" ... as central role players in national systems of innovation, Science Granting Councils are key to advancing gender transformation... **"**

Strengthening Capacities of **Science Granting Councils** in advancing **Gender and Inclusivity Transformation**

Gender & Inclusivity

A PROJECT OF THE SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS INITIATIVE

About the project

The first phase of the Gender and Inclusivity Project (September 2020 to February 2023) aimed to strengthen the capacities of Science Granting Councils (SGCs) in sub-Saharan Africa to advance systemic change towards greater gender equality and inclusivity in the science technology and innovation (STI) sector.

As central role players in national systems of innovation, SGCs are key to advancing gender transformation. SGCs contribute to setting and monitoring national research agendas and stimulate research designs and content responsive to gender inequality, through funding projects informed by a gender-transformative lens.

Building on existing work of SGCs, the Gender and Inclusivity Project started the process of mainstreaming an intersectional gender-transformative approach in the development, implementation and monitoring of gender policy, programmes and research in the functions of SGCs.
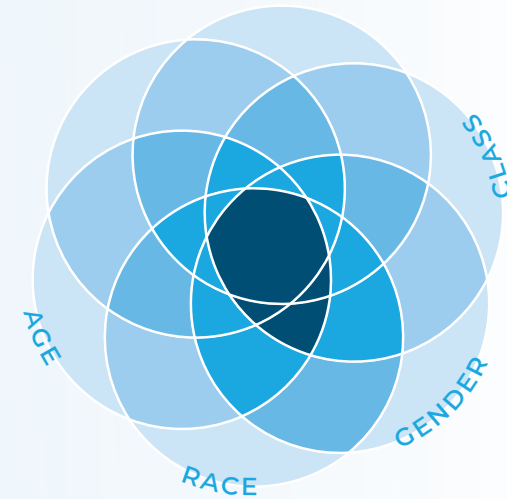
What is 'Intersectionality'?

Introduced by feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, this framework deepens understanding of the interplay between people's diverse identities and experiences, to explore how this interplay shapes and mutually reinforces oppression and exclusion. It expands the focus on gender to recognise inequalities related to other forms of diversity, such as age, race, class and (dis)ability, amongst others.

Gender & Inclusivity

A PROJECT OF THE SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS INITIATIVE

The Gender and Inclusivity Project was led by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) of South Africa in partnership with Gender at Work, Jive Media Africa and the Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa (CODESRIA), harnessing extensive and complementary experience in gender transformation in STI.

The project was implemented as part of the second phase of the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI), a multi-funder capacity-building initiative launched in 2015 to support the development of research and evidence-based policies that contribute to socio-economic development.
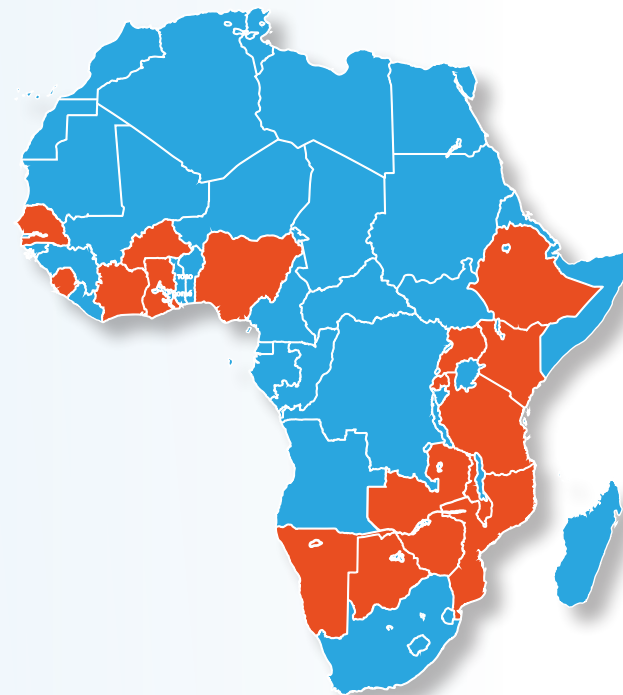
Key facts at a glance

30%

Only 30% of researchers in the region are women (Huyser, 2019)

4-13%

Female representation in science academies in the region ranges from only 4% to 13% (Ngila et al., 2017).

?

Most of the countries in which participating SGCs are situated lack national gender disaggregated data to monitor attainment of gender-related SDGs (UN Women, 2021).

Participating councils

Participating SGCs were based in Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Gender & Inclusivity

A PROJECT OF THE SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS INITIATIVE

Why the project

Addressing gender disparities in STI is not only a question of rights and justice; it is crucial to producing more inclusive teams in organisations, higher quality research, and greater relevance and impact of research and innovation – not only for women, but for society broadly. In other words, addressing gender equality is essential in advancing the continent's STI agenda. Despite an increasingly enabling policy and legislative environment for gender transformation, inequalities in STI remain:

- Women are under-valued and under-represented in scientific disciplines worldwide, especially in key leadership and decision-making positions.
- Research still carries the legacy of gender bias in both method and content.
- In Africa, regional gender policy frameworks have only partially filtered down to national level, particularly for STI-specific policy. While women are increasingly joining science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) educational programmes, their representation dwindles the further they proceed through the 'leaky' STI pipeline.
- There are limited intersectional approaches to gender transformation that consider diversity related to other marginalised identities and experiences

Existing policy landscape

- African Union's Agenda 2063
- Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024
- 2015 as the 'Year of Women's Empowerment and Development Towards Africa Agenda 2063'
- Global Research Council (GRC) Statement of Principles and Actions on Promoting the Status and Equality of Women in Research (2016)
- IDRC's Equality Statement (2019)
- SGCI Gender Mainstreaming Framework and Action Plan (2018)

> ❝ … In Africa, regional policy frameworks have only partially filtered down to national level, particularly so for STI-specific national policy… ❞

Gender & Inclusivity

A PROJECT OF THE SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS INITIATIVE

What did the Gender and Inclusivity Project set out to do?

1 Review and consolidate information about the regional, national and institutional environments within which SGCs operate;

2 Co-identify capacities and needs of participating SGCs, as well as key principles and targets that inform their work in advancing gender and inclusivity;

3 Provide action-based learning opportunities and support to resource SGCs towards advancing gender equality and inclusivity in their work; and

4 Develop mechanisms and an evidence base to enable the monitoring and evaluation of the impact of gender equality and inclusivity initiatives.

❝ The Gender and Inclusivity Project offered a unique approach for sustained structural change. ❞

Dr Ingrid Lynch and Prof Heidi van Rooyen,
Principle Investigators, Gender and Inclusivity Project

Gender & Inclusivity

A PROJECT OF THE SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS INITIATIVE

Khanysa Mabyeka – Taken at the Learning Summit

The Gender and Inclusivity Project adopted a unique approach for sustained structural change through:

- Integration of an **intersectional lens** to recognise diversity beyond gender, such as age, race, class and (dis)ability, amongst others;
- A **participatory methodology** that is responsive to councils' own change agendas, which builds meaningful partnerships within and beyond the SGCs and encourages a sense of ownership over the change process;
- A unique **peer-learning methodology** – Gender Action Learning – developed by partner organisation Gender at Work and underpinned by a customised, participatory process of co-creating strategies focused on both individual and systemic change; and
- A **Targeted Technical Assistance** process. This was an innovative adaptation of the project that supported councils which, for various reasons, could not take part in the Gender Action Learning process, in the implementation of a gender equality and inclusivity strengthening activity in their grant-making cycle.

Gender & Inclusivity

A PROJECT OF THE SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS INITIATIVE

What did councils achieve?

Gender at Work's unique Gender Action Learning (GAL) methodology and the HSRC's Targeted Technical Assistance (TTA) approach supported councils in exploring one central learning question: "What will it take for SGCs to more fully develop and implement policy commitments around gender equality and inclusivity?"

Councils initiated wide-ranging actions in response to this common learning question, illustrating the importance of avoiding a one-size-fits-all approach to addressing gender disparities in STI. Their actions were innovative, responsive to national change priorities and underpinned by social and contextual relevance.

For example, while a focus on gender cut across all councils' actions, some councils identified other overlapping factors that create barriers to equal science participation, such as generational bias, rural location and disability.

Annette Ouattara – Taken at the Learning Summit

Gender & Inclusivity

A PROJECT OF THE SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS INITIATIVE

What did councils achieve?

The methods which councils used to address barriers were also diverse, ranging across scholarships for female STEM students, an institutional gender champion approach, mentorship programmes, advocacy to advance regional gender transformation initiatives, organisational gender policy development, science promotion programmes in marginalised communities, ring-fenced grants for women scientists, and addressing gender disparities in STI decision-making, among others. Posters developed by councils to summarise their actions can be viewed on the SGCI website at https://sgciafrica.org/gender-and-inclusivity-theme/.

The project culminated in a final Gender and Inclusivity Learning Summit, where councils had the opportunity to showcase and reflect on key actions implemented during the project period. (A short video on the highlights of the Learning Summit can be viewed at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvHOyby7Zeg&t=156s.)

Reflection videos developed by councils can be viewed at https://youtube.com/playlist?list=PLWpK_f-GZpIZ0J4gAOPQU6R8fynV3ycc4

Gender & Inclusivity

A PROJECT OF THE SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS INITIATIVE

A new funding cycle

A second, three-year grant cycle was launched in early 2023 under a slight name change: the Gender, Equality and Inclusivity Project (GEI). In this new cycle, councils will build on their existing work to deepen their focus on integrating GEI into their grant-making policies and practices. A research grant-making cycle that integrates GEI can be a potent tool for making research responsive to social needs, enhancing scientific excellence and improving research methodologies. Responsive and inclusive grant-making directly supports governments in achieving development commitments linked towards United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 5.

In addressing barriers to women's participation in STI, the GEI project will also undertake a multi-country research study which aims to investigate what transformed research environments might look like, in offering improved support to women in their diversity in science disciplines.

The project methodology, based on the action learning cycle of Plan, Act, Reflect and Learn (PARL) aims to support councils in introducing GEI concepts and practices in their grant-making processes. This will be done through partnering with SGCs to:

● Co-develop a common SGCI GEI Policy Roadmap for advancing GEI in research environments, design and content, with guidelines for local adaptation;
● Implement practical methods for integrating GEI into grant-making;
● Generate evidence for which interventions work best, in which contexts and why; and
● Create an environment for continuous learning, reflection and sharing of insights and knowledge.

Gender & Inclusivity
A PROJECT OF THE SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS INITIATIVE

For more information visit:
https://hsrc.ac.za/gender-and-inclusivity/ and https://sgciafrica.org/themes/gender-and-inclusivity-resources/.

HSRC Human Sciences Research Council

Gender at work

ACTIVATE AFRICAN KNOWLEDGE
Jive Media Africa

SGCI IOSRS
INITIATIVE DES ORGANISMES SUBVENTIONNAIRES DE LA RECHERCHE SCIENTIFIQUE

Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office

IDRC · CRDI
International Development Research Centre
Canada

NRF National Research Foundation

Sida

DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft
German Research Foundation

Norad