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MEL: STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS AMONG AFRICA'S SCIENCE GRANTING COUNCILS AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR

Final Report

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Submitted by:	Project focus:
Dr. Rebecca Hanlin, Principal Investigator African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) Duduville Campus, ICIPE, Kasarani P.O. Box 45917-00100, NAIROBI, Kenya r.hanlin@acts-net.org/ +254 702 142 130	- Science granting council capacity building - 15 African countries - Monitoring, evaluation and learning across the initiative
Research Team *ACTS:* Rebecca Hanlin and Donnelly Mwachi (consultant)	

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PROJECT BACKGROUND

African countries continue to face a number of development challenges. These include food and nutrition insecurity, lack of sustainable access to affordable energy, lack of access to safe water supply and inadequate health care. Public policy across the continent increasingly recognizes the role of science, technology and innovation in addressing these challenges. Through regional and national science and technology policies, the continent seeks to enhance the quality of its scientific research and the translation of research results into material products and services. This calls for increased exchange of knowledge and greater interaction, coordination and collaboration between and among universities and other research organizations, private sector, Science Granting Councils, and the broader society. As such, the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) seeks to strengthen the capacity of 15 science granting councils in Sub-Saharan Africa in order to support research and evidence-based policies that will contribute to economic and social development.

Designing a robust and relevant Monitoring, Learning and Evaluation (MEL) framework has been needed to understand what works and what does not and to draw long-lasting lessons from the implementation of the Initiative. This project was developed to implement such an MEL framework.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The overall objective of this project was to support learning and accountability in the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) in ways that help improve the implementation of the initiative and the achievement of the intended results.

The specific objectives of this project were:

1. to provide technical support and mentoring to the Collaborating Technical Agencies (CTAs) in their monitoring and reporting:
2. to facilitate the learning process by supporting the use of data and encouraging reflection and evidence-based decision making for SGCI's improvement. This includes collating and synthesising monitoring reports and organising results, review and reflection workshops;
3. to identify opportunities for analysis and assessment in order to generate learning and document results. This includes the coordination of case studies and;
4. to support the Initiative Management Teams (IMT) with progress tracking and reporting to the Executive Committee.

This report outlines the final reporting against these objectives. Separate detailed finance reporting on the project is submitted separately.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

This section briefly outlines the main activities undertaken by project objective followed by an overview of administrative and management activities of the past year.

ACTIVITIES BY OBJECTIVE

Over the period of this project, the following activities have been completed.

Objective 1: To provide technical support and mentoring to the Collaborating Technical Agencies (CTAs) in their monitoring and reporting

i. *To review and update the SGCI monitoring and evaluation framework, and the tools for data collection*

- An online system was developed in the first months of the project in collaboration with South Africa's NRF to receive the SiR forms. This went through a number of different testing phases before coming online in November 2017.
- A first edition of an SGCI Outcome Journal has been developed in May 2018 detailing an overview of the material of the SiR forms.
- Submission and sign off of an inception report outlining the key gaps with MEL to date within SGCI Phase I, and the requirements to achieve the objectives of the Initiative before the end of February 2020.

- To write the inception report, Donnelly held a number of meetings (face-to-face and virtually) with CTAs and discussed their current MEL activities and observations of the current MEL system. He has plans to visit all the CTAs later in 2019 (Year 3 of this contract) to discuss MEL issues with them further.

- Provided input to the IMT on how to design the SGCI Phase 2 MEL activities so that CTAs are more engaged in the process than were in the first Phase.

ii. *To provide support to the ACTS CTA as they coach and mentor SGCs in designing and developing M&E systems.*

- A 2 day workshop was held in Pretoria in July 2017 to discuss the MEL framework and SiR form system.
- A session was held at the Annual Forum in November 2017 in Livingstone, Zambia, where the revised SiR (significant incidence report) form was discussed. See also under Objective 2.
- Supported Dorothy Ngila from South African NRF to conduct a training in Kenya in late 2017 for those who couldn't attend the Pretoria workshop.

- In addition, provided support before an ACTS' CTA (i.e. Association of African Universities, AAU) set of learning-visits to Francophone SGCs within the SGCI. This support included initial review and preparation of an MEL systems evaluation document and support to AAU team on data analysis and designing of a follow up workshop that took place in Addis Ababa in June 2019.

Objective 2: To facilitate the learning process by supporting the use of data and encouraging reflection and evidence-based decision making for SGCI's improvement. This includes collating and synthesising monitoring reports and organising results, review and reflection workshops

i. *To collect, collate, analyze and synthesize data collected by the CTAs into a MEL report that documents progress over the whole Phase I period (2015-2019)*

- A R3 workshop was organised and run at the Annual Forum in November 2018 involving all CTAs and most of the SGCs and members of the IMT.

- In addition (as outlined above) a training workshop was given in July 2017 in Pretoria and input to a further training in November 2018 in Nairobi and a MEL session being organised in July 2018 at the Annual Regional Meeting to be held in Ghana.

- In addition, since late 2018, the MEL consultant started preparing templates for data collection activities. He also developed a presentation that was delivered during the RM meeting in Addis Ababa in June 2019 on his proposed data collection activities for the remaining period of Phase 1.

ii. *To design and lead facilitation of MEL workshops held during the ARM and AF which include the development of interim reports on MEL progress*

- MEL sessions were held at all ARM and AF meetings

Objective 3: To identify opportunities for analysis and assessment in order to generate learning and document results. This includes the coordination of case studies

iii. *To support planning and implementation of case studies to be undertaken in 2019 by an external research team*

- Donnelly held several meetings with IDRC and IMT members to discuss the case studies and commented on the draft case studies Terms of Reference between April and May 2019. He was also involved in various workshops that the case study team undertook during their activities.

Objective 4: To support the Initiative Management Teams (IMT) with tracking and reporting to the Executive Committee.

i. *To support the overall annual reporting and review for the SGCI conducted by the IMT*

- Regular meetings with IDRC have been held and reporting has occurred as timetabled.

ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

This project was managed by Rebecca Hanlin at ACTS. ACTS successfully oversaw the completion of Kevin Kelpin's consultancy and the transition to a new MEL consultant in 2018. Engagement between the new consultant, Donnelly Mwachi and Rebecca was regular and both maintained frequent contact with the IMT through IDRC staff in Nairobi.

PROJECT OUTPUTS AND DISSEMINATION

The project has produced the following outputs

iii. R3 Workshop report (November 2017)

iv. At least 30 SiR forms

v. First edition of the SGCI Outcome Journal

vi. Inception Report by Donnelly Mwachi

vii. Draft and Final report on MEL of Phase 1 by Donnelly Mwachi