

By Aimable Twahirwa;

Approaches to the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of policy influencing activities has been recognized as one of the pillars for Rwanda to improve policy implementation during the second phase of the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI 2) in Sub-Saharan Africa (SGCI).

Rwanda's National Council of Science and Technology (NCST) is considering to develop a Monitoring and Evaluation Plan in various domains they believe will help the government improve policy implementation as an essential element to drive the transformation of the country to a knowledge-based economy.

During the implementation phase, a group of researchers have received grants from the university in the past with the support of Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) In Sub-Saharan Africa.

Monitoring indicators

In general most attention had been given to monitoring indicators of project implementation during SGCI 2 whereby Influencing policy is a central part of these interventions, according to Felly Kalisa, STI policy analyst at Rwanda's National Council of Science and Technology (NCST).

In recent years, the Rwanda STI system has also been boosted by the establishment of various centers of excellence many of which serve a regional and pan-African audience.

The Centers in Rwanda include: a regional branch of the International Center for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), the international headquarters of the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences (AIMS), Carnegie Mellon University Africa (CMUA), and Regional Center in Biomedical Engineering (CEBE).



It also includes four African Center of Excellence in Internet of Things, Data Science, Energy for Sustainable Development and Innovative Teaching and Learning Mathematics and Science.

Many of the researches conducted by these entities are focus on various domains in sectors such as agriculture, health, general sciences, humanities, entrepreneurship, economics, among others, and their findings will have impact on various government policies.

In order to support policy implementation during the second phase of SGCI2, Rwanda is considering leveraging Monitoring and Evaluation metrics to support policy formulation across a range of key areas.

Knowledge-based economy

Yet the process of policymaking is not simple enough to be amenable to the statistical methods required to prove precisely the 'impact' of a particular intervention, established M&E approaches for SGCI2 will involve tools that generate useful information, according to experts.

The M&E systems aim to collect information that has multiple uses - for both decision-making and reporting, but it is important that is integrated with knowledge produced during the planning stage of a project, it said.

In line with the Government plans to integrate and mainstream STI through efficient application of knowledge and technological innovation towards addressing societal challenges, current efforts in Rwanda are focusing on establishing enabling environment to facilitate knowledge and technology creation , transfer, diffusion and application.

In the meanwhile, despite current efforts in the use of M&E tools to collect relevant data opportunistically or at periodic intervals throughout policy influencing work, official estimates show that Rwanda still faces challenges of limited research and innovation infrastructure as well as inadequate and outdated equipment.

While there is a wide range of ways in which research is having an impact on policy-making across sectors in Rwanda, the report stresses the need to put in place a comprehensive STI monitoring and evaluation to inform decision making on trends and performance within the National System of Innovation.

In the drive to close the technology gap and catch-up to advanced economies, Rwanda needs to create an entrepreneurial and innovation friendly environment, it said.

The reports stresses that for the successful implementation, the establishment of functional cooperation between stakeholders including ministries, public agencies, academic and reseach institutions as well as the private sector remain the key. (END)