

# **National Discourse on Innovation: Theory and Practice in Poor Developing Countries**

## **Background**

In response to a rapidly changing social and economic environment – especially the process of global integration and competition, innovation has emerged as a crucial factor for public policies in many nations. The concept is gaining currency also in less developed countries, including the very poor nations of the world. In Tanzania for instance, there has been recent interest in the subject of innovation, both in academics and policy arenas; and political will and commitment is currently very evident.

However there are different understandings regarding the role of innovation and innovation policy. This has been exacerbated by the fact that innovation, by its nature, is difficult to pin down, and is context specific. Moreover, for most African countries, it is a received wisdom from more developed countries. Such situation can have adverse effect on the science, technology and innovation (STI) policy making process in these countries.

While many African countries, Tanzania inclusive, have recognized the crucial role played by science, technology and innovation policy in growth and poverty alleviation, and have put in place such policies, there appears to be a mismatch between policy objectives, conceptual issues surrounding innovation in the context of poor developing countries, and underlying science, technology and innovation problems.

## **Objectives and Expected Outputs**

In recognition of the above, ATPS-Tanzania – an NGO dealing with policy research in science technology and innovation - has decided to organize a Workshop on national discourse on innovation. The objectives of the event are two fold. First, it is to develop an understanding of this very crucial aspect of social and economic development, especially as it relates to least developed countries; and second, to understand how it has hitherto been put in practice in the policy making process.

The Workshop is anticipated to facilitate a common understanding of innovation as far as least developed countries such as Tanzania are concerned, laying a foundation for further national studies and debates on specific policy issues and strategic planning on innovation in different sectors of the economy: We immediately need to take advantage of the current political will and commitment to put things right and fast track the design and implementation of innovation policies.

The Workshop is co-organised with Globelics and will be combined with an African wide Seminar on innovation and innovation policy in Africa. The Seminar is sponsored by IDRC, Canada and SIDA, Sweden. The co-organisation makes it possible to draw upon leading innovation scholars from all parts of Africa.

## **Specific Issues to be addressed in the discourse**

### *A. Understanding Innovation*

1. The role of innovation in economic growth and poverty alleviation
2. The history and the evolving relationship between science, technology and innovation
3. Innovation and higher education (largely focusing on poor developing countries).

*B. Designing innovation policies*

1. Rationale for public policy interventions in the innovation process.
2. The concept of evidence based innovation policies, and the role of research.
3. Financing innovation.

*C. Innovation in practice in Africa*

1. Presentation and discussion of the review of NSI systems (Tanzania & Nigeria)
2. Presentation of the draft national STI policy (Tanzania)
3. Policy learning through international comparison of good practice innovation policy in Africa.

**Participants**

This is a national debate; in essence therefore, it should involve all stakeholders. Since we aim at a workshop mode rather than a big conference a selection of representatives from the private and public sector, including the academics and the media will be invited to join. The discourse will be preceded by a press conference.

**Resource persons**

Resource persons will be selected among world authorities in the subject of innovation and its relationship with development. Topics will carefully be selected to ensure clear understanding of the concept, especially as it relates to African environment, and its relationship to development, including poverty alleviation.

# **Program for the Workshop on Tanzania National Discourse on Innovation and Innovation Policy**

## ***March 21:***

**9.00-9.30 Opening**

**9.30-11.30 Understanding innovation**

- 1. The role of innovation in economic growth and poverty alleviation**
- 2. Innovation systems and economic development**
- 3. The history and the evolving relationship between science, technology and innovation**
- 4. Innovation and higher education (largely focusing on poor developing countries).**

**11.30-12.00 Coffee break**

**12.00-13.00 Round table on Understanding innovation**

**LUNCH**

**14.30-16.30 Designing innovation policy**

- 1. Support to R&D as a means to promote innovation.**
- 2. Rationale for public policy interventions in the innovation process.**
- 3. The concept of evidence based innovation policies, and the role of research.**
- 4. Financing innovation.**

**16.30-17.00 Coffee break**

**17.00-18.00 Round table on Designing innovation policy**

**19.00-21.00 Dinner**

## ***March 22:***

**9.00-11.00 Innovation in practice in Africa**

- 1. Presentation and discussion of the review of NSI systems (Tanzania & Nigeria)**
- 2. Presentation of the draft national STI policy (Tanzania)**
- 3. The African Innovation Outlook by Nepad**
- 4. Policy learning through international comparison of good practice innovation policy in Africa.**

**11.00-11.30 Coffee break**

**11.30-12.30 Round table on Innovation in Practise in Africa**

**12.30-13.00 Closing of the Workshop**

**LUNCH**

## **Preliminary program for the All African Globelics Seminar on innovation and economic development**

### **March 22**

**14.30-15.00** Opening

**15.00-17.00** Mapping of research on innovation and development in Africa (4 presentations)

**17.00-17.30** Coffee break

**17.30-18.30** Round table on the mapping of research

**19.30** Dinner

### **March 23**

**9.00-11.00** Building Africa Lics – Ideas for African research projects (4 presentations)

**11.00-11.30** Coffee Break

**11.30-12.30** Round table on the future research agenda on innovation and development in Africa

**LUNCH**

**14.00-16.00** Building Africa-lics ideas for research training (4 presentations)

**16.30-17.00** Coffee break

**17.00-18.00** Round table on strengthening research infrastructure in Africa

**18.00-19.00** Closing of the All African Seminar

**19.00-21.00** Dinner