

# How the SGCI makes a difference for Africa's Science Granting Councils

SGCI Annual Report  
2023



## SGCI participating countries



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# List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AAU</b>	African Association of Universities
<b>ACTS</b>	African Centre for Technology Studies
<b>ATPS</b>	African Technology Policy Studies Network
<b>AUDA-NEPAD</b>	African Union Development Agency-New Partnership for Africa's Development
<b>CC</b>	Councils Committee
<b>CTAs</b>	Collaborating Technical Agencies
<b>DFG</b>	German Research Foundation
<b>EC</b>	Executive Committee
<b>FCDO</b>	Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office
<b>GERD</b>	Gross Expenditures on Research and Development
<b>GEI</b>	Gender equality and inclusivity
<b>GRC</b>	Global Research Council
<b>HORCs</b>	Heads of Research Councils
<b>IIASA</b>	International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis
<b>IMT</b>	Initiative Management Team
<b>IP</b>	Intellectual property
<b>MEL</b>	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
<b>NOW</b>	Dutch Research Council
<b>Norad</b>	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
<b>NRF</b>	National Research Foundation, South Africa
<b>POA</b>	Panel of Advisors
<b>PPPs</b>	Public-private partnerships
<b>R&amp;I</b>	Research and Innovation
<b>SARIMA</b>	Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association
<b>SC</b>	The Scinnovent Centre
<b>SGCI</b>	Science Granting Councils Initiative
<b>SGCs</b>	Science Granting Councils
<b>Sida</b>	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
<b>STEM</b>	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
<b>TOC</b>	Theory of Change
<b>UJ</b>	University of Johannesburg
<b>VfM</b>	Value for Money



# 1. Executive Summary

The Science Granting Councils Initiative in sub-Saharan Africa (SGCI) is a multi-donor Initiative funded by United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF-SA), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida); the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (Norad), and the German Research Foundation (DFG). Since its inception in 2015, the SGCI has been strengthening the capacities of Science Granting Councils (SGCs) in sub-Saharan Africa countries to support research, innovation, and evidence-based policies that contribute to economic and social development.

The ongoing SGCI phase two (SGCI-2) is supported under new partnerships with FCDO, IDRC, Norad, Sida, NRF, and DFG. These partnerships are collectively strengthening the capacities of Science Granting Councils (or related agencies) from 17 countries (Box 1) in 6 thematic areas (Box 2). The thematic areas were initially selected to respond to the key challenges facing the Councils identified through a scoping study (2014) and subsequent political economy analyses, various consultative meetings with the Councils, and case studies. These challenges included limited research management capacities; lack of sustained funding base; poor application of knowledge for economic and social use; poor coordination with other agencies; and limited capacities to use evidence for policy and decision making.

This joint report presents the progress made by all SGCI partnerships for the period July 2022 to October 2023 against the objectives set in previous reports. It is also based on a combined SGCI logical framework that is included in this report.

## Box 1

### SGCI participating countries

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

## Box 2

### SGCI-2 Themes and lead CTAs

**Theme 1** – Strengthening the ability of Science Granting Councils in research management. (AAU/ SARIMA).

**Theme 2** – Strengthening the Capacity of Science Granting Councils to use data and evidence in policy and decision making. (University of Johannesburg, UJ).

**Theme 3** – Supporting the ability of Science Granting Councils to fund research and innovation. (African Centre for Technology Studies, ACTS).

**Theme 4** – Supporting strategic communications and knowledge uptake. (CABI-SciDev).

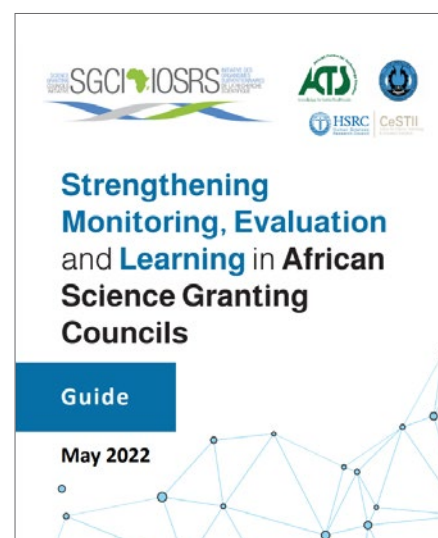
**Theme 5** – Strengthening the Capacities of Science Granting Councils in gender equality and inclusivity. (Human Sciences Research Council, HSRC).

**Theme 6** – Supporting the Science Granting Councils to develop frameworks and enabling structures for public-private sector partnerships in research and innovation. (Scinnovent Centre, SC).

**Theme 7** – Supporting frameworks for the establishment of new funding agencies in West (African Technology Policy Studies Network, ATPS).

Significant progress has been realized in the implementation of all aspects of the Initiative during the reporting period. Examples are shown below:

- i. The Initiative has intensified its efforts to **implement the recommendations of the 2022 External Review** during the period (Table 1). For instance, greater reliance on in country and onsite training has ensured that the work of Collaborating technical agencies (CTAs) is tailored to the needs of the individual Councils. Harmonization of the work of CTAs has been intensified through regular consultations among the CTAs to develop joint [calendar of events](#), and to review progress. Efforts to strengthen monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) capacity at the Councils' level and establish links to the Initiative-level monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) have been intensified and a consultant hired to support data collection and analysis under **Theme 2** project (led by the University of Johannesburg).
- ii. **The Initiative has met or exceeded most of the lower outcome and output indicator targets set for October 2023.** The data collection process for some of the higher outcome and impact indicators is still ongoing. These include data on the Councils' expenditures on research and innovation, patents registered, and gross expenditures on research and development (GERD) in SGCI countries.
- iii. The new SGCI partnerships have significantly **increased the ability of SGCI Councils to fund and manage research and innovation projects in their countries.** In this regard, 15 Councils have received a total of CA \$8.7M to fund 89 projects under the Norad-IDRC partnership. Under the FCDO-IDRC partnership, a total of CA \$4.8M has been used to support 81 projects in 16 SGCI countries. Co-investments in research projects by the Councils has increased through funding of additional projects and in-kind contributions. For instance, the Councils from the following countries have funded additional research projects as follows: Senegal (5), Côte d'Ivoire (1), Kenya (1), and Rwanda (1).
- iv. Through the SGCI, **Councils have continued to renew existing collaborative agreements** (signed under SGCI-1 and 2) or enter into new agreements and operationalize them by funding joint research projects. For instance, the Councils in Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe have renewed an existing trilateral agreement to fund projects. Similarly, the Mozambique-Botswana, Mozambique-Côte d'Ivoire, and Ghana-Zambia have signed new bilateral agreements to support joint research projects. These collaborations have helped Councils to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers. For instance, Fonds Pour la Science, la Technologies et l'Innovation (FONSTI, Côte d'Ivoire) had no professional relationship with a Portuguese or English-speaking Council prior to its involvement in the SGCI. However, the Initiative has helped the Council to establish partnerships with the Councils in Mozambique and Uganda.
- v. The Initiative continued to support **more effective grants management systems.** For instance, the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology (UNCST) has provided technical support to other Councils (alongside the responsible CTA) with regards to digitization of grants management systems. Through this effort, a total of 8 Councils (from Malawi, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Ghana, Namibia, Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Mozambique) are currently using digitized systems to run research calls leading to greater transparency, efficiency, and effectiveness in tracking and monitoring of research projects.
- vi. As in previous years, **the Initiative has continued to promote peer-to-peer learning among participating Councils.** For instance, UNCST (Uganda) has provided technical support to other Councils (alongside the responsible CTA) with regards to digitization of grants management systems. Through this effort, a total of 8 Councils (from Malawi, Burkina Faso, Senegal, Ghana, Namibia,



Zimbabwe, Botswana, and Mozambique) are currently using digitized systems to run research calls. Secondly, an online gateway for technology matchmaking (Techno-Mart<sup>1</sup>) developed by UNCST is being refined and adapted for use by other SGCI Councils under

**Theme 6** project led by the Scinnovent Centre, SC (p. 16). As well, Botswana's experience in conducting IP audits of funded projects will be leveraged to support other Councils.

- vii. SGCI continues to support **raising the profiles of Science Granting Councils** through participating in global and regional programs and networks (p. 18). These programmes and networks have strengthened the Councils' capacities, promoted collaborations amongst them, and enhanced their profiles regionally and globally. They include Global Research Council (GRC), OR Tambo Africa Research Chairs Initiative (ORTARCHI), and Africa-Japan collaboration in environmental sciences (AJ-CORE), Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Member Organization (SSARMO) of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) and a new multilateral research partnership programme with the NRF (South Africa), SGCI councils, DFG, and the Dutch Research Council.
- viii. SGCI has helped the Councils **move the needle on Gender Equality and Inclusivity**. For instance, four Councils (from Côte d'Ivoire, Tanzania and Ghana and Zambia) have launched calls specifically targeting women researchers; six Councils (from Zambia, Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, and Burkina Faso) have developed guidelines for gender equality and inclusivity in research calls and within their institutions and several knowledge outputs related to gender have been produced by Councils with the support of **Theme 5** project (led by Human Sciences Research Council, HSRC).
- ix. In response to a recommendation of the SGCI External Review, concrete steps have been taken to enhance the visibility and knowledge uptake of the SGCI with the recent engagement of SciDev.Net (and its parent organization, CABI) to lead the work on strategic communications and knowledge uptake (**Theme 4**). Five articles (e.g., on issues relating to gender and STEM) have been published on Scidev.Net platform, which has a very large readership. As well, 12 short articles (for example, on specific research supported by councils such as mobile applications in Mozambique, or on the launch of Uganda's National Research Outlook) have been added to the SGCI website. These stories are complemented by podcast episodes focused on SGCI themes and SGCI-supported research. The [website](#) is in the process of being redesigned and migrated to a new server for greater access to content. New analytics have been developed to enable better tracking of contents on the website and provide critical feedback loops to communications and marketing campaigns. Social media presence has been relaunched via the X platform. Finally, SciDev.Net has begun strengthening networks of science journalists in participating countries and engaging in media training for selected SGCs.



1. The platform is essentially for matching innovations or inventions with potential private sector users. It includes a module for infrastructure sharing and another one for locating/ sharing of research expertise.

## Emerging Lessons and recommendations:

Along with continuing to make progress towards SGCI's stated goals, this report highlights lessons and recommendations for the upcoming year:

- . Considering renewed interest in global research and policy fora for **supporting locally led development and the decolonizing of knowledge**, SGCI needs to redouble its **efforts to communicate its role** in these conversations.
- . Although SGCI has advanced the **integration of environmental sustainability** into its programming, including through better inclusion of sustainability in its logical framework, it needs to do more, notably through looking at more systematic integration of environmental issues in research quality assessments.
- . As the last few years has demonstrated, **global research funding flows are vulnerable to global shocks** like the pandemic and the war in Ukraine. SGCI needs to continue to **present administrative and financial flexibility** to ensure greater resilience of the program to adapt to shocks.



## 2. How the SGCI is Addressing the 2022 External Review Recommendations

**Table 1.** Summary of the key recommendations from the 2022 SGCI external review recommendations and the progress made by the Initiative Management Team (IMT) to address them during this reporting period.

External Review Recommendations	Actions taken by the SGCI to date
<b>R1.</b> International partners should continue funding African SGC transformational journey efforts and initiate a follow-up phase to the SGCI beyond 2025 (SGCI 3)	As noted in the SGCI management response, the funders are committed to continuing to support SGCI, subject to continued good progress and availability of funds. As well, the SGCI continues to support the participation of the SGCs in other networks and programs some of which have potential for research funds. These include a new multilateral research partnership program with the NRF (South Africa), SGCI councils, DFG, and the Dutch Research Council (NOW). By supporting the Councils' ability to demonstrate the impacts of their funded projects, the SGCI hopes that they will be better able to lobby for increased government investments in research and innovation.
<b>R2.</b> Science Granting Councils should fully own and invest in their transformational journeys to ensure sustainability	The current partnerships emphasize greater leadership roles for the Councils in all aspects of the Initiative's implementation. For instance, ownership in capacity strengthening is being realized through a tailored approach that assures greater alignment with the Councils' needs. As well, the work of the CTAs is being complemented through peer-to-peer learning among the Councils. The Councils have also received funds (through the Norad-IDRC partnership) to enable them to identify complementary areas of capacity strengthening needs and identify suitable agencies or national experts to provide technical support. A total of 15 Councils (from Burkina Faso, Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe have already identified their capacity strengthening needs. Additional information about the progress made by the Councils in this regard will be included in the next report. Co-funding of research projects (mentioned elsewhere in this report) is another example of how the Councils have demonstrated ownership of the Initiative.
<b>R3.</b> The Initiative should provide as much as possible trainings tailored to the limited critical priorities of Councils and accelerate the uptake of associated knowledge outputs	Under SGCI-1, a strategy was developed to facilitate and monitor the uptake of knowledge outputs. This strategy is being updated. The main elements are summarized below: (a) All products are shared electronically with the Councils, CTAs, and other stakeholders in a timely manner. The products are also posted on the <a href="#">SGCI website</a> to facilitate easy access. All stakeholders are immediately informed about new materials on the website. (b) The IMT encourages and monitors the use of the knowledge outputs (including manuals, guidelines, and commissioned papers) in the work of the CTAs and the Councils. Further dissemination of outputs is achieved through communications training and support of national science journalists by CABI/ SciDev.Net. (c) The feedback from the users is used to update the outputs.
<b>R4.</b> Science Granting Councils should take a more proactive stance on gender and inclusivity to ensure mainstreaming	Gender continues to be front and centre in the SGCI's implementation through the work of the lead CTA, Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC). As well, the work of other CTAs includes an objective on gender equality and inclusivity. In this context, the HSRC, understanding that the SGCs are differently resourced and at different readiness points in their change-making journey, the Targeted Technical Assistance (TTA) programme was initiated as an innovative addition to the original G&I Project design. The TTA programme offered direct technical support to SGCs, aimed at identifying opportunities to integrate a GEI-strengthening activity in their grant-making cycle. The TTA programme, while more narrowly focused, still integrated principles of participatory action learning by acknowledging participants as experts and drawing on existing strengths, experience, and resources; encouraging experimentation; and creating opportunities for peer-to-peer learning and reflection.
<b>R5.</b> The MEL should also be developed at Council level to capture each Council progress on their transformational pathways	A key objective under Theme 2 (use data and evidence in policy and decision making, Evi-Pol 2) is to strengthen the Councils' MEL frameworks and plans and data management systems. Strong MEL systems will enable the Councils to demonstrate the impacts of their funded projects, and to assess the impact and relevance of national STI policies. Progress is provided in <b>section 4.3</b> of this report.

### 3. Revised Logical Framework and Progress made against 2023 Targets

Each of the SGCI-2 partnerships evolved with a slightly different Theory of Change (TOC) and logical framework with respect to the outcomes, outputs, indicators, and annual targets. Based on the SGCI Executive Committee's recommendation, the Initiative has recently developed a combined TOC and log frame for all SGCI-2 partnerships (Sida-IDRC; FCDO-IDRC, Norad-IDRC, and NRF-DFG). A combined log frame was deemed necessary to facilitate joint annual reporting by the Initiative. The TOC is a depiction of how the five key thematic areas are linked to corresponding expected outputs (short-term), and how these outputs contribute to lower outcomes (short/ medium term), higher outcome (medium-term), and impact (long-term). The key features of the combined TOC (**Fig. 1**) and logical framework are summarized below:

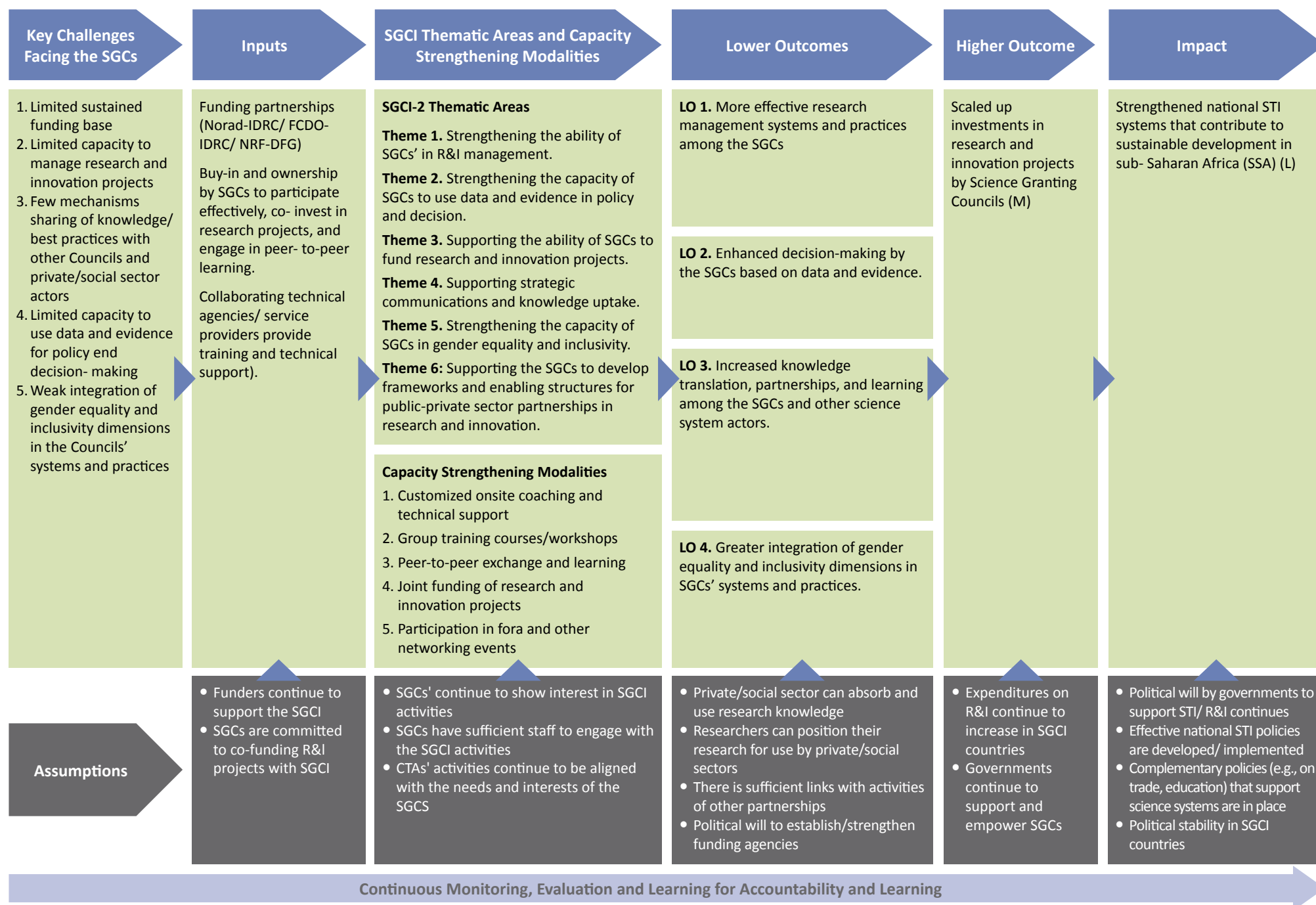
- a. **Impact** (Long-term): The impact statement has been revised to read *“Strengthened national STI systems that contribute to sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa”*. Two impact indicators have been identified as follows: (a) Gross domestic expenditures on research and development (GERD), and (b) Patent applications in SGCI countries.
- b. **Higher Outcome** (Medium-term): *“Scaled up investments in research and innovation by Science Granting Councils”*. Three indicators have been identified as follows:
  - (i) Higher Outcome Indicator 1: Documented numbers of research and innovation projects in key priority sectors funded by the SGCs.
  - (ii) Higher Outcome Indicator 2: Documented numbers of basic/ fundamental research projects funded by the SGCs.
  - (iii) Higher Outcome Indicator 3: Documented numbers and examples of solutions, products, evidence, and knowledge from projects funded by the SGCs.
- c. **Lower Outcomes** (Short/ Medium term): A total of 4 Lower Outcomes (LOs) and corresponding indicators have been identified.
- d. **Outputs** (Short-term): A total of 12 outputs have been identified for the four lower outcomes. Every effort has been made to retain most of the outputs that were already identified under the various partnerships.
- e. **Annual targets**: The targets have been adjusted to align with the new reporting time which has been changed from March to October of each year. In some cases, the targets for 2024 and 2025 have been revised based on new information about the baselines.

Overall, the Initiative has met or exceeded most of the lower outcome and output indicator targets set for the current reporting period. The baseline data collection for some of the indicators is still ongoing. These includes data on patent applications and registrations, and gross domestic expenditures on research and development (GERD).<sup>2</sup>

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2. The main sources of GERD data are African Innovation Outlook (AIO) Reports, UNESCO Institute of Statistics (UIS) Reports, and National Statistical Offices. AIO and UIS reports are produced every 2 years or longer and so annual targets are difficult to set. Moreover, GERD values could increase, decrease, or remain constant over the project period.

**Fig. 1: Combined SGCI Theory of Change**



## 4. How the SGCI makes a difference to Africa's Councils

### 4.1. Building sustainable capacities by the Councils to fund research and innovation projects

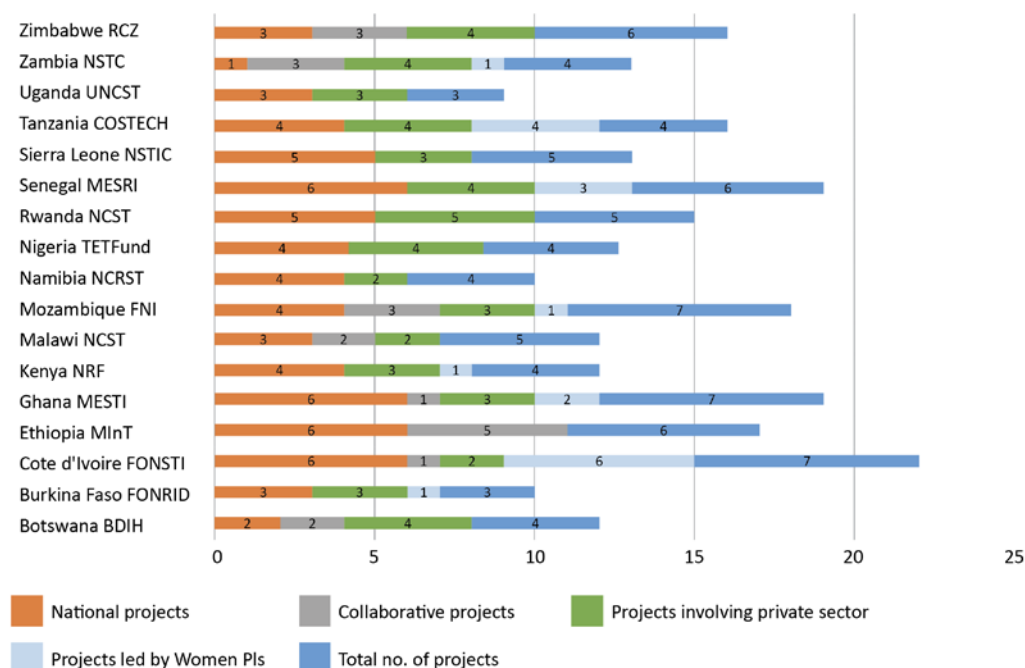


Fig 2. Summary of the numbers and types of projects selected for funding under FCDO-IDRC partnership

The SGCI-2 is building sustainable capacities by the Councils to fund research and innovation projects covering four broad national priority areas<sup>3</sup> identified during a consultative meeting for the Heads of Research Councils (HORCs) held in 2019 (Entebbe, Uganda) in preparation for the launch of SGCI-2. Research funds are managed either directly by the Councils (for Norad-IDRC partnership) or through a collaborating technical agency (CTA) in the case of FCDO-IDRC partnership. The NRF-DFG partnership continues to support three collaborative projects involving the Councils from 6 countries (Namibia-Mozambique, Burkina Faso-Senegal, and Kenya-Uganda). A total of CA \$4.8M have been used to support 84 research projects<sup>4</sup> in 17 countries under the FCDO-IDRC partnership (Fig. 2). Similarly, a total of 15 Councils (from Malawi, Zambia, Uganda, Botswana, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Côte d'Ivoire) have received CA \$8.7M to fund between 89 and 118 projects under the Norad-IDRC partnership.<sup>5</sup>

Co-investments in research projects by the Councils has increased through funding of additional projects. For instance, Senegal (MESRI) is funding five additional projects while Côte d'Ivoire (FONSTI), Kenya (NRF), and Rwanda (NCST) are each funding one additional project under the Norad-IDRC partnership.<sup>5</sup> Burkina Faso (FONRID) has supported projects linked to the country's development priority areas and promoted collaborations among various research institutes. As a result, the government funded projects on COVID-19 pandemic and other infectious diseases to the tune of 1.4 billion CFA franc (ca. CA \$3M). The Council has been able to better integrate gender equality and inclusivity (GEI) considerations in all aspects of its programming.



3. Industrialisation and manufacturing; Sustainable economies and societies; Emerging technologies and development; and Social Sciences and Humanities. A small number of Councils have expressed interest in supporting fundamental/ basic research projects.

4. Of the 84 projects selected, 66 projects are national, while 15 projects are collaborative (9 bilateral and 6 tri-lateral). 54 projects involve private sector actors. Gender focused projects and projects involving private sector actors (PPPs) are part of the national and collaborative projects.

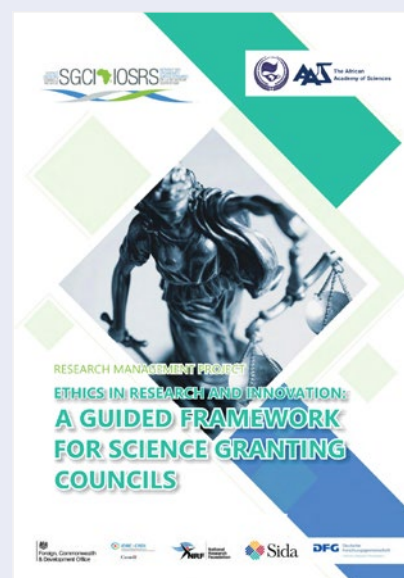
5. Detailed information about these projects is still being collated.

## 4.2. Strengthening the Councils' capacities in research and innovation management

The SGCI-2 continues to strengthen the capacity of participating Councils in research management through two projects led by the Association of African Universities, AAU (under Sida-IDRC partnership) and Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association, SARIMA (NRF-SA support). The following examples illustrate the key achievements during the current reporting period.

- i. The AAU-led project<sup>6</sup> has supported Councils to develop and operationalize digitized grant management systems. The approach adopted by the project involved upgrading an existing system developed by UNCST (Uganda) and positioning it for adoption by other Councils. In this regard, a generic online grants management system with multi-lingual functionalities and the flexibility to accommodate the different needs of the SGCs was initially developed and implemented by 8 Councils (from Mozambique, Zambia, Rwanda, Malawi, Senegal, Ghana, Namibia, and Zimbabwe). Using UNCST's expertise was a strategy to ensure sustained capacities of the Councils in this area because UNCST could be relied upon to provide continuous technical support beyond the life of the AAU-led project. The fact that UNCST is a participating Council facilitated easier acceptance of its support by other Councils. It is worth noting that Councils are keen to contribute to the online grants management systems in their countries. For example, Tanzania (COSTECH) has budgeted US\$40,000 to sustain its digital system. Similarly, Malawi (NCST) reported that the adoption of an online grants management system has enabled the country to be incorporated into the Grand Challenges Initiative which is supported by Bill and Melinda Gates and other donors through the Science for Africa Foundation. Malawi is the 6th country to host a project under this Initiative having fulfilled the necessary requirements including an online grant management system and co-funding commitment from the government.<sup>7</sup>
- ii. A total of 14 Councils (from Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, Senegal, Tanzania, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) have received training and technical support on research excellence. The goal is to promote the utilization by the Councils of tools such as Research Quality Plus (RQ+) framework<sup>8</sup> to evaluate their research project portfolios.

Councils have also received training and technical support to adopt Good Financial Grants Practices (GFGP)<sup>9</sup>. The goal of GFGP certification is to better position the Councils to attract donor funding by demonstrating the integrity, reliability, and transparency of their systems (financial management, human resources, and procurement, and governance). The project team appointed a specialized certification body to support the Councils' certification journey. In this regard, several webinars and workshops have been held during the current reporting period.



6. The AAU-led consortium includes the African Academy of Sciences (AAS)

7. Other countries in Africa include RSA, Rwanda, Senegal, Mozambique, Uganda, and Ethiopia

8. RQ+ framework includes originality and relevance; accessibility of research data, actionability and scalability; and scientific rigour.

9. The Standard sets out the requirements for the Good Financial Grant Practices (GFGP) that major funders expect and look for when allocating funding. These requirements run across practice areas of financial management, human resources, procurement, and governance.



The initial concerns expressed by some Councils about sharing of sensitive financial information has been addressed by the project team. A total of 6 Councils (Ghana, Mozambique, Namibia, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe) have completed pre-certification self-assessments to identify the strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and opportunities within their financial systems. Self-benchmarking has helped to create ownership of the GFGP process by the SGCs – leading to sustainable capacities in this area. These Councils have now graduated from self-benchmarking to audited certification of their grants management processes. In this regard, Uganda (UNCST) is currently going the GFGP certification process.

### 4.3. Positioning the Councils as champions in national policy-making processes

There is increasing demand for and interest in using data and evidence by African government ministries and agencies, regional and continental bodies, and public sector funding bodies (including Science Granting Councils) to demonstrate the impacts of public investments in STI programmes and other development interventions. As well, data and evidence are increasingly used to formulate, review, and implement STI policies, strategies, and programmes/ projects. However, the capacity of African countries to make policy and other decisions based on concrete evidence remains limited. Under a project led by the University of Johannesburg (UJ) and its partners (Evi-Pol 2)<sup>10</sup>, the SGCI is strengthening the capacity of Councils in 13 countries (Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe) to develop/ update robust MEL plans; review/ implement STI policies; and collect, analyze, and use relevant R&D data in policy and decision-making. The examples below illustrate recent outcomes of this work.

- i. A total of 5 SGCI countries (Senegal, Namibia, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, and Kenya) have completed STI policy reviews. In Burkina Faso, the review included ways to ensure stronger private-sector partnerships in research and innovation. Reviews of the strategic plans of private sector institutions will also be supported to further strengthen the partnerships.

Zambia (NSTC) has undertaken an R&D survey<sup>11</sup>, and the data collection phase was completed in August 2023. Data analysis is ongoing to determine R&D expenditure estimates, and this will be used to inform the country's STI policies. Evi-Pol 2 project (**Theme 2**) is supporting NSTC to write a R&D statistical report and data submission to the AUDA-NEPAD for the next African Innovation Outlook (AIO) report.



- ii. A total of 8 Councils (from Tanzania, Burkina Faso, Uganda, Senegal, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, and Namibia) have developed or revised their MEL plans. This included impact assessment of research funding (e.g., Tanzania and Mozambique) and setting up of online data collection dashboards (e.g., Uganda and Burkina Faso). Through this exercise, Tanzania (COSTECH) realised that it was not effectively assessing the impacts of research projects funded through the National Fund for Advancement of Science and Technology (NFAST)<sup>12</sup>. As a result, COSTECH is currently undertaking an impact study to support its efforts of seeking additional government funding for research.



10. Centre for STI Indicators (CeSTII), Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (UCAD)

11. Survey instrument is based on Frascati manual.

12. NFAST is a research funding agency under COSTECH.

## 4.4. Supporting the establishment of new research funding agencies

Compared to the other SGCI regions, few countries in West Africa have established funding agencies that disburse funds for research and innovation, and support policy formulation. In several countries, these functions are performed by Departments/ special Units within Government Ministries. Out of the six SGCI countries in the region<sup>13</sup>, only Burkina Faso<sup>14</sup> and Côte d'Ivoire have established full Councils. Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone are at different stages of establishing Councils. The examples below illustrate how the SGCI has supported/ influenced the establishment of new Councils through SGCI projects led by the African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS) and ACTS/ AAU.

- i. **Sierra Leone:** The country has recently adopted a National Science Technology and Innovation (NSTI) Policy that prioritized the establishment of a new Council, National Science, Technology, and Innovation Council (NSTIC). The Ministry of Technical and Higher Education (MoTHE) is currently establishing the structures of the new Council as funds are mobilized for its operationalisation. The representatives from the MoTHE who have participated in SGCI meetings narrated how they used trip reports and other information about the Initiative to successfully lobby the government about the need to establish a national Council. The Council has identified the following research priority areas: a) mining; b) housing solutions; c) environment and climate change; and d) food preservation and agriculture. It is noteworthy that Sierra Leone is already participating in the research and innovation project managed by ACTS. In this regard, ACTS/ AAU team has supported NSTIC to draft a call for proposals, conduct reviews, and manage the award process.<sup>15</sup>
- ii. **Botswana:** A Bill to establish a new Council (Botswana National Research Fund, BNRF) was initially sent to Parliament for debate in early 2023. However, the process was stopped after the government issued a moratorium on the establishment of new agencies. The Bill has recently been resubmitted to the current session of Parliament<sup>16</sup> after the government lifted the moratorium. The country's Department of Research Science and Technology (DRST) has hitherto relied on Botswana Digital and Innovation Hub (BDIH) to manage SGCI's research and innovation funds since the department has no granting infrastructure.
- iii. **Ethiopia:** A new Council (Research Granting Council or RGC) was launched in April 2023. This was due, at least in part, to the participation of the Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MIT) officials in SGCI activities, including the successful hosting of the 2019 SGCI Regional Meeting by the Ministry in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia). The new Council has recently appointed Dr. Habtamu Abera Goshu as its first CEO. It should be noted that RGC is managing a research call funded by the FCDO-IDRC partnership.<sup>17</sup>
- iv. **Ghana:** The SGCI phase 1 (2015 to 2020) supported the establishment of Ghana Innovation and Research Centre (GIRC)<sup>18</sup> as an initial step towards the establishment of a National Research Fund (NRF). The Country's involvement in the SGCI contributed to the establishment of the fund in 2020. However, the full operationalization of the fund has been delayed due to ongoing discussions about its governance structure. In the meantime, the country continues to participate in SGCI's activities (including research funding) through MESTI.

13. Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

14. Fonds National de la Recherche et de l'Innovation pour le Développement (FONRID)

15. Proposals have been received and review process is ongoing (November 2023)

16. The current session runs until March 2024

17. Six projects (5 upscaling and 1 research) have been selected for funding and inception meeting/ training held for grantees (November 2023).

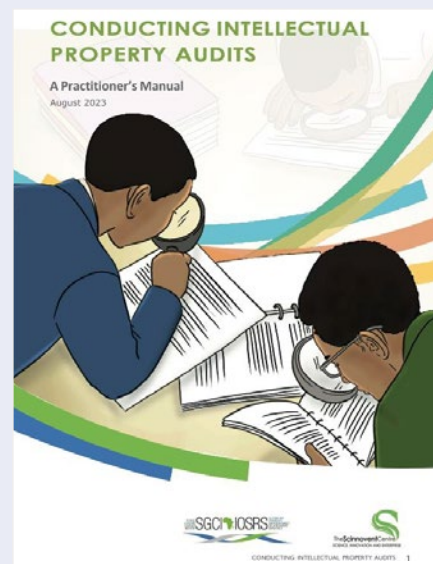
18. The SGCI's involvement in this effort was recognized by DFID's Research and Evidence Division (RED) in September 2018 as part of its RED Impact Stories that highlight key impacts on policy and actions.

## 4.5. Supporting public-private partnerships frameworks and structures

Public-private partnerships in research and innovation present an opportunity for the co-creation, exchange, and transfer of knowledge and associated products between the public and the private sector. The role of Councils as intermediaries in the facilitation of the interactions between knowledge-generating organizations and other STI system actors, particularly the private sector, has become central. However, lack of clear frameworks for managing collaborative partnerships between the Councils and other actors undermines free flow of knowledge, technologies, and innovations between the public and private spheres. Under the FDCO-IDRC partnership, Scinnovent Centre (SC) and its partners<sup>19</sup> are implementing a project that supports the Councils to develop and operationalize frameworks and strategies (including intellectual property policy, research, and collaborative partnerships) for private sector partnerships and commercialization of research results. Specifically, the Councils are receiving support to conduct IP audits of funded projects; develop institutional IP policies and strategies; develop frameworks for private sector engagement as well as commercialization and technology transfer; customize and implement an online platform for technology matchmaking (TechnoMart) developed by Uganda (UNCST).

Examples of recent achievements are highlighted below:

- i. A total of 5 Councils (from Botswana, Ghana, Zambia, Tanzania, and Namibia) have been supported to develop frameworks and structures for commercialization of research results. Ghana and Botswana were supported in this regard under SGCI-1. National stakeholder dialogues have been supported in Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, and Burkina Faso to develop plans for the implementation of these strategies.
- ii. An intellectual property Audit Manual developed under SGCI-1 is being used to enable the Councils gain practical hands-on skills in IP asset assessment of funded projects.
- iii. A model institutional IP policy and strategy has been developed to support councils in reviewing and customizing their own institutional IP policies.
- iv. An explainer video/ whiteboard on developing institutional IP policies [https://oidrc-my.sharepoint.com/Users/mauriceochiengbolo/Desktop/PPP Technical Report 1/PPP Technical Report 1.1/PPP Project Infographic Videos/Whiteboard\\_IP Strategy-10Min\\_1.mov](https://oidrc-my.sharepoint.com/Users/mauriceochiengbolo/Desktop/PPP Technical Report 1/PPP Technical Report 1.1/PPP Project Infographic Videos/Whiteboard_IP Strategy-10Min_1.mov) has been prepared for use by the Councils.

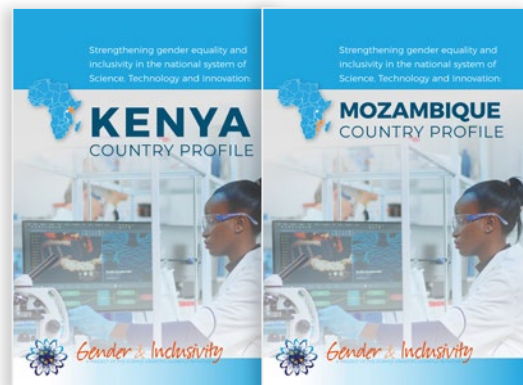


19. African Technology Development Forum (ATDF) and the Association of African Universities (AAU).

## 4.6. Supporting the integration of gender equality and inclusivity by the Councils

Recommendation 4 of the 2022 External Review underscored the need for the Councils to take a more proactive stance GEI to ensure mainstreaming. As mentioned above, GEI continues to be a key focus of SGCI's implementation across all thematic areas. Through a project led by HSRC and its partners<sup>20</sup>, this work uses an intersectional, transformative approach in supporting the Councils to advance systemic change towards greater gender equality and inclusivity in their systems and practices. The following examples illustrate how the SGCI has supported GEI in the Councils' systems and practices during the reporting period:

- i. Councils have launched calls that specifically target women researchers:
  - a. Côte d'Ivoire (FONSTI) launched a research call targeting women in science (STI).
  - b. Tanzania (COSTECH) launched a call to upscale research outputs produced by women with a focus on food security.
  - c. Ghana (MESTI) and Zambia (NSTC) have launched a bilateral call aimed at upscaling projects by women researchers in agro-processing and food-processing.
- ii. Councils have developed guidelines and frameworks for gender equality and inclusivity:
  - a. Zambia (NSTC) has revised its Guidelines for research and innovation Funds to make them responsive to GEI considerations.
  - b. Tanzania (COSTECH) has established a National Framework for Mainstreaming Gender in research and innovation to cultivate a culture of GEI in research institutes and universities.
  - c. Malawi (NCST) has drafted a policy which is gender inclusive.
  - d. Mozambique (FNI) has been supported to review its national STI policy from a GEI perspective.
  - e. Namibia (NCRST) is in the process of reviewing its grant management process to incorporate and integrate elements of GEI in the entire value chain from applications, reviews, monitoring and evaluation.
  - f. Burkina Faso (FONRID) has incorporated GESI into its evaluation criteria for research proposals submitted to the fund.
  - g. UNCST (Uganda) has recently established a "Gender Equity in Research Alliance" (GERA) as a collaborative platform that enables the sharing of experiences and lessons and developing GEI policies and action plans. The Council has appointed gender champions in selected regions of the country. The Alliance serves as a rallying point for mainstreaming GEI in the wider STI ecosystem. Through the Alliance, UNCST has been able to implement the concept of geographical inclusion in its work. The regional chapters in the GERA have been used as stage posts for the work being done under the SGCI. SGCI support has enabled UNCST to mainstream GEI in its grants management process.
- iii. The various knowledge outputs generated from the HSRC-led project are being used by the Councils to advance their gender work. These include the following:
  - a. The Councils from 15 countries<sup>21</sup> have been supported to prepare gender and inclusivity profiles for their countries. The profiles ("Strengthening gender and inclusivity in national science



20. Gender at Work, Council for the Development of Social Sciences in Africa (COSDERIA), and Jive Media Africa.

21. This includes all SGCI countries except Sierra Leone and Nigeria that have only recently joined the Initiative.



systems”) synthesize evidence from multiple gender-related indicators to provide the Councils and other stakeholders with a comprehensive analysis of gender disparities (and progress towards addressing the gaps).

- b. A regional brief (in English, French and Portuguese) titled: *"Embedding gender transformation in Science, Technology, and Innovation in Context: Emerging Priorities and Practices of African Science Granting Councils"* shares insights and recommendations from the first phase of the GEI project.

## 4.7. Raising the profiles of SGCI Councils

The SGCI continues to promote the roles of Councils as key actors within national and regional science systems as illustrated by the following examples:

- i. The SGCI continued to strengthen the roles of Councils in its governance structure during the reporting period. The Councils Committee (comprised of the Heads of Research Councils) held a joint meeting with the SGCI Executive Committee (EC) and Panel of Advisors (POA) during the 2022 Annual Forum (Cape Town, South Africa) under the chairmanship of Dr. Amos Nungu (COSTECH’s Director General) to deliberate on the SGCI external review report and recommendations.
- ii. Following the presentation of the Masterclass paper on *"Foresight in Research and Innovation for development"* at the 2022 Annual Forum, a panel composed of three Councils’ representatives from Botswana (Lesego Thamae), Tanzania (Dr. Bugwesa Katale) and Burkina Faso (Dr. Inoussa Zongo) shared the perspectives and experiences from their respective countries about the applications of foresight in research and innovation for Africa’s development of open science. The Councils also chaired most of the annual forum sessions.

- iii. Ghana (MESTI) co-hosted the SGCI Learning Consolidation Workshop (February 2023) in Accra, Ghana with ACTS to reflect on the progress made under SGCI-2, enable Initiative members to share experiences on lessons learned, and co-produce recommendations for future activities. The meeting was attended by approximately 120 participants made up of staff from the 17 Councils (and Mali as an observer Council), relevant STI and policy stakeholders, SGCI funders, representatives from CTAs, and the IMT.



- iv. Uganda (UNCST) hosted a highly successful 2023 Regional Meeting under the theme "the role of SGCs in Africa’s development" (Kampala, Uganda, June 19 - 23) that helped to raise its profile and visibility both nationally and regionally. The meeting was attended by approximately 130 participants from 20 countries, including the representatives of 15 SGCI countries, SGCI funders, CTAs, the IMT, Ugandan researchers supported by SGCI, policy makers, and private sector representatives. With MEL as its centrepiece, the meeting provided opportunity for the participants to evaluate progress across the SGCI Themes, reflect on lessons learnt, and discuss the Initiative’s implementation plan. The participants also discussed the updated SGCI MEL framework including an updated overarching TOC, logical framework, and data collection instruments. The engagement incorporated dynamic and interactive sessions, such as working groups, learning spaces, and poster presentations. Additionally, the CTAs, AJ-CORE partners, and Ugandan researchers (supported by SGCI) organized several enriching side-events. Another key event was the launching of the National Research Outlook Report 2023 by the Minister for STI in the Office of the President, Dr. Monica Masanza.





Developed by UNCST, Uganda's National Research Outlook Report ([UNCST Status Report 2022-12.pdf](#)) provides a snapshot of the state of research, including investments, personnel, and infrastructure, and assesses the country's readiness to engage in a progressively competitive global knowledge ecosystem. The great success of the meeting resulted from excellent coordination and collaboration between UNCST team and other organizing committee members that included UJ, ACTS, and the IMT.

- v. Ghana (MESTI) and HSRC co-hosted an interactive panel session entitled "strengthening concepts of gender equality and inclusivity (GEI) in the policy and practices of the grant-making cycle" during the 2023 Gender Summit held in Accra, Ghana (June 1-2). The panel enabled 13 SGCI Councils to share progress made towards the full integration of GEI dimensions in their work.
- vi. As in previous years, participating Councils have hosted training courses and workshops with the CTAs. For example, Zambia (NSTC) co-hosted a workshop on Research quality Plus (RQ+) framework with the AAU-led project in Zambia (August 2023). As well, Senegal (MESRI) and ACTS co-hosted a regional workshop on research and innovation frameworks and the synthesis research results for the West African Councils in Dakar.

## 4.8. Nurturing strategic partnerships to benefit SGCI Councils

The SGCI has evolved as an effective platform for other initiatives, networks, and programmes interested in strengthening the roles of Councils in their respective nations science systems. Examples of such initiatives are shown below.

**Table 2:** Partnerships and networks involving SGCI Councils

Global Research Council (GRC)	FONSTI (Côte d'Ivoire), NRF (Kenya) and COSTECH (Tanzania) are participating in a GRC Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Pilot Initiative launched in 2022 that aims to find innovative ways to utilise and implement impactful research to achieve societal impact. FNI (Mozambique) and COSTECH (Tanzania) serve in the Responsible Research Assessment Working Group. FONSTI, COSTECH, FONRID (Burkina Faso), NCRST (Namibia), MESRI (Senegal), FNI (Mozambique), RCZ (Zimbabwe), and NSTC (Zambia) serve on the Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Working Group. MESTI (Ghana) and NRF-Kenya serve on the Multilateral Collaboration Working Group.
COVID-19 Africa Rapid Grant Fund (CARGF)	CARGF was launched in May 2020 and funded 73 projects across 17 countries as a contribution to the African response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Highlights for the current reporting period include: (i) All science communication projects have been completed. Several projects in the science advice and research strands have also been completed. (ii) The African Science Technology and Policy Institute (ASTEPI), the CARGF Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) service provider has been working with the SGCs to support in-country CARGF MEL.
O.R. Tambo Africa Research Chairs Initiative (ORTARCHI)	ORTARCHI supports 10 Research Chairs in 7 countries with SGCI Councils as the core partners (FNI, NSTC, COSTECH, MESTI, FONRID and Botswana's Ministry of Tertiary Education, Research, Science and Technology, and UNCST) all of which are also contributing funds.
Dutch Research Council (NOW)	The 11th GRC Annual Meeting was hosted by the Dutch Research Council (NOW) and the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP) (May/ June, 2023) at the Hague. The meeting addressed two topics: recognising and rewarding researchers, and climate change research. NRF-K, NCRST, MESTI, FONSTI, TETFund (Nigeria) and FNI attended the meeting.
African-Japan Collaborative Research on Environmental Science (AJ-CORE) <a href="https://www.nrf.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Africa-Japan-Collaborative-Research-AJ-CORE-2024-Framework-and-Guide.pdf">https://www.nrf.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Africa-Japan-Collaborative-Research-AJ-CORE-2024-Framework-and-Guide.pdf</a>	NRF South Africa, JST Japan and the SGCI hosted an AJ-CORE Researchers' Workshop (February 2023). The workshop offered recommendations on how to effectively and efficiently coordinate and manage the AJ-CORE Programme for desired impact, value add and to ensure long-term sustainability of the programme. Among the recommendations was to develop an AJ-CORE Long-Term Partnership Framework. A draft of this Framework was discussed with AJ-CORE funders during the SGCI Regional Meeting in June 2023 in Kampala, Uganda. The following Countries are currently participating in AJ-CORE: Japan, Botswana, Kenya, Mozambique, Sierra Leone and South Africa.
Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Member Organization (SSARMO) of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA)	The SGCI became the first regional member of IIASA under SSARMO in 2022. The membership includes the 17 African countries who are participating in the SGCI. SSARMOs involvement with IIASA is coordinated by the NRF-SA. SSARMO through the establishment of the SSA Systems Analysis Centre (SASAC), will develop integrated systems solutions and policy insights to current, emerging, and novel regional sustainability challenges and opportunities.
Research Programme on Young People and Relational Wellbeing <a href="https://www.nrf.ac.za/ugood/">https://www.nrf.ac.za/ugood/</a>	The NRF in partnership with Fondation Botnar (Switzerland) and the Human Sciences Research Council (South Africa) is implementing a five-year research program on young people (in urban environments) and Relational Well-Being (RWB). The programme is being implemented in Colombia, Ecuador, Egypt, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Morocco, Romania, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania, and Vietnam. MESTI (Ghana), MESRI (Senegal) and COSTECH (Tanzania) are engaged as in-country partners of this programme.

## 5. Emerging Lessons and Recommendations

### 5.1. Ensuring SGCI is at the forefront of global trends towards localizing and decolonizing research and innovation.

In recent years, the development and research sectors have recognized the need for local ownership and local knowledge in informing and determining appropriate policy choices. Several principles have been adopted worldwide to support the production and funding of research that is effective, equitable and that is locally led. For example, the Africa Charter for Transformative Research Collaboration among other declarations and initiatives such as the World Resources Institute principles and the Bridgetown Initiative, put emphasis on the importance of locally led development and innovations (including decentralisation, local governance, and local actors at the centre of decision making). Despite these trends, R4D is still largely dominated by institutions in the Global North, and researchers in the Global South face different obstacles to leading research design, implementation, and evaluation. For instance, a 2019 study found that most of the research on development in the Global South is conducted by researchers from the North. The proportion of articles published by Northern researchers in top development journals was 4.5 times higher than those published by Southern researchers.

These trends highlight the continued relevance and importance of SGCI's mission and model. Through supporting the foundations of locally designed and managed research that addresses the needs of African contexts, SGCI helps to empower the key actors in local research ecosystems: research and science councils. As such, SGCI's efforts to leverage further resources for African science councils needs to be redoubled, including the strengthening SGCI's visibility and engagement in global research fora.

### 5.2. Better integrating environmental sustainability into SGCI

Addressing environmental sustainability is one of the key global challenges of our time, SGCI has taken steps to strengthen commitments and build capacity around climate change issues, however this cross-cutting area has not received the same focus as gender equality and inclusion. For many Councils reflections and insights related to sustainability were largely absent from research projects that were not focused directly on climate. Consequently, SGCI will move towards better integrating sustainability into the work it supports. A first and important step is highlighting the primacy of environmental sustainability into its log frame, having addressed it in the long-term impact of the program, which now includes a sustainability dimension (*Strengthened national STI systems that contribute to sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa*). Moving forward, revisions will be made to the research calls, including revamping the RQ+ framework that has been used to assess research quality, as well as broader monitoring and evaluation tools to enhance SGCI's and the Councils' ability to measure and monitor environmental sustainability and make it an integral part of research in all SGCI funded projects. SGCI will also explore the development of metrics for its operations, including thorough vetting of the necessity of travel and other carbon intensive activities.



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