



**CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE
ON INCLUSIVE/COMMUNITY-BASED INNOVATION
FOR AU MEMBER STATES**

10th to 12th December, 2018

Reiz Continental Hotel

Central Business District, Abuja, Nigeria

Concept Paper

i. Introduction

Science and Technology development is critical to the promotion of overall growth and prosperity in Africa. The most successful economies in the world are innovation-driven, with a greater percentage being in the STI, because creation of new ideas and technologies leads to invention of product solutions, services, and infrastructure which improve human standard of living or quality of life significantly. Regrettably however, Africa has not experienced neither significant nor widespread development in STI. Most of the technology used on the continent is foreign, expensive and sometimes inadequate to meet the needs of indigenous/rural communities.

A major detriment to STI development in Africa is the inability of the few home-grown innovative science and technology products available to reach the market, consumers and effectively compete for market share. In some cases, innovative prototypes from research do not achieve the mass-production phase. The reasons for this gap between the laboratory bench and the market vary from lack of funding to lack of entrepreneurial acumen of African scientists to the lack of adequate connections and partnerships between scientists and industrialists/entrepreneurs with the resources and platform to convert research findings into product solutions and scale up to commercial quantities. Industrialization of STI products is pivotal to Africa's long-term development. Therefore, the need to develop comprehensive strategies and platforms to upscale STI products is urgent. In addition, building the technical competence of Member States' STI staff to enhance professionalism and equip them with requisite skills to boost Africa's competitive advantage in the global market is key.

The overarching continental framework for development (AU Agenda 2063) critically highlighted the indispensability of STI as multi-functional tools and an enabler for achieving its development aspirations and objectives of an integrated and prosperous Africa. In this regard, there are sectorial policies, strategies and frameworks geared towards the realisation of this vision. Against this backdrop, the Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2014- 2024 (STISA 2024) was developed to facilitate the needed transition of the continent from commodity-based to innovation-led and knowledge-based economy. The mechanism under which this will be achieved is encapsulated in the STISA 2024

pillars “Upgrading/Building Research Infrastructure; Enhancing Technical and Professional Competencies; Innovation and Entrepreneurship; and Providing an Enabling Environment”.

Further analytical study of the STISA 2024 identified the policy gaps and institutional arrangements that may or may not exist in majority of African Union Member States and/or Regional Economic Communities (RECs). These gaps and arrangements are a must for STISA 2024 integration in ongoing national and regional STI processes. The analysis took into cognisance that AU Member States and the RECs are at different stages of readiness in terms of finance, infrastructure, human and organizational capacity to properly undertake activities/actions to implement the STISA 2024; and it set forth a minimum set of requisite infrastructure and human resources required to create an enabling environment. The detailed outcome of the analysis produced 13 policies and 7 institutions; where **Inclusive Innovation And Community-Based Innovation** were given preference in responding to the needs of the bottom of the consumer pyramid in the continent.

In the same vein, in 2008, the Action Plan for the Accelerated Industrial Development for Africa (AIDA) was endorsed by the African Union as the strategy for implementation to bring about industrial development in Member States. AIDA, one of many strategic initiatives developed as a sectorial policy in achieving the AU Agenda-2063 highlighted “Human Capital Development and Sustainability, Innovation, Science and Technology” as one of the critical priorities to be addressed. As industrialisation is largely driven by scientific and technological advancement, Africa needs sustained efforts towards STI development via adaptation of technologies to ensure improvement in productivity and competitive production of African STI products. Achieving the needed expansion in the manufacturing sector will build more resilient economies in AU Member States. Furthermore, special emphasis should be placed on human capacity development necessary for African countries to commercialise knowledge efficiently. In this connection, the enterprise must be at the core of Africa’s industrial strategy.

Accordingly, the African Union, Scientific, Technical and Research Commission (AU-STRC) as a specialized institution of the AU; has one of its flagship initiatives - **“CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE ON INCLUSIVE**

/COMMUNITY-BASED INNOVATION FOR AU MEMBER STATES”. An Inclusive Innovation is any innovation that leads to affordable access to quality goods and services for the poor on a sustainable basis, serves a real need, effective and with extensive outreach. While Community-based innovation is innovation driven by community needs where research institutions are more informed about their local community needs and design efficient solutions to resolve these challenges. STI development in Africa must be people-centered, affordable and tailored to meet the needs of our indigenous/rural communities.

ii. **Justification**

In response to the growing necessity for building competence and capacity of Member States’ in STI to enhance efficiency of enterprise and entrepreneurship of African researchers and innovators to produce marketable products, The Capacity Building Initiative on Inclusive/Community-Based Innovation for AU Member States” has been developed to bring together various stakeholders from Member States to enhance their professionalism and equip them with requisite skills to boost Africa’s competitive advantage both locally and in the global market. Recalling that “Building Professional and Technical Competencies” is a pillar of STISA 2024 and its policy analysis recommended building of institutional capacities and promotion of professionalism.

It further called for a paradigm shift in the way and manner research is conducted in the continent to be more focused on appropriate market-driven research. This can never be achieved unless universities and research institutes are determined to solve communities’ immediate challenges and needs. This Initiative therefore seeks to change the landscape of research in Africa to be focused on community needs and market-driven innovation. It seeks to bring stakeholders’ urgent attention to the importance of inclusive and community-based innovation in Africa. Considering that the people at the grassroots constitute the majority percentage of the population and potential consumers, hence, a greatly untapped resource/source of income. The challenge for African scientists and other stakeholders is to simplify technology to make it accessible, thereby, increase their reach and solve community’s challenges.

Also, this Initiative seeks to create and establish the needed trilateral connection among African scientists, industrialists and financial institutions. STI solutions and inventions by African scientists require quality investment from industrialists to scale-up to commercial levels. Whereas, African financial institutions play a major role in enabling access to needed funding mechanisms for scientists and researchers.

Finally, the Initiative will train stakeholders from Member States who are at the front burner of implementation and integration of continental policies to fully grasp the essence and benefits of effectively exploring inclusive and community-based innovation in Africa. The stakeholders identified are Vice-Chancellors of African universities, heads of African research institutions, parliamentarians, African scientists, African industrialists, financial institutions and private sector; to be also trained on the potentials embedded in the sector for Africa's socio-economic prosperity. The AU-STRC will work with the support from the Department of Trade & Industry of the AUC and other partners.

The following are expected to be the core for the technical sessions:

1. Inclusive Innovation as a driving force for Africa's growth and Economic Prosperity;
2. African Union frameworks supporting STI development in Africa;
3. Harnessing African Indigenous Technologies for a Diversified Economy;
4. Valorisation and authentication of the African Indigenous Technologies;
5. Effective Legislation for the development of Science and Technology in Africa;
6. The Role of Science and Technology in Development: Lessons from developed Economies;
7. The Link between Industry and S&T; and
8. Science and Technology funding opportunities for AU Member States.

iii. **Objectives**

The following are objectives of the Capacity Building Initiative on Inclusive and Community-Based Innovation for AU Member States:

- a. To engage relevant stakeholders to enhance STI development and commercialization of STI products in Africa
- b. To train stakeholders on the importance of Inclusive and Community-based innovation for national and continental development
- c. To facilitate the implementation of continental strategies and policies on STI and Industrial Development
- d. To empower stakeholders with information and will to promote Inclusive and Community-based innovation in their respective Member States
- e. To encourage the participation of Africa's industrialists, financial institutions, business communities, Governments to incubate Africa's entrepreneurs and STI products
- f. To respond to Africa's community challenges and economic prosperity by enhancing intra-Africa trade
- g. To improve intra-Africa trade through STI

iv. **Organizers:**

The workshop is being organized and sponsored by AU-STRC.

v. **Dates and Venue:**

The Capacity Building Initiative will take place at the Reiz Continental Hotel, Central Business District, Abuja, Nigeria from December 10 - 12, 2018.