of women in all participants at events. The SGCI will expand reporting beyond statistics to include an analysis of participation by women and consideration of issues of gender equality and inclusivity. The CTAs will report on any significant contributions or achievements by women in the training, research and outreach activities, highlight gender equality/inclusivity findings, and make suggestions on ways to further promote gender and inclusivity. The SGCI also reports on gender and inclusivity as part of annual reports.

4.6. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL)

The SGCI has developed a robust Evaluative Learning Framework (ELF) to guide its evaluative activities and support its multi-faceted learning and accountability needs, drawing on a Learning Based

Management (LBM) approach. The premise is that as the SGCI undertakes activities with the Councils to strengthen their capacities, there will be resulting observable and measurable changes in their "actions, practices and relationships" as they engage in their work. Identifying and documenting these behavioural changes is critical to understanding the types and number of outcomes that can be associated with the Initiative. These changes are documented in Significant instance Reports (SiRs). Apart from using this tool to capture sex disaggregated statistics, the CTAs will be asked to record any significant gender equality and inclusivity outcomes as part of general comments. A Results, Review and Reflection (R^3) workshop is held on the sides of the Annual Forums and the Annual Regional Meeting. It convenes the Initiative Management Team (IMT), the CTAs and the SGCs to reflect on the outcomes of the Initiative. The CTAs will be encouraged to also reflect on gender outcomes during their presentations.

In addition to on-going efforts, other areas for expanding SGCI work on gender are:

   i.   Support to Councils for development of gender equality strategy, framework or policy

The Councils are in different stages of developing policies and framework for gender equality and inclusion of disadvantaged groups in and through STI. Mozambique's Fundo Nacional de Investigação (FNI), already has a gender strategy that addresses the need to promote research by women (e.g., through hiring, funding and parental leave practices), about women and men (e.g., gender differentiated research methods), and for women. Kenya's National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI) has developed a draft policy on access and increasing participation of youth, disadvantaged groups and gender in STI. The SGCI plans to offer technical support to the Councils to enable them to develop policies or frameworks on gender equality and inclusivity.

Should additional funding for SGCI be available under a new partnership, this could fund some data collection and studies on Councils and their national STI systems and the policies and practices they use to address gender equality and inclusivity, such as support of women as scientists and requirements that research they fund uses gender-based analysis.

   ii.   Training on gender equality and inclusivity

Gender mainstreaming is a complex process that requires capacity for it to be instituted. The SGCI will support training to the Councils on gender mainstreaming in STI, and ensure that existing CTA training material includes gender modules. Details of the proposed training will be discussed with SARIMA and other gender experts. *This area of work could be expanded with additional funding to SGCI.*

   iii.   Designation of gender focal points within the Councils

The SGCI will advocate for the appointment of a gender focal point within SGCs where they do not exist. The gender focal point will be instrumental in monitoring implementation of commitments to gender equality and inclusivity within the Councils.

5. Summary of SGCI Gender mainstreaming framework

Impact	Gender parity and greater participation by women in Science, Technology and Innovation		
Strategic Outcomes	1. A shared understanding and commitment to gender mainstreaming among SGCI actors	2. Increased knowledge and capacity to implement gender mainstreaming strategies by CTAs and Councils	3. Increased participation by women in SGCI activities
Outputs	1.1 Gender equality awareness sessions held with the Heads of Councils; 1.2 Policy dialogue sessions held with STI system actors including Councils, policy makers, private sector, civil society and higher education actors among others	2.1 Gender mainstreaming framework developed by Councils and CTAs; 2.2 Gender focal point appointed by Councils; 2.3 Research management and projects incorporate gender concerns; 2.4 SGCI (including CTAs) reports include section on gender equality and inclusivity; 2.5 Appropriate gender indicators developed and incorporated into the Evaluative Learning Framework	3.1 More women selected to represent Councils in SGCI events; 3.2 Women play active roles in SGCI activities
Activities	- Hold discussions with Councils on the issue of gender equality and inclusivity in STI and research - Organise policy dialogue sessions on the sides of key regional events	- Support Councils to develop gender framework, policy or guidelines; - Advocate for appointment of a gender focal person within the Councils - Train Councils in gender analysis and planning; - Guide CTAs in reporting on gender; - Incorporate gender consideration in MEL data collection tool (SiR)	- Include gender balance as a selection criteria of participants at SGCI events; - Assign substantive roles to women during SGCI events

6. Action plan

Strategic objective	Activities	Indicators	Responsibility	2017	2018	2019	2020
1. **Shared understanding and commitment to gender mainstreaming**	Hold gender mainstreaming sensitisation sessions with CTAs, Heads of Councils	# of HoC aware of gender mainstreaming obligations of SGCI	IMT	■	■	■	■
	Advocate for designation of a gender focal person within the Councils;	# of Councils appointing a gender focal person	IMT		■	■	■
	Organise policy dialogue sessions on gender equality and inclusivity in STI and research	# Policy dialogues held on the sides of key regional events;	IMT and CTAs	■	■	■	
2. **Increased knowledge and capacity to implement gender mainstreaming strategies**	Train Councils in gender mainstreaming (e.g. gender analysis and planning)	# of Councils developing a gender mainstreaming strategy/ framework/ policy	CTAs, IMT		■	■	■
		# Councils incorporating gender elements in calls for proposals	CTAs, IMT		■	■	■
	Promote reporting on gender and inclusivity	A section on gender included in CTA reports; MEL SiR captures data on gender	IMT, CTAs		■	■	■
3. **Increased participation by women in SGCI activities**	-Advocate for gender balance in Councils representation at training workshops	Increase in number of Council female staff participating in SGCI activities	IMT, CTAs	■	■	■	■
	- Assign substantive roles to women during SGCI events	-Increase in number of women taking up leading roles at key SGCI events e.g. the Annual Forum	IMT, CTAs	■	■	■	■