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SGCI IOSRS

Gender Equality and Inclusion in Research and Innovation Projects

Lessons from Science Granting Councils Initiatives (SGCI)

Prepared for International Development Research Centre (IDRC)

Synthesis Report May 2025

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Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
IDRC · CRDI Canada
NRF National Research Foundation
Sida
DFG Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft
Norway

ACRONYMS

ACTS	African Centre for Technology Studies
AAU	Association of African Universities
BMJ	British Medical Journal
BIH	Botswana Innovation Hub
COSTECH	Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology
DRST	Department of Research, Science, and Technology
EASTECO	East African Science and Technology Commission
FNI	Fundo Nacional de Investigacao
FONRID	Fonds National de la Recherche et de l'innovation pour le développement
FONSTI	Fonds pour la Science, la Technologie et l'Innovation
GEI	Gender Equality and Inclusivity
GERA	Gender Equity in Research Alliance
GRC	Global Research Council
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
MESRI	Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
NCRST	National Commission on Research, Science and Technology
NCST	National Commission for Science and Technology
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PI	Principal Investigator
PWDs	Persons with Disabilities
RCZ	Research Council of Zimbabwe
RIM	Research and Innovation Management
R&D	Research and Development
SADC	Southern African Development Community
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SGC	Science Granting Council
SGCI	Science Granting Councils Initiative
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
STI	Science, Technology and Innovation
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNCST	Uganda National Commission for Science and Technology
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WISETO	Women in Science, Engineering and Technology Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Science Granting Councils (SGCs) in Africa play a crucial role in enhancing Gender, Equality and Inclusivity across the continent by championing systemic interventions in how research in Science, Technology and Innovation is steered among African nations. Since 2017, SGCs have been supported by IDRC to fund and manage research and innovation projects in areas aligned with their national development plans and priorities. This report synthesizes the integration of gender equality and inclusivity (GEI) within the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) Phase II (2020-2023) projects across the 12 participating Science Granting Councils (SGCs). The overall objective is to analyze how GEI was integrated into SGCI-II funded projects, identifying progress, strategies, outcomes, challenges, and lessons to inform future programs and policy directions for SGCs in Africa.

The **Key Findings** from the synthesis are summarized below:

Progress in women's leadership but overall representation remains low

Out of 74 funded projects across the participating countries, only 19 (26%) were led by female Principal Investigators (PIs). Zimbabwe recorded the highest number of women-led projects (5), followed by Namibia (3), and Uganda, Mozambique, Senegal, and Burkina Faso (2 each). Although gender-focused project selection criteria were in place in most countries, the number of women in research leadership positions remained disproportionately low compared to male counterparts.

Use of gender-sensitive evaluation criteria influenced project selection

Several SGCs, notably Uganda, Zimbabwe, Malawi, and Côte d'Ivoire, embedded gender-responsive scoring systems within proposal evaluation frameworks. These included awarding additional points for female leadership, requiring a minimum percentage of female team members, and mandating the inclusion of women in project teams. Rwanda, for example, required a minimum of 30% female participation, and Côte d'Ivoire rejected proposals lacking women or early-career researchers.

Dedicated funding streams and gender quotas supported female inclusion

Dedicated initiatives such as Namibia's Women Innovators Program and Rwanda's Women in Science Research and Innovation Grant provided targeted funding and leadership opportunities for women. Burkina Faso and Côte d'Ivoire applied affirmative action and quotas to ensure gender parity in funded research. These interventions significantly improved female participation, particularly in research teams and co-investigator roles.

Projects addressing gendered research themes demonstrated transformative potential

Eight countries implemented projects with explicit gendered research themes. These included women's economic empowerment through agro-processing (e.g., Malawi and Mozambique), market access and product development (e.g., Uganda), and structural analysis of gender barriers in STI (e.g., Zambia). Burkina Faso's projects on local beer and kenaf production directly addressed women's roles in traditional industries.

Structured capacity building for students and early career researchers

Across the participating councils over 140 students and early career researchers were supported. These include 69 undergraduate, 63 masters and 11 PhD students. Structured capacity-building activities including internships, IP training, research management, and technical skills development were reported in Uganda, Zambia, and Burkina Faso. Zimbabwe introduced a Small Grant Scheme, while Uganda collaborated with EASTECO for scholarship-based training.

Best Practices and Institutional Reforms Were Initiated Across Multiple Councils

Several SGCs took concrete steps to institutionalize GEI within their operations. Uganda, Malawi, and Côte d'Ivoire developed or revised gender policies. Burkina Faso appointed a gender focal point. Senegal, Botswana, and Mozambique embedded GEI considerations in procedural documents and review panels.

Based on these findings, this synthesis recommends that SGCs need to:

- Strengthen targeted support for women in research leadership.
- Develop inclusive grant schemes that also prioritize persons with disabilities (PWDs).
- Promote gendered and inclusive research themes across funding calls.
- Enhance monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) with disaggregated Metrics.
- Adopt GEI as a standalone objective in research and innovation.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background on Gender Equality and Inclusivity in SGCI-2

It is widely acknowledged that STI boosts nation states' competitiveness, growth, and socioeconomic development (Mugabe, 2011; Economic and Social Council, 2014; Unesco Science Report, 2015). To encourage, promote, and use STI as a tool for Africa's development, several cooperative initiatives have been started at the regional and AU levels (36198-Treaty-Statute_african_space_agency_e, 2013.; Report of Ministerial Meeting, 2017; Statute of The Pan African University, 2013). Across the world, various STI initiatives have been put in place to ensure women are not left behind. One such effort is the UNESCO STEM and Gender Advancement (SAGA) project (Statistics, 2016; the SAGA Toolkit, 2017), which seeks to bridge the gender gap in STEM education and research. By analyzing sex-disaggregated data, SAGA helps shape and implement policies that promote gender equality in STI. Another key initiative is the Gender Summit Africa[1], a platform that brings together scientists, policymakers, gender experts, and stakeholders to explore how biological (sex) and sociocultural (gender) differences influence research and innovation outcomes.

In SGCI-1, gender considerations were most visible in discussions about increasing women's representation in SGCI meetings, training programs, research teams, and funding opportunities. Despite widespread recognition of gender disparities in research, gender mainstreaming was not prioritized at an institutional level within SGCI-1 councils. While individual researchers (115 out of 143 respondents in a 2016 survey) identified gender mainstreaming in research and development as a key priority, SGCI-1 organizations collectively ranked it as having zero priority on a 7-point scale. This dissonance between individual awareness and institutional prioritization underscored a gap in strategic commitment to advancing gender equality during this phase. Besides, while gender and inclusivity frequently appeared in SGCI discussions, they were often segregated as side events at conferences and regional meetings rather than being fully integrated into core activities (Zigic, 2023).

Gender was commonly measured in terms of the number of women attending meetings, participating in panel discussions, or delivering keynote speeches, rather than through a structured evaluation of gender equity in research funding, policy development, or leadership roles. The development of a gender mainstreaming framework during SGCI-1 represented a significant milestone (HSRC, 2021). However, this framework was largely driven by donors and implementing partners, rather than originating from internal SGCI governance structures. The 2016 SGCI Annual Report recommended that a gender mainstreaming framework be developed to ensure evidence-based gender policies (Mouton, 2016). By 2017 and 2018, a comprehensive gender mainstreaming framework and action plan had been formalized, with provisions for monitoring progress in SGCI-2. Additionally, surveys conducted in 2017, 2018 and 2019 gave a more concrete picture of gender disparities in that it revealed a widening underrepresentation of women scientists in research funding and leadership positions, lower success rates for female scientists in securing research grants, disproportionately smaller grant sizes awarded to female researchers compared to their male counterparts and underrepresentation of women in senior positions within SGCs (SARIMA, 2018). At a 2019 consultative meeting on SGCI-2 implementation (Sentongo, 2019), council representatives questioned the definition of gender equality, debating whether it referred to equality within the research ecosystem or within SGCs themselves. This uncertainty and resistance suggest that many stakeholders still viewed gender mainstreaming as an external mandate rather than a necessary internal transformation. The commitment to gender equality varied across participating countries in SGCI-1. In a 2019 SGCI-2 consultative meeting, only six out of 14 participant countries (Burkina Faso, Botswana, Ghana, Malawi, Mozambique, and Zambia) identified gender and inclusivity as a priority capacity-building need for SGCI-

1 https://aims.edu.gh/event/gender-summit-2023

2(Sentongo, 2019). The experiences of SGCI-1 provided key insights that informed the approach to gender equality and inclusivity in SGCI-2[2].

- Gender mainstreaming was recognized as a core element of research excellence, emphasizing the importance of diverse perspectives in knowledge production.
- The gender mainstreaming framework identified the underrepresentation of women in STEM as a structural challenge that needed systematic intervention.
- SGCI-2 formally incorporated gender mainstreaming as an output, with specific indicators included in its monitoring and evaluation framework.
- Intersectionality was introduced in SGCI-2 discussions, albeit in a limited capacity, mainly in footnotes acknowledging the interplay between gender, age, ethnicity, class, and ability.

SGCI entrusted the Gender Equality and Inclusivity (GEI) Project with the responsibility of enhancing the capacity of councils to embed gender equality and inclusivity across their operations in SGCI-2 and SGCI-2+ (HSRC, 2023). During the first phase (2020-2023), the SGCI GEI Project team collaborated with councils to incorporate intersectional and gender-transformative approaches into policies, programs, and research initiatives. Throughout this phase, the 13 participating African countries actively worked on building organizational GEI infrastructure to institutionalize gender-responsive policies and practices, reshaping norms, practices, and power dynamics that have historically sustained gender inequality, implementing targeted measures to address the unequal access women often face in securing resources and research opportunities and promoting collective ownership of gender equality efforts within the research and innovation ecosystem

To institutionalize gender equality, councils established gender committees or units to ensure gender issues were formally recognized and addressed (HSRC, 2023). Efforts were made to balance representation in decision-making spaces, such as grant review panels and executive boards, while gender policies were developed to provide a structured approach to inclusivity. Recognizing that informal structures often sustain gender inequality, councils worked to change workplace culture and internal biases. This included identifying gender champions to lead advocacy efforts and implementing GEI training programs for staff. Training covered workplace protections like maternity and childcare support, strategies to counter gender bias and stereotyping, and ways to enhance inclusive decision-making. To tackle disparities in funding and career progression, councils introduced gender-responsive grant-making guidelines and prioritized funding calls for female principal investigators. Capacity-building initiatives, such as mentorship programs for emerging female researchers, were introduced to bridge gaps in skills and leadership opportunities. Additionally, regional gender committees were set up to support female researchers in rural and marginalized areas. Beyond internal reforms, councils actively engaged in awareness-raising, advocacy, and stakeholder collaboration to promote GEI across the research and innovation ecosystem.

1.2 Purpose and Scope of the Report

This report aims to systematically synthesize how Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) funded projects have incorporated gender equality and inclusivity. It takes into account different dimensions of gender equality and inclusivity of SGCI projects, such as the policy and strategies that different SGCs have employed to promote gender equality in research teams and leadership, the incorporation of considerations of gender into the process of selecting projects to fund and its impact on the approval of projects, the application of gender-sensitive research design and data collection, the issues and barriers to gender equality in research teams and projects, and the relevance and usability of the research outputs of research that is inclusive of gender to different groups of society. The evaluation will inform proposals for the improvement of the gender equality in future SGCI programs and contribute to broader debates on the mainstreaming of gender in science, technology, and innovation in Africa.

2 https://idl-bnc-idrc.dspacedirect.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/4546aa6e-2a34-4cc3-a466-d8c1ca2191d7/content

1.3 Research Questions

This synthesis is guided by the research questions posed to review interventions that SGCs have put in place to promote gender equality and inclusivity in research. The review will evaluate the extent in which GEI objectives set by respective SGCs have been realized as well as highlight specific interventions that have led to the highest gains in Gender and Inclusivity.

Specifically, our synthesis will address the following research questions:

1. What strategies and policies did SGCI projects implement to promote gender equality and inclusivity in their research teams and leadership roles?
2. How did the consideration of gender equality and inclusivity impact the selection criteria for funding SGCI projects?
3. To what extent did SGCI projects incorporate gender-sensitive methodologies and data collection techniques in their research design?
4. What were the perceived barriers and challenges faced by SGCI projects in achieving gender equality and inclusivity in their project teams?

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Approach

This synthesis is based on a systematic review of reports, project monitoring updates and funding guidelines from 12 Science Granting Councils (SGC) across Africa to draw valuable insights on gender equality and inclusivity in SGCI funded projects. Since SGCI 1, Science Granting Councils have stepped up their efforts to prioritize inclusivity in research such that underrepresented groups are not only subjects of study but also involved in the actual research and in determining the outcomes. The objective of the synthesis is therefore to document the contribution of the SGCIs on gender mainstreaming and inclusivity. To achieve this objective, th review was structured around nine themes:

- Women Led Research projects
- Composition of Research Team
- Incorporation of Gender Equality in Funding Decision
- Incorporation of Inclusivity in Funding Decision
- Training of students & Capacity building
- Research projects targeting gendered themes
- Gender sensitive methodologies and data collection techniques
- Best Practices and innovative GEI strategies
- Challenges in achieving gender equality and inclusivity

2.2 Data Sources

The synthesis was conducted by analyzing multiple secondary data resources such as official SGCI reports, funding announcements, project proposals, and evaluations. The team also conducted an analysis of publications, case studies, and other outputs produced by SGCI-funded projects so as to triangulate the data found from the reports presented by SGCs. To narrow the focus on GEI, the team reviewed policies and guidelines related to gender equality and inclusivity within SGCI and partner organizations as well as relevant literature on best practices for gender equality in research and development, including UNESCO and other international bodies' guidelines.

2.3 Data Analysis

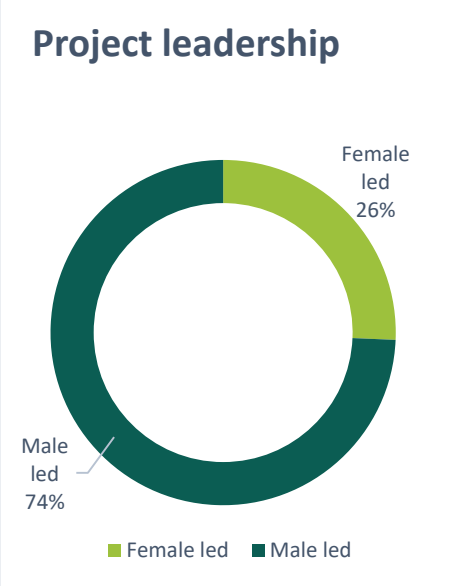
The data analysis in this study encompassed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to comprehensively understand the dynamics of gender equality and inclusivity in the funded projects. Qualitative analysis focused on interpreting non-numerical data to identify trends, common strategies, barriers, and challenges related to gender equality and inclusivity. On the other hand, quantitative analysis involved using statistical methods to measure and compare numerical data and providing a structured and objective assessment of key metrics. Thematic analysis was employed to identify and analyze themes related to gender-sensitive research design, leadership, team composition, and barriers. Additionally, a comparative analysis was conducted to evaluate projects with varying degrees of gender inclusivity to assess how it affected research outputs and outcomes.

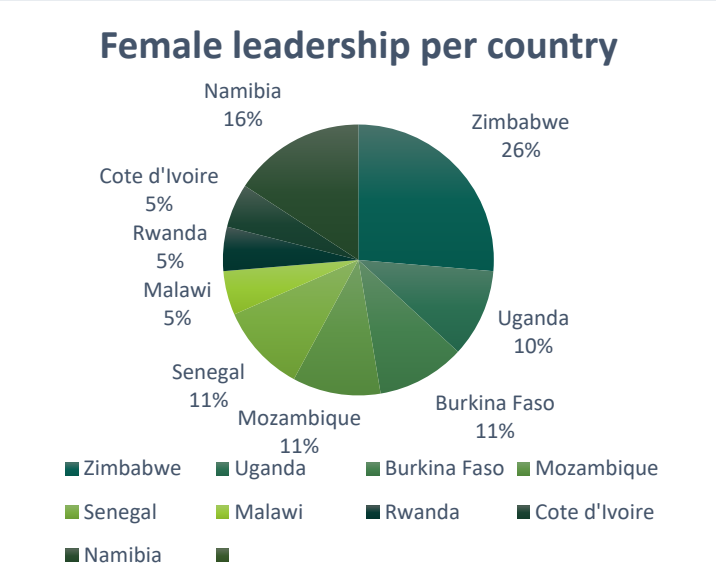
3. FINDINGS

3.1 Women Led Research projects

Finding 1: Approximately 74 research projects received funding across the participating countries. Of these, 19 projects (approximately 26%) were led by women as Principal Investigators.

Zimbabwe had the highest number of women-led projects (5 out of 15), followed by Namibia with three women-led projects then Uganda, Burkina Faso, Mozambique, and Senegal, each with two women-led projects. Malawi, Rwanda, and Côte d'Ivoire each reported one woman-led project.





Finding 2: The SGCs implemented various strategies to actively support women-led research projects, resulting in increased female participation and leadership across funded projects. These strategies included Targeted Evaluation Criteria, Positive Discrimination in Project Selection, Mandatory Gender-Based Quotas, and Dedicated Funding Streams and Programs.

Strategies SGCs Used to increase Female Participation

- **Mandatory Gender-Based Quotas**
- **Targeted Evaluation Criteria,**
- **Positive Discrimination in Project Selection**
- **Dedicated Funding Streams and Programs**

Targeted evaluation criteria entailed assigning explicit evaluation points during proposal reviews for projects that had female PIs or significant female representation in their leadership structures. Positive discrimination in project selection on the other hand involved deliberately prioritizing or giving favorable consideration to project proposals submitted by women, particularly in cases where proposals demonstrated equal merit. Some SGCs implemented mandatory gender based quotas which were policy requirements that necessitated a minimum percentage of women who must participate in research teams. Moreover, as discussed in the next section, a number of SGCs established dedicated funding streams and programs to provide specific grant opportunities or programs explicitly designed to fund and support women researchers.

Uganda and Zimbabwe adopted Targeted Evaluation Criteria, whereby Uganda's scoring framework specifically awarded additional points for female leadership, directly resulting in two significant projects led by women researchers: Dr. Deborah Ruth Amulen and Prof. Maud Kamatenesi Mugiha. Zimbabwe, likewise, used favorable evaluation criteria, resulting in a substantial proportion (five out of fifteen) of funded projects being women-led.

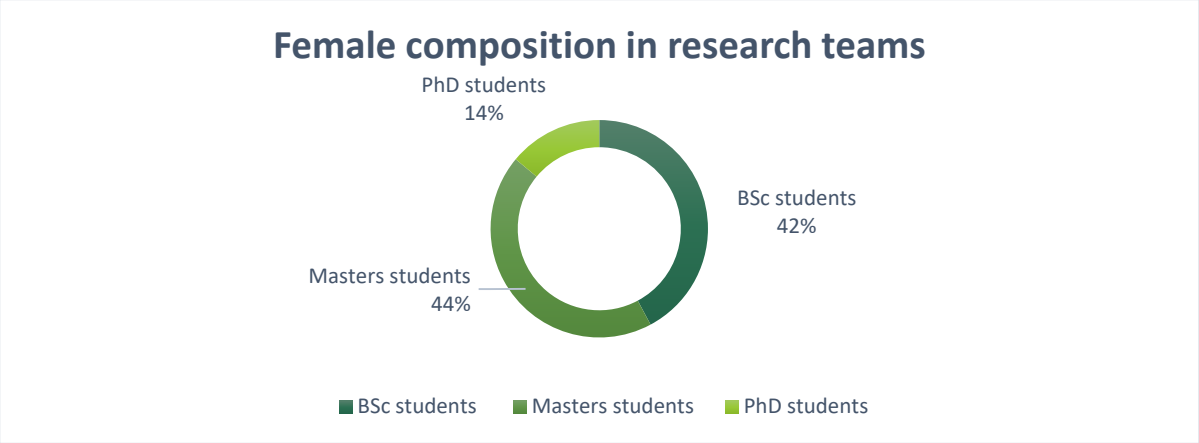
Burkina Faso utilized Positive Discrimination in Project Selection, actively selecting women-led proposals when assessing projects of comparable merit. This resulted in two projects such as the enhancement of local beer production and the valorization of kenaf leaves, being successfully led by women.

Rwanda and Côte d'Ivoire implemented Mandatory Gender-Based Quotas. Rwanda required a minimum of 30% female participation in each research team, leading to the selection of one woman-led project with significant commercialization potential. Côte d'Ivoire mandated the inclusion of at least one woman per project team, ensuring consistent gender representation in all funded projects.

Namibia implemented Dedicated Funding Streams and Programs by establishing the Women Innovators Program, specifically designed to encourage and support women-led science, technology, and innovation initiatives. This targeted intervention ensured three out of five funded projects were led by women.

3.2 Composition of Research Team

Finding 3: Strategies used to promote inclusivity in research team composition included establishing minimum thresholds for female inclusion in research teams, gender-responsive evaluation criteria with proposals demonstrating higher gender balance scoring higher, targeted calls and project objectives designed to enhance female participation in research and dedicated programs and interventions to support women in research and innovation.



Due to these strategies, SGCs saw an increase in the diversity of team composition: approximately 27.5% of the BSc graduates were female, with 19 out of 69 undergraduates identified as female. For the master's level, about 28.6% were female, 18 out of 63 MSc students, and while at the doctoral level, roughly 9.1% were female, with 1 out of 11 PhD students explicitly noted as female.

Countries like Rwanda required that at least 30% of team members be women for projects to be eligible for funding, while Côte d'Ivoire mandated the inclusion of at least one woman per project team, rejecting proposals that lacked female or early-career researchers. Senegal similarly made female participation a requirement in its call for proposals to ensure inclusivity in funded projects.

SGIs that adopted gender-responsive evaluation criteria, where proposals that demonstrated gender balance were awarded higher; scores included Malawi, Burkina Faso and Zimbabwe. In Malawi, more weight was given to proposals with female co-investigators, and the gender composition of research teams was a formal part of the review process. Uganda emphasized gender balance particularly in senior roles such as principal investigators and co-PIs, incorporating this into the evaluation framework. Burkina Faso applied positive discrimination, prioritizing projects that demonstrated gender equity in team composition, while Namibia included a specific evaluation score for gender diversity and ensured female participation in proposal review committees. Zimbabwe also promoted inclusivity by prioritizing gender-balanced teams and actively encouraging women to apply for funding opportunities.

Some councils issued targeted calls and objectives that were specifically designed to enhance female participation in research. Zambia launched a dedicated national call on gender dimensions in Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI), while Côte d'Ivoire included objectives to support female researchers in its funding call and encouraged women and early-career academics to apply.

In addition to targeted calls, various councils introduced dedicated programs and interventions to support women in research and innovation. Namibia established the Women Innovators Program, designed to empower women in STI-related entrepreneurship and research. Uganda's UNCST formed a gender committee, developed policies to mainstream gender in all its programs, and revised national research ethics guidelines to ensure gender parity in the selection of research participants. Zimbabwe adopted the SGCI Gender Mainstreaming Framework and awarded scholarships to female researchers under its joint funding calls.

3.3 Incorporation of Gender Equality in Funding Decision

Finding 4: At least 8 Councils employed targeted strategies for gender equality in determining the funded projects; some of these strategies include targeted evaluation criteria, gender-based quotas, positive discrimination and dedicated funding streams.

These measures ensured that women were not only represented as project PIs but also actively involved in research teams. Furthermore, they influenced the thematic focus of funded research, driving projects that directly empowered women and addressed gender-specific challenges within the respective communities.

Rwanda and Côte d'Ivoire implemented mandatory gender quotas as part of their funding criteria. Rwanda required a minimum of 30% female participation in research teams, and proposals that failed to meet this requirement were rejected outright. This administrative screening process resulted in female participation in research teams ranging from 30% to 57%, averaging 38%. Côte d'Ivoire required that at least one woman be included in every research team, setting a baseline for gender inclusion in all funded projects.

Uganda, Botswana, and Senegal integrated gender considerations directly into their evaluation frameworks. Uganda awarded additional points to proposals that incorporated gender-disaggregated data and detailed gender considerations in research design. Botswana made female participation one of only three key evaluation priorities, encouraging greater female involvement in both research leadership and team composition. Senegal included gender considerations in the technical evaluation process, where assessors were instructed to evaluate the gender balance of research teams and the relevance of research topics to gender issues. Rwanda also incorporated gender-based scoring into its evaluation system, allocating 10 out of 100 points to "Added value through cooperation (private sector, women and students)."

Burkina Faso adopted a strategy of positive discrimination by explicitly requiring gender balance and

inclusivity in funding proposals. This influenced both the composition of research teams and the selection of projects that directly empowered women. A key example is Dr. Julienne Gué's project on the kenaf value chain, which was funded partly because kenaf is traditionally cultivated by women and had a direct impact on women's economic empowerment.

Zambia introduced dedicated funding streams to support gender-sensitive research and women-led projects. They launched a national call specifically focused on "Gender dimensions in Science, Technology, and Innovation," highlighting the importance of gender-focused research.

3.4 Incorporation of Inclusivity in Funding Decisions

Finding 5: To ensure inclusivity in funding decisions, SGCs employed strategies such as prioritizing research teams with early-career researchers and PhD students, embedding capacity-building opportunities into project calls, implementing positive discrimination in proposal evaluation, and developing institutional guidelines and frameworks that promote gender-balanced participation.

Inclusivity in research is taken to mean that there is diverse representation of researchers (early career, Masters), methodologies are sensitive to the diversity participants and intended beneficiaries and underrepresented groups such as PWDs are considered by providing information through accessible formats. Our review showed that SGCs limited their definition of inclusivity to *diversity of research teams* and consequently focused on such initiatives.

Malawi explicitly encouraged early-career women scientists to apply for proposals and stated that priority would be given to research teams that included early-career researchers and PhD students. Burkina Faso, through FONRID, adopted a policy of positive discrimination to favor teams with young researchers, including PhD students and early-career academics. Their selection criteria emphasized mixed teams of senior and early-career researchers and included structured training sessions to build capacity among project managers and key investigators.

Uganda's UNCST embedded inclusivity within its funding framework by committing to capacity-building activities tailored for researchers at different career stages. It partnered with EASTECO to provide training in research writing, publication, and gender-responsive pedagogy, and made regional training opportunities accessible through scholarships. This ensured tailored support for early-career academics and women.

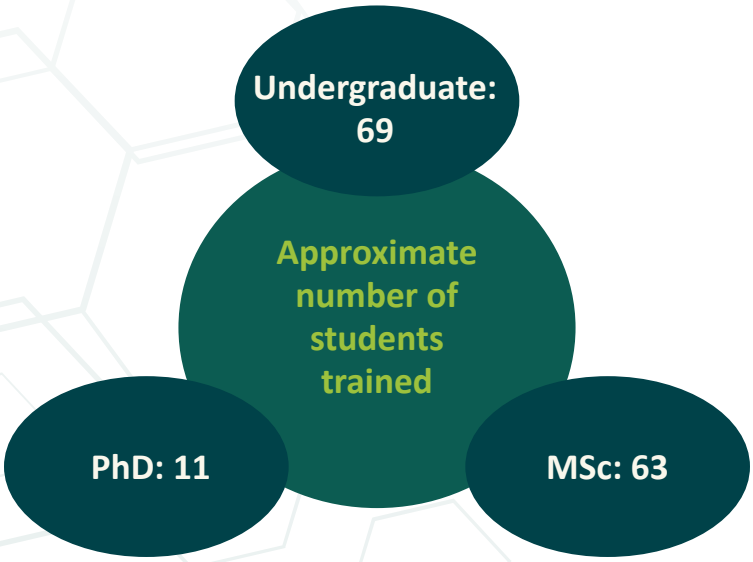
Zimbabwe's RCZ promoted the inclusion of young scientists through initiatives like the Small Grant Scheme, which specifically funded Master's students through targeted scholarships (funded 11 students, 5 of whom were women). Namibia's NCRST aligned its calls with national and international frameworks on gender equality, making gender balance a key element of team composition. Their proposal guidelines explicitly promoted equal gender representation and acknowledged the need to address the underrepresentation of women in science and technology.

Our review did not yield any information on initiatives to include researchers living with disability among participating SGCs, proving that councils did not attach adequate attention to this marginalized group.

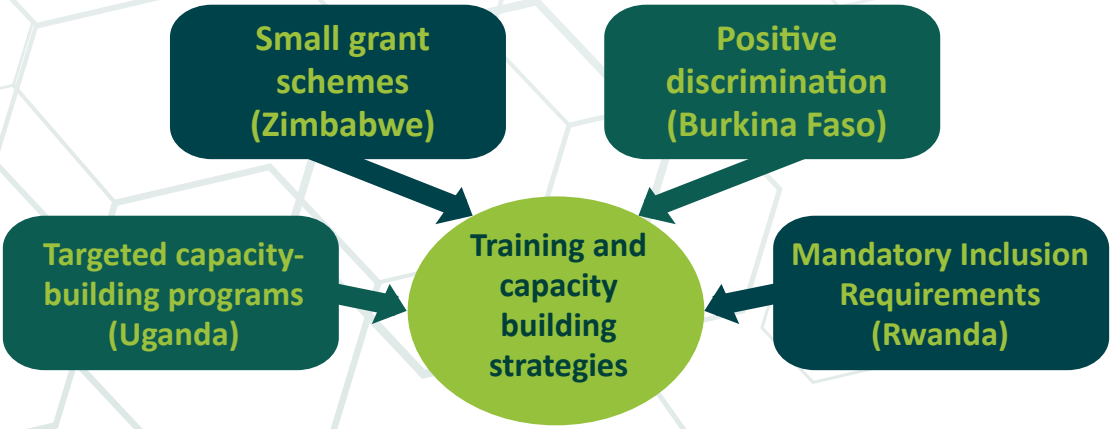
3.5 Training of Students and Capacity building

Finding 6: All participating SGCs were proactive and intentional on training of Students with strategies such as targeted capacity-building programs offering specialized training in critical research skills, project management, intellectual property management, and research dissemination being recorded in all participating councils. A total of 69 undergraduate (BSc) students, 63 master's (MSc) students and 11 PhD students were supported across the board.

Of the 69 undergraduate (BSc) students supported, 8 were from Malawi, 8 in Burkina Faso, 33 in Zambia, 3 in Uganda, 16 in Mozambique, and 1 in Senegal. For master's (MSc) level training, 63 students were supported, including 4 from Malawi, 2 from Burkina Faso, 6 from Tanzania, 11 from Zambia, 4 from Uganda, 7 from Rwanda, 4 from Mozambique, 5 from Senegal, 5 from Côte d'Ivoire, 11 from Zimbabwe, 3 from Botswana, and 1 from Namibia. In addition, 11 PhD students received support, with 1 from Malawi, 3 from Zambia, 1 from Rwanda, 1 from Mozambique, 1 from Senegal, and 4 from Botswana. Moreover, a total of 122 researchers underwent capacity building, including 46 from Malawi, 20 from Uganda, 50 from Senegal, and 6 from Zimbabwe.



Positive discrimination criteria were employed to prioritize projects integrating early-career researchers, ensuring intentional inclusion and skill development. Scholarship-based and small grant schemes provided dedicated financial support, enabling students and early-career academics to pursue research opportunities effectively. Furthermore, mandatory inclusion requirements ensured systematic engagement of graduate students, reinforcing a sustainable approach to building research capacity. Collectively, these strategies significantly strengthened the academic and professional foundations of young researchers across the councils.



Uganda demonstrated a highly strategic approach by embedding targeted capacity-building activities directly into the research funding framework. UNCST partnered with the East African Science and Technology Commission (EASTECO) and other regional bodies to provide targeted training in research writing, publication, and gender-responsive pedagogy. The proposal also included scholarship-based access to training programs for both male and female researchers, reinforcing the commitment to early career development. Additionally, UNCST funded two research teams at Uganda Christian University and Makerere University's School of Veterinary Medicine and Biosecurity, which received specialized training on intellectual property (IP) registration and exploitation, equipping early career researchers with critical skills for securing and managing research outputs.

Burkina Faso adopted a strategy of positive discrimination in favor of young researchers, incorporating specific evaluation criteria that prioritized research teams with a mix of senior and early career researchers. Training sessions were held for project managers and key investigators, including early career academics, to strengthen their capacity in project execution and financial management. The Research Council of Zimbabwe (RCZ) also introduced a staff development program that supported six researchers—two of whom were women—in enrolling for diploma and postgraduate training. Zambia also demonstrated a strong commitment to capacity-building, training 13 postgraduate and over 10 undergraduate students. The inclusion of hands-on training in culturing cells and screening plant species for viral growth inhibition enhanced the research capabilities of early career academics, while trilateral collaborations with Mozambique and Malawi facilitated cross-border knowledge sharing.

Other countries implemented moderate to limited frameworks to promote early career inclusion. Rwanda made it a mandatory requirement for funded projects to include graduate students (master's or PhD) in research teams. Mozambique incorporated early career researchers in its research teams, training one PhD student, four master's students, and 16 undergraduates, although no structured capacity-building framework was outlined. Botswana reported high participation of graduate students, with eight students supported (three of them women), but the initiative lacked targeted mechanisms to track the outcomes of this participation.

3.6 Research projects targeting Gendered Themes

Finding 7: At least 8 SGCs (Malawi, Uganda, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana, and Zimbabwe) funded projects with a focus on gendered themes.

The gendered themes addressed in these projects included women's economic empowerment, scientific research participation and structural barriers, market access and product development, community-level innovation and technology transfer, and value addition and beneficiation.

In Burkina Faso, the project on Cultural Assets and Promotion of Local Beer Conservation Technologies targeted local beer production, which is traditionally dominated by women. The project trained women producers in hygiene, brewing, and preservation techniques to improve the shelf life and marketability of dolo, increasing their profitability and economic independence. The project on Hibiscus cannabinus (kenaf) in Burkina Faso also focused on empowering women, as they are the primary producers and processors of kenaf-based food products. The project supported women with improved seed varieties, enhanced processing skills, and better market opportunities, contributing to greater economic independence. In Malawi, projects aimed at increasing income generation among women farmers included training in artificial insemination of goats and chickens to improve livestock productivity. Additional projects on biogas production and invasive alien plant control targeted rural households, providing sustainable and affordable energy sources, which reduced household costs and increased women's financial independence.

In Zambia, the project titled "Exploring the Gender Dimensions and Factors Affecting Female Participation in STI in Academia, Industry, and Research & Development" examined the barriers faced by women in scientific research. The project proposed targeted mentorship programs for women in science, increased funding for women-led research, and structural reforms within research institutions to create a more gender-inclusive environment.

In Uganda, the "Commercialization of Propolis Powder and Infused Tea Bags" project and the "Essential Oil Crops Commercialization" project strengthened women's participation in product development and market access. These projects trained women in production, packaging, and marketing, enabling them to become key players in the agricultural and health sectors. For Mozambique, a project on milk processing with native fruits ensured strong female participation, with 63% of the participants being women. Women were trained in financial management, fruit quality control, and the use of native fruit pulp and juice in food preparation. The project also supported 14 women small-scale suppliers of masala fruits and trained another 22 women in how to process native fruit pulp for cooking, thereby increasing their market presence and profitability.

In Tanzania, two projects addressed agricultural and processing challenges at the community level. One focused on the transfer of hybrid sunflower oil processing technology to local processing plants, creating opportunities for women in agro-processing. The second project introduced innovative animal feeding programs aimed at improving livestock productivity and contributing to the Youth National Program's job creation policies, directly benefiting women and youth in rural areas.

In Botswana and Zimbabwe, projects focused on addressing challenges in the mining sector by finding technological and scientific solutions for value addition and beneficiation. While not directly targeting women, these projects created downstream economic opportunities that could increase female participation in mining-related industries. For example, in Botswana, projects identified commercially viable solutions for processing and value addition in the mining sector, potentially opening new employment opportunities for women. Similarly, in Zimbabwe, value addition strategies aimed at increasing efficiency and profitability in mining operations were expected to create job opportunities that could benefit both men and women.

3.7 Gender Sensitive Methodologies and Data Collection Techniques

Finding 8: SGCI projects demonstrated a commitment to incorporating gender-sensitive methodologies and data collection techniques in their research design and implementation. The key strategies employed included gender-disaggregated data collection, gender-responsive evaluation criteria, targeted engagement of women in research teams, and designing training and project interventions to meet the specific needs of women and marginalized groups.

Malawi incorporated gender-sensitive methodologies by ensuring that gender-disaggregated data was collected during project monitoring and evaluation. The project on improving livestock productivity through artificial insemination in goats and chickens was implemented in village groups composed of women from female-headed households, with women actively involved in data collection and fieldwork. Similarly, in the biogas production and solar drying technology project, women participated in training sessions on technology adoption and value chain improvement.

Uganda's UNCST ensured that research teams collected and reported gender-disaggregated data and analyzed project outcomes through a gender lens. The Technomart platform highlighted gaps in gender-disaggregated data, which prompted UNCST to integrate gender-sensitive data collection into project funding requirements. Zambia applied this strategy in the project titled "Exploring the gender dimensions and factors affecting female participation in STI," which used mixed-methods data collection to identify barriers to female participation in scientific fields. Burkina Faso applied gender-disaggregated analysis in the local beer conservation project, revealing that over 45% of the producers were women, which influenced the design of training modules. The project on Hibiscus cannabinus (kenaf) leaves also collected gender-disaggregated data to tailor agricultural interventions to the needs of women farmers.

Furthermore, Uganda integrated gender-responsive evaluation criteria into the funding framework by requiring applicants to demonstrate how their projects would address gender-related issues and promote inclusivity. The project on "Commercialization of Propolis Powder and Infused Tea Bags" targeted rural women as key beneficiaries and incorporated gender-sensitive approaches in market research and product development. Similarly, the project on "Essential Oil Crops Commercialization" focused on increasing women's participation in agricultural value chains and ensuring access to training and market opportunities.

Burkina Faso adapted training on beer production and preservation to meet the needs of female producers, including simplified language and practical demonstrations. Burkina Faso also included gender parity as a formal evaluation requirement, ensuring that research teams demonstrated a balanced gender representation and direct benefits to women.

Mozambique's milk processing project ensured strong female participation, with 63% of the participants being women, and provided training on financial management and product quality standards.

3.8 Best Practices and innovative GEI strategies

Finding 9: At least 9 councils adopted a wide range of best practices, including Gender Policies and Action Plans, Dedicated Gender Committees, a designated council staff dedicated to gender issues and Capacity Building and Targeted Training.

Since the inception of the Science Granting Council Initiative, SGCs have increasingly been supported to develop frameworks that promote inclusion in scientific research and funding. These practices have enhanced the participation and leadership of underrepresented groups, particularly women and early-career researchers, in research and innovation. In SGCI II, targeted support from the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) through the Gender and Inclusivity Project played a significant role in advancing these strategies.

Malawi drafted a Gender Policy for the National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST) with support from the Ministry of Gender, following gender training by HSRC. Cote d'Ivoire's FONSTI developed a gender policy with targeted support from HSRC and recognized the best female STEM students in public universities by awarding them scholarships to encourage further studies and leadership in research. Zimbabwe's RCZ adopted the SGCI Gender Mainstreaming Framework and Action Plan, which made it mandatory for research teams to demonstrate gender equality and inclusivity in project design. Mozambique's FNI established a Gender Strategy aligned with the 2016 GRC Statement of Principles and Actions, ensuring gender inclusivity throughout the research project cycle.

Uganda's UNCST established a three-member internal Gender Committee to mainstream gender within its programs and developed the UNCST Grants Management Manual, highlighting gender inclusiveness as a key requirement for funding. Burkina Faso's FONRID appointed a dedicated gender focal point (Dr. Mrs. Aminata KABORE) to oversee gender mainstreaming across project management activities. Senegal's MESRI created a gender unit to work with HSRC to better manage gender and inclusivity issues.

Botswana's Department of Research, Science, and Technology (DRST) signed the SADC Women in Science, Engineering and Technology Organization (WISETO) Charter to promote women's participation in STI and established regulations requiring funded proposals to involve underrepresented groups, including women and disabled researchers. Rwanda's NCST established the "Women in Science Research and Innovation Grant," specifically designed to increase female participation and leadership in research and development.

Other innovative best practices include Uganda's GERA, a national network of researchers promoting gender equity in research that was established by UNCST. Launched in 2019, GERA operates through regional committees, conducting gender audits, developing gender policies, training staff, and raising institutional awareness. Supported by a virtual platform and strong regional ownership, GERA has become a key driver for mainstreaming gender across Uganda's research ecosystem. Further, in 2023, COSTECH achieved a 50/50 gender balance in research teams through a revised call prioritizing female-led project. Simultaneously, COSTECH enhanced inclusivity and research management by upgrading its National Research Management System and building staff capacity.

4. SHORTCOMINGS IN ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY AND INCLUSIVITY

Our review shows that SGCs have made significant efforts to integrate gender equality and inclusivity in research funding among the councils; nonetheless several challenges still persist.

1. **Underrepresentation of women in research projects:** One of the most significant challenges in achieving gender equality in research funding is the low number of female PIs and Co-PIs. In Tanzania, none of the selected projects had women PIs, and other countries like Rwanda and Cote D'Ivoire only had 1 female PI, highlighting the need for targeted themes to promote women leadership roles in funded projects.
2. **Limited funding for gender-themed projects:** The objective of the Councils was to fund projects that respond to their national priorities. Some projects incorporated gender sensitive approaches, however, there was limited funding for gender-themed projects. Many countries did not have dedicated research grants specifically for gender-focused themes, making it difficult for researchers to secure funding for studies that address women's issues. However various research projects that were implemented directly addressed gender-related themes and targeted the empowerment of women and marginalized groups.
3. **Lack of robust gender policies and frameworks:** Some councils such as Cote D'Ivoire and Botswana lacked a National Gender Research Framework. The absence of such frameworks and policies means that gender considerations are not systematically integrated in funded projects resulting in gender disparities and inclusions not being addressed. It should however be noted that despite this gap, some councils including Cote D'Ivoire and Botswana have currently taken steps to develop or are in the process of developing national gender policies and framework i.e. Cote D'ivore's FONSTI received targeted support from HSCR to guide in the development of a gender policy and Botswana was supported by the HSCR through Gender and Inclusivity (G&I) Project to facilitate Botswana's signing of the SADC Women in Science, Engineering and Technology Organization (WISETO) Charter aimed at promoting the participation of women at various levels in the research, science, technology and innovation (RSTI) sector, including leadership. These efforts ensure that gender considerations are integrated into funded projects thus addressing disparities and promoting inclusivity.
4. **Cultural attitudes and systemic barriers:** In many African countries, there are cultural norms and systemic barriers that perpetuate the belief that certain fields are male dominated and this affected some themes for example, in Tanzania, the objective on increasing number of women PI was not realized due to the call focus on themes of Industrialization and manufacturing, which are considered to be traditionally dominated by male researchers.
5. **Limited Support for Early Career Female Researchers and PhD Students:** While some councils took steps to ensure that the PhD, MSc and BSc students are included in the research teams, the actual number of female students remains low. For example, Botswana required the projects to include students yet only 3 out of the 8 supported students were female. More dedicated mentorship programs are required to encourage women to pursue advanced research careers.
6. **Lack of frameworks to ensure support of PWDs and other marginalized groups:** Councils need to expand their definition of inclusivity to ensure that other marginalized groups such as PWDs are positively included in research. We noted that countries such as Botswana made a deliberate call to include "Black persons" illustrating that inclusivity should be approached within specific country contexts.

5. MEASURING THE GAINS OF GEI POLICIES

Due to varying levels of institutional maturity and operational capacity, SGCs often require sustained support and capacity development to fully realize these mandates. In response to this need, the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS), in collaboration with the Association of African Universities (AAU) and the University of Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (UCAD), is leading a 32-month initiative titled **"Supporting Science Granting Councils to Fund and Manage Research and Innovation Projects."** The goal of the project is to strengthen the capacity of SGCs in Sub-Saharan Africa to design, fund, and manage research and innovation activities that are aligned with national development priorities and contribute to inclusive economic and social progress. Among the projects core objectives is to support the councils to mainstream gender equality, inclusivity, and ethical considerations in all funded research projects and throughout the project implementation phase.

From the onset, the ACTS-led consortium positioned gender equality and inclusivity as a central pillar of the RIM project. During the inception meetings, councils formally adopted a set of GEI strategies proposed by the ACTS consortium, which guided the design, implementation, and evaluation of all funded research projects. These included: ensuring adequate representation of women in funded research teams; mandating that at least 30% of all funded projects be led by female Principal Investigators (PIs); and achieving this through targeted interventions such as ringfenced calls for women, special proposal writing workshops, and outreach efforts to mobilize female applicants. Additionally, councils were encouraged to ensure that at least 30% of proposal reviewers were women and that gender and inclusivity considerations be embedded throughout the research cycle, from proposal development and data collection to reporting and targeting of beneficiaries.

The RIM project also promoted broader inclusivity by urging councils to focus on historically underfunded areas such as the informal sector, and to deliberately include less experienced researchers such as MSc and PhD students and Early Career Academics (ECAs). This approach helped embed GEI as a core performance metric and likely contributed to the broader and deeper outcomes seen under RIM, compared to SGCI-II. These outcomes include;

- Of the 83 research projects funded in the first year of the RIM project, 31 (representing 37%) were led by female PIs, exceeding the set minimum benchmark of 30%. Eight councils, Côte d'Ivoire, Malawi, Tanzania, Ghana, Mozambique, Zambia, Senegal, and Burkina Faso, met or exceeded the 30% target for women-led projects. In total, 13 councils funded at least one project led by a woman. This outcome reflects a deliberate adoption of gender equality and inclusion strategies proposed at the project's inception.
- Of the 440 researchers participating across the 83 funded projects, 45% were women. Twelve councils successfully met or exceeded the 30% benchmark for female representation in research teams. Among them, Cote d'Ivoire led with 61%, followed closely by Uganda (58%), Ghana (57%), Tanzania (53%), and Mozambique (52%). Uganda achieved one of the highest rates of female participation despite not recording any women-led projects which suggests deliberate efforts to promote inclusivity within team composition.
- Several councils integrated ECAs and students into their project designs to enhance inclusivity and capacity building. Malawi ringfenced projects for ECAs, emphasizing skills in research impact assessment. Namibia allocated funds to support MSc students' fieldwork, while Zimbabwe prioritized younger universities and supported five PhD women students. Zambia required all research teams to include ECAs, and Uganda ensured its funded projects would train six MSc students, with gender balance maintained.
- Inclusivity efforts extended to engagement with the private sector, informal economies, and small-scale producers. Councils such as Malawi, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Mozambique, and Botswana intentionally supported projects engaging marginalized groups such as informal sector actors, smes, and small-scale producers. Malawi backed renewable energy innovations from the informal sector; Kenya prioritized projects in the leather value chain and mental health; Rwanda focused on

smallholder farmer technologies; Rwanda ensured private sector inclusion in all funded projects; and both Mozambique and Botswana funded community empowerment initiatives through value addition of indigenous fruits.

- Councils funded eleven projects designed to address gender-specific themes. These included a trilateral project between Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe targeted maternal health using an AI-based risk prediction model. Ghana supported studies on women's participation in STI and mainstreaming gender in higher education. Tanzania implemented projects on sardine value addition and pigeon pea processing, both aimed at supporting women in caregiving and food production. Kenya funded a digital intervention on youth mental health, while Côte d'Ivoire backed research on menopause management and women's economic empowerment through local agricultural innovation.
- Councils also introduced innovative strategies to deepen gender equality and inclusion. For example, Sierra Leone ensured that at least 30% of proposal reviewers are women. Tanzania trained grant recipients on gender issues, and Uganda included performance indicators to track gender-related outcomes in projects. Ghana used a "3Fs" approach, fixing the numbers (more women in research), fixing the institution (promoting inclusive structures), and fixing the knowledge (integrating gender in research content). Namibia gave gender and inclusion a 15% weight during proposal evaluation, while Zimbabwe prioritized supporting female PhD students, especially from younger universities.

	SGCI 2	RIM
Female led PIs	26% of funded projects led by women (19 out of 74 projects).	37% of funded projects led by women (31 out of 83 projects), exceeding the 30% target.
Research composition	Female composition across the funded research projects was less than 30%.	Of the funded research projects, 45% of researchers were women.
Gender Themes	Seven projects focusing on gender specific themes were funded	Eleven projects focusing on gender specific themes were funded
Inclusion of Marginalized Groups	Focused on diversity within research teams (early career, Masters level).	Inclusivity went beyond Undergraduate, MSc and PhD students to involving private sector actors, SMEs, smallholder farmers, and informal sector participants.
Inclusivity Strategies	Different councils employed different strategies to achieve GEI	The ACTS led consortium mandated GEI as a standalone objective with set strategies.

Therefore, the RIM project took a more structured approach by embedding specific GEI benchmarks into project implementation from the outset, creating stronger accountability mechanisms across all participating councils. While both SGCI-II and RIM projects made substantial strides toward mainstreaming GEI, RIM's centralized and standardized framework led to stronger overall performance in terms of gender balance, institutional adoption of strategies, and inclusivity outcomes.

6. CONCLUSIONS

This synthesis of SGCI-II-funded projects affirms that progress has been made across SGCs in integrating GEI principles. However, the findings also underscore gaps and opportunities for strengthening institutional frameworks, research leadership, and inclusive practices across the nine core thematic areas assessed.

While there was an encouraging number of women-led research projects, the overall representation of women in leadership remains limited. Only 26% of funded projects were led by female Principal Investigators (PIs), pointing to the need for more deliberate and sustained efforts to elevate women into research leadership roles.

In terms of composition of research teams, several councils implemented measures such as gender quotas, positive discrimination, and dedicated funding criteria to improve female representation. Countries like Rwanda, Côte d'Ivoire, and Malawi integrated gender balance into team composition requirements. Further, many councils incorporated gender equality in funding decisions through scoring frameworks and screening mechanisms. For example, Uganda and Zimbabwe awarded extra points for proposals with female leadership, while Rwanda and Côte d'Ivoire used quota-based eligibility criteria. These mechanisms significantly influenced selection outcomes and contributed to greater inclusivity.

Inclusivity in funding decisions extended beyond gender, with councils such as Malawi, Burkina Faso, Uganda, and Namibia prioritizing early-career researchers and students in proposal evaluation. However, persons with disabilities (PWDs) were largely excluded from funding strategies and team composition, indicating a critical area for future improvement. Efforts in training students and capacity building were robust, with over 140 students and early-career researchers supported across undergraduate, master's, and PhD levels. Initiatives such as Uganda's partnership with EASTECO, Zimbabwe's Small Grant Scheme, and Zambia's trilateral training collaborations served as strong models for integrating skill development into research programs.

Several projects addressed gendered research themes, contributing to real-world impact and social relevance. Countries like Malawi, Mozambique, Burkina Faso, and Uganda implemented projects focused on women's economic empowerment, agro-processing, and gendered market access. That said, there remains a need to expand and scale such projects across all SGCs. The use of gender-sensitive methodologies and data collection techniques was evident in countries like Malawi, Uganda, and Burkina Faso, where gender-disaggregated data and community-responsive methods were incorporated into research design and implementation. Such practices ensured that research outputs addressed the specific needs of women and marginalized groups.

With a high percentage of SGCs noted to have drafted or in the process of developing and mainstreaming Gender research Frameworks, it remains to be seen how this initiative will positively affect gender, equality and Inclusivity in subsequent funding calls.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and from the conclusions drawn, our synthesis makes the following recommendations.

1. **Strengthen Targeted Support for Women in Research Leadership:** We recommend that SGCs implement more targeted strategies to elevate women into research leadership. These include setting minimum thresholds for the number of female PIs in each funding cycle and offering exclusive grant opportunities for women researchers. These efforts should be sustained through policy-level commitments that ensure consistent gender leadership pipelines across all thematic research areas, including those traditionally dominated by men.
2. **Develop Inclusive Grant Schemes that Also Prioritize Persons with Disabilities (PWDs):** One notable gap in SGCI-II was the limited attention given to the inclusion of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) in both research design and participation. Future initiatives under SGCI should explicitly include PWDs as a priority group in their inclusivity frameworks. This can be achieved by introducing clear participation indicators, requiring proposals to articulate how PWDs will be engaged as beneficiaries or team members, and ensuring that research processes are accessible to those with disabilities. Additionally, funding guidelines should promote reasonable accommodations and provide resources to make research infrastructure and communication inclusive of PWDs.
3. **Promote Gendered and Inclusive Research Themes across Funding Calls:** To move beyond symbolic inclusion, councils should deliberately fund research that explores, and addresses gendered social and economic challenges. Calls for proposals should include specific thematic areas such as gender and STI, women's/youth economic empowerment, gender and climate resilience, and inclusivity in emerging technologies.
4. **Enhance Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) with Disaggregated Metrics:** Robust MEL systems are critical for tracking GEI progress. All funded projects should report on gender, age, and disability-disaggregated metrics. Councils should support their researchers to develop effective tools for capturing disaggregated data and ensure that this is a project deliverable.
5. **Adopting GEI as a standalone objective in research and innovation, as demonstrated by the RIM project's success:** Making GEI an explicit objective, rather than a cross-cutting issue will ensure stronger institutional commitment, clearer accountability, and more deliberate implementation of strategies.

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9. ANNEX: COUNTRY GENDER AND INCLUSIVITY ANALYSIS

9.1 MALAWI

Inclusivity e.g PhD Students and Early Career Academics

The proposal explicitly stated that early career women scientists would be encouraged to apply for research proposals under the call. The proposal also mentioned that priority would be given to research teams that included early career researchers and PhD students. However, there was no detailed strategy or mechanism outlined for ensuring the participation of PhD students and early career academics beyond the general encouragement stated.

A total of eight (8) BSc students completed their dissertations and graduated—three of them were female and five were male. One male MSc student completed his dissertation and graduated, while one male PhD student also completed his dissertation. Additionally, three MSc students (one female and two males) completed a one-year internship at a fish farm supporting the Coptodon Rendalli experiment at Mzuzu University. In the final report, there was no mention of specific measures aimed at ensuring the inclusion of early career academics in the research projects. Besides, 46 researchers received training in research proposal writing, and multiple capacity-building workshops were organized for the staff of the National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST) by SGCI Collaborating Technical Agencies (CTAs), including the African Academy of Sciences (AAU), Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), and African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS).

Women Led Projects

There was mention in the proposal that projects led by women principal investigators (PIs) would be strongly encouraged. Besides, the proposal stated that greater weight would be given to proposals led by female PIs during the evaluation and selection process.

One woman-led project titled “Invasive Alien Plants (IAPs) for Eco-friendly Energy: From Environmental Problem to Economic Asset,” led by Dr. Judith Kamoto from LUANAR was supported. This project not only focused on gendered themes but also involved women in rural communities as key participants and beneficiaries.

Composition of Research Team

Malawi’s proposal specified that project proposals had to have research teams that included both women and men as co-investigators. Additionally, more weight was to be given to project teams that included female co-investigators during the review and selection process. The evaluation criteria for the proposals would consider the gender balance of the research team as a factor in scoring.

The core research team for the project was made up of nine key researchers from NCST and its partner institutions. Among these nine, there was a mix of genders with five women (including one female principal investigator and four female co-principal investigators) and four men. During the selection process, NCST explicitly required research proposals to include female co-investigators to promote gender balance. The project evaluation criteria gave higher scores to proposals with balanced gender representation in the research teams. For example, in the project titled “Investigating Diverse Microbial Consortia for Production of Biofertilizers,” led by Dr. Keston Njira from LUANAR, the research team included three female co-investigators and two male co-investigators. In addition, the teams were complemented by extensive collaborations with researchers from Zimbabwe, Mozambique, and Zambia, as well as a broader capacity-building component where 46 researchers received training in research proposal writing and publishing. Furthermore, student researchers contributed to the projects, including eight BSc students, MSc students

(one who completed his dissertation, one who went missing, and three who completed internships), and one PhD student.

Research projects targeting gendered themes

The proposal did not mention any specific research projects targeting gendered themes.

However, various research projects that were implemented directly addressed gender-related themes and targeted the empowerment of women and marginalized groups. A notable example was the project titled "Harnessing Biotechnology to Enhance the Productivity of Indigenous Livestock (Goats and Chickens) in Malawi and Zimbabwe," led by Prof. Timothy Gondwe which worked directly with village communities and cooperative groups composed mainly of women from female-headed households. The project trained these women in goat and chicken breeding, artificial insemination, and sustainable livestock management, empowering them to increase household productivity and economic independence. Another example was the project titled "Invasive Alien Plants (IAPs) for Eco-friendly Energy: From Environmental Problem to Economic Asset," led by Dr. Judith Kamoto from LUANAR. This project involved women in training sessions on how to convert invasive alien plants into bioenergy sources, creating alternative livelihoods for women in rural communities. Moreover, the project titled "Assessing the Performance of Solar Drying Technology," led by Dr. John Taulo, supported a farmers' cooperative composed primarily of women to improve post-harvest processing and value addition for fruits and vegetables.

Other innovative GEI strategies and Best Practices

The proposal outlined that gender equality and inclusivity considerations would be taken into account during monitoring and evaluation visits. Specifically, the monitoring and evaluation (M&E) teams were to be composed of both male and female officers and experts. The proposal also mentioned that affirmative action for gender inclusivity would be made in the design and implementation of research calls.

NCST actively participated in gender training workshops facilitated by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) to build the capacity of women in research. These workshops provided practical insights into gender mainstreaming, which influenced the development of NCST's institutional Gender Policy. The policy is referenced as a key output of the project, but the actual content of the Gender Policy is not provided.

9.2 BURKINA FASO

Inclusivity e.g PhD Students and Early Career Academics

FONRID proposal mentioned giving priority to young researchers including PhD students and early career academics, through a policy of positive discrimination in the evaluation of research project submissions.

The selection criteria for projects included a focus on promoting the participation of women and young researchers. For instance, the composition of research teams across projects included a mix of senior and early career researchers. Besides, training sessions were held for project managers and key investigators, which included early career academics, to enhance their capacity in project execution and financial management. A total of 8 undergraduate students were supported and 2 MSc students prepared and defended their theses using the project data.

Women Led Projects

At the proposal stage, FONRID promised to employ positive discrimination strategies in favor of women-led research projects. The proposal articulated that special emphasis would be placed on encouraging women-led projects.

FONRID directly supported women-led research initiatives. Out of the nine funded projects, two were led by women. The project on the conservation and production of local beer was led by Isabelle Dabiré/Dabiré, and the project on improving the Hibiscus cannabinus value chain was led by Nessenindoa Julienne Gué.

Composition of Research Team

The proposal committed to ensuring gender balance in the composition of research teams by applying criteria in its evaluation processes that emphasize gender equity. The evaluation criteria were stated to prioritize gender inclusion and ensure that submissions which showed balanced gender representation among team members would receive favorable consideration.

The research teams across the nine projects were composed of diverse, multidisciplinary experts from national institutions and collaborative partners from Burkina Faso and Senegal. The projects were divided into five national initiatives and four collaborative initiatives, with teams generally comprising about 30% women. In the national projects, at least 14 women contributed their expertise, while in the collaborative projects more than 10 women were actively involved. Each team included a mix of researchers, technical experts, and field staff. Additionally, in the project on the use of Go.Data for malaria control, the team included both male and female data collectors and health workers.

Research projects targeting gendered themes

Research projects that addressed gendered themes were funded. The project on the promotion of local beer production ("Atouts culturels et promotion des technologies de conservation de la bière locale au Burkina Faso") targeted female brewers, most of whom were non-literate and older (average age of 53). Training was provided in hygiene and production practice. Additionally, the project on the value chain for Hibiscus cannabinus (kenaf) focused on improving the livelihoods of women by enhancing processing techniques and market access for products traditionally handled by women.

Other innovative GEI strategies and Best Practices

FONRID appointed a dedicated gender focal point within their management structure (Dr. Mrs Aminata KABORE) to ensure gender mainstreaming across all activities related to project management.

The selection criteria for project funding explicitly integrated gender considerations. Training and capacity-building sessions were deliberately structured to include both men and women, reinforcing gender parity in skill development. The project on local beer production particularly highlighted the role of women in traditional industries and sought to modernize production methods without compromising cultural practices, representing a nuanced approach to gender and inclusivity.

9.3 TANZANIA

Inclusivity e.g PhD Students and Early Career Academics

COSTECH supported 6 researchers to undertake MSc studies but failed to include any PhD students due to the limited timeframe of the project. It is not clear whether these students were able to defend their thesis which was pegged to the project output or contribute to research outputs.

Women Led Projects

COSTECH SGC supported inclusivity in its research projects through two main objectives; "To Increase the number of women leading in managing research projects" and "To build capacity of early career researchers at MSc and PhD levels".

Unfortunately, the objective on increasing number of women PI was not realized; the council attributed this to the call focus on themes of Industrialization and manufacturing, which are still dominated by male researchers. Notably, COSTECH later revised its grants manual and, in 2023, implemented a separate grant category for female researchers, in which all the PIs were women, and the research teams achieved a 50/50 gender balance.

Composition of Research Team

The research teams were formed across four collaborating institutions (Sokoine University of Agriculture, Tanzania Engineering and Manufacturing Design, University of Dar es Salaam, and University of Dodoma) and predominantly comprised male researchers, technicians, and engineers, with female representation below 30% in the original call.

Research projects targeting gendered themes

During this funding cycle, COSTECH's objective was to fund proposals that focused on enhancing manufacturing and research in Tanzania. Some of these projects have had a direct impact on their communities, for example in one project there was technology transfer for the hybrid technology of processing of sunflower oil to locally existing sunflower processing plants. In another project, cost- effective innovative animal feeding programs were recommended to contribute to the Youth National Program.

Other innovative GEI strategies and Best Practices

COSTECH implemented a few innovative gender equity and inclusivity (GEI) strategies and best practices. For example, although the original call in manufacturing and industrialization had a low representation of female PIs, COSTECH ensured that female researchers were proportionally included in every research team as a criterion for selection. Learning from this experience, they revised their grants manual to introduce a dedicated grant category specifically for female researchers, as well as one for young researchers. In 2023, this revised approach was put into practice by issuing a call that resulted in female-led projects with research teams achieving a balanced 50/50 gender representation. Additionally, COSTECH improved its online National Research Management system and provided capacity building for new staff, which together with the GEI strategies contributed to enhancing overall inclusivity and effective research management.

9.4 ZAMBIA

Inclusivity e.g PhD Students and Early Career Academics

A total of 33 BSc, 11 master's and three PhD students were trained under the project, which contributed to enhancing their skills and knowledge in research and grant management. The project also emphasized professional development through direct participation in research activities. For instance, in the research on SARS-CoV-2, researchers gained new skills in culturing vero-6 cells and in screening candidate plant species for viral growth inhibition. These activities involved hands-on training and mentorship, which directly benefited early career academics. The bilateral and trilateral joint calls facilitated cross-border learning and experience-sharing among researchers from Zambia, Mozambique, and Malawi which further broadened the exposure and research capabilities of early career academics.

Women Led Projects

The report does not mention any project that was explicitly led by a woman.

Composition of Research Team

Specific numbers of male and female team members were not provided for most projects. For example, in the project on "Strengthening the partnership among Government, Academia and Industry in Research and Innovation" led by Dr. Joseph Phiri of Copperbelt University, both male and female researchers were involved, but the report does not provide the exact numbers of men and women. Similarly, the project on solar drying technology for fruits and vegetables involved both male and female researchers, but the gender breakdown is not specified in the report.

Research projects targeting gendered themes

NSTC funded research targeting gendered themes. A specific national call was issued on Gender Dimensions in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) in Academia, Industry, and Research & Development in Zambia. One project was funded under this call, titled "Exploring the gender dimensions and factors affecting female participation in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) in Academia, Industry-Research & Development in Zambia" led by Dr. Cephas Sialubanje from Levy Mwanawasa Medical University. The project examined the barriers and opportunities for female participation in STI and resulted in a scientific paper titled "Gender integration and female participation in scientific and health research in Zambia: A descriptive mixed methods cross-sectional study", which was accepted for publication in the British Medical Journal (BMJ).

Other innovative GEI strategies and Best Practices

Various strategies and best practices were implemented to ensure gender balance and inclusivity in research teams and decision-making bodies. These included a framework for implementing PPPs in research and innovation was developed under the leadership of Dr. Shem Sikombe. The framework provides a structured approach for identifying, funding, and managing PPPs, with gender balance and inclusivity embedded as key evaluation criteria.

9.5 UGANDA

Inclusivity e.g PhD Students and Early Career Academics

UNCST proposal committed to promoting inclusivity by expanding avenues and opportunities for women and early-career researchers. The proposal specified that capacity-building activities would be undertaken to support researchers at different career levels. Prior to issuing the call for proposals, UNCST planned to partner with the East African Science and Technology Commission (EASTECO) and the National Commissions of its Member States to provide training in research writing, research publication, and gender-responsive pedagogy for research students. This training aimed to increase participation of both male and female researchers, particularly targeting early-career academics and women. Additionally, the proposal stated that a regional course running under EASTECO would be made available and accessible on a scholarship basis to male and female researchers from Uganda to improve the quality of grant applications and increase their visibility and competitiveness in research.

The winner of the SGCI-I extension component grant was an early-career female researcher. UNCST also facilitated capacity-building activities aimed at early-career researchers. Two research teams funded under SGCI at Uganda Christian University and Makerere University's School of Veterinary Medicine and Biosecurity received training on intellectual property (IP) registration and exploitation. This training was designed to equip researchers with knowledge and skills to navigate the process of securing and managing IP generated from their research. The training was conducted to strengthen research capacity and increase the participation of early-career researchers in the manufacturing sector. Besides, UNCST trained 19 staff members, including two in Prince2 project management, two in grants management, and 15 in translating Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) policies into regulations. Four Master's students (three female, one male) completed their studies, while three female Bachelor's students graduated.

Women Led Projects

The proposal outlined that the call for proposals would require gender-balanced leadership within research consortia, specifically encouraging women to take up the role of principal investigators (PIs) and co-principal investigators (Co-PIs). The proposal also mentioned that selection criteria for the research call would assign additional points for projects led by women or with significant female leadership.

UNCST supported two women-led projects under SGCI-II. Dr. Deborah Ruth Amulen led the project titled "Commercialization of Propolis Powder and Infused Tea bags for Improved Health and Income in Uganda." The project secured additional funding of UGX 100 million from Makerere University's Innovation Fund, reinforcing the success of this woman-led initiative.

Additionally, Professor Dorothy Nambugwe from Makerere University led the "Development of safe mass rearing tools and value addition for the desert locust value chain in East Africa" project. This project received funding under a separate agreement between UNCST, NRF-Kenya, and NRF-South Africa, indicating UNCST's commitment to supporting women-led projects beyond the primary SGCI-II framework.

Composition of Research Team

UNCST had committed to ensuring gender balance within research teams as part of the proposal evaluation criteria. The call guidelines were expected to specify that research consortia must have gender balance in the composition of research teams, particularly in senior researcher and co-principal investigator (Co-PI) positions. The proposal outlined that gender composition would be explicitly evaluated during the technical review of research proposals, with teams that reflected gender balance receiving higher scores. Additionally,

the proposal stated that UNCST would revise the National Research Ethics Guidelines to require gender parity in the selection of research participants for research involving human subjects.

Among the seven projects funded under SGCI-II, one project, "Commercialization of Propolis Powder and Infused Tea bags for Improved Health and Income in Uganda," was led by a woman, Dr. Deborah Ruth Amulen. Additionally, the appointment of a female researcher, Professor Dorothy Nambugwe from Makerere University, to lead the "Development of safe mass rearing tools and value addition for the desert locust value chain in East Africa" project, further demonstrated efforts to enhance gender balance in leadership.

Research projects targeting gendered themes

The proposal stated that the call guidelines would explicitly require gender mainstreaming in research designs and outputs. Research proposals were expected to address both male and female gender considerations, collect gender-disaggregated data, and present gender-disaggregated results and analyses. Furthermore, UNCST proposed to fund and promote "assets-based" research that would demonstrate the positive and critical roles that both men and women played in Uganda's economic and social development. The proposal also mentioned that research themes would include aspects of gender equity and inclusion as evaluation criteria for awarding grants.

UNCTS did not provide specific details or examples of funded projects explicitly addressing gendered themes. However, the proposal evaluation criteria included gender and inclusivity considerations, and projects were expected to collect gender-disaggregated data and present gendered analyses in their reporting.

Other innovative GEI strategies and Best Practices

UNCST proposed several innovative strategies to strengthen gender equality and inclusivity within the research ecosystem. These included:

- Establishing women's writing and peer-review groups to enhance the capacity of women researchers to secure research grants and publish in high-impact journals.
- Developing awareness campaigns in collaboration with the Uganda Institute of Professional Engineers and the Gender Learning Alliance to highlight the benefits of gender parity in research and innovation.
- Promoting the use of influential female engineers and researchers as role models to increase the visibility and motivation for women to participate in research.

UNCST established a three-member internal Gender Committee to oversee and mainstream gender and inclusivity within UNCST's programs. The committee produced a draft UNCST Gender Policy, which was submitted to the governing board for approval. UNCST developed and refined the TECHNOMART platform, an online gateway for matching technological solutions with industry needs. The platform was expanded to include a module for internships and apprenticeships, creating additional opportunities for early-career researchers and improving gender balance in recruitment for research and industry roles.

9.6 RWANDA

Inclusivity e.g PhD Students and Early Career Academics

All projects were required to include graduate students (Master's or PhD) in their teams, with a focus on ensuring that women were actively involved in research activities. A total of 7 Master's and 1 PhD student were trained under the project.

Women Led Projects

One of the key objectives of the projects was to support and promote Women in Research and Innovation. NCST established a mandatory requirement that at least 30% of the research team must be women. This criterion was key for project eligibility and funding. In the 1st Interim Technical Report, it was noted that

out of the 59 proposals received, only 28 fulfilled this requirement. Of the 28 proposals, the average female representation was 38% and the team with the highest female representation had 57%, whilst the lowest had 30%. The project selection process encouraged female leadership in the sense that 5 projects out of the 28 shortlisted projects had female Principal Investigators (PIs) and from the final 4 selected projects, one had a female PI. The projects also aimed to build the capacity of women in research and innovation. In the Final Technical Report, it stipulated that among the 8 funded projects one project was led by a woman and the project led by a woman showed potential for commercialization and was selected for further funding towards commercialization.

Composition of Research Team

The team composition of each project had a minimum of 30% women and among the 8 funded projects one project was led by a woman. The reports however do not give a complete breakdown of the research teams however, the project on "Assessing the Dendropower Generation Potential of short Rotation Woody Crops and Agroforestry in Remote Areas of Rwanda" by Dr. Jean Damascene Ndayambaje had 3 researchers, technicians and 3 ladies in the team.

Research projects targeting gendered themes

None of the 8 funded projects are explicitly described as gender themed (projects that address women-specific subjects/ research problems). All projects were in the area of Food Security and Modern Agriculture and Sustainable Energy.

Other innovative GEI strategies and Best Practices

NCST established a specific Grant scheme for women "Women in Science Research and Innovation Grant to ensure increased participation of women in performing R&D Activities and ensure increased women scientific leadership and entrepreneurship.

9.7 MOZAMBIQUE

Inclusivity e.g PhD Students and Early Career Academics

The projects supported early career academics and PhD students, including 1 PhD, 4 Masters students and 16 Undergraduates.

Women Led Projects

FNI prioritized the need for gender balance/inclusivity in the proposals as a criterion to be considered in the review. Of the 7 funded projects, which had an objective of supporting and promoting the involvement of women in research and innovation, two (2) are coordinated by women as principal investigators.

Composition of Research Team

The funded projects included 8 female students.

Research projects targeting gendered themes

The project funded research in key areas were agro-processing, indigenous knowledge systems, sustainable health, and renewable energy. While the themes were not explicitly gendered, the project ensured inclusivity by involving women researchers and students in the research teams and 36 participants were trained in milk processing using native fruits (maphilwa and masala) and financial management of which (63%) of the trainees were female and the rest were male. 14 women small masala fruit suppliers were also trained in fruit quality criteria and another 22 were trained in use of native fruit pulp and juice in cooking highlighting the project's focus on gender and inclusivity. 72 women from a total of 118 people were trained. The projects such as the "Application of indigenous knowledge in the treatment of infectious diseases (Malaria, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and COVID-19) in Manica and Tete provinces of Mozambique, and in the Linyanti and Sibinda constituencies in the Zambezi region of Namibia" by Charwan Iwanette du Preez and Dizimalta dos Santos Fernando also had an impact on the community whereby 31 traditional

practitioners were trained in the development of herbal remedies for commercialization in Manica and Sussundenga and other stakeholders including women were trained in agro-processing.

Other innovative GEI strategies and Best Practices

FNI has a Gender Strategy whose aim is to "Encourage women to participate more actively in scientific research in Mozambique". This strategy is informed and aligned to the 2016 GRC Statement of Principles and Actions: Promoting the Equality and Status of Women in Research. FNI is guided by this strategy in the design and management of all calls and related processes that funded research projects address and promote gender equality and inclusivity throughout the research project cycle. During the implementation of these projects, FNI updated the Gender Strategy to include the issues related to inclusion and inclusivity.

9.8 SENEGAL

Inclusivity e.g PhD Students and Early Career Academics

Support was provided to higher education students across several projects. In the project "Amélioration de l'utilisation du phosphore du sol pour la Fixation Biologique d'Azote," two Master's (Masters 2) students in BIOVEM were supported. In the project "Mise en valeur des terres salées pour contribuer à l'amélioration des conditions de vie des populations vulnérables," two Master's students were supported and one PhD candidate was engaged (with a thesis in progress). In the project "Fertilisation innovante par rhizo-inoculation pour l'augmentation du rendement du niébé," three theses were defended—specifically, one Licence (undergraduate) student, one engineering student, and one Master's student (with the Master's thesis still being finalized). This amounts to support for one undergraduate (Licence), five Master's students, and one PhD candidate. Furthermore, 18 researchers benefited from EPIVHE II Project training on PCR-based pathogen detection and bioinformatics tools. Additionally, 20 agricultural scientists received training in symbiotic nitrogen fixation and bio-fertilizer application under the Fertilisation Innovante par Rhizo-Inoculation project, while 12 chemists and food safety experts were trained in heavy metal analysis and iodine quantification under the Salt Quality Project.

Women Led Projects

MESRI included gender and inclusivity as criteria in its call for proposals and stated that it was essential that women be included in project teams for them to be eligible. The call, which was widely distributed across the country, generated great enthusiasm from researchers, who sent in 67 proposals. Following the evaluation, six (6) projects were selected for financing in priority areas for the country such as health and food security. Out of the six (6) projects selected for funding, two (2) are led by female researchers, and there were three women in the program management team at DGRI.

Composition of Research Team

The report does not provide a detailed breakdown of the research team composition, however, the evaluators of the proposals recommended that a gender approach be undertaken in project teams and research themes.

Research projects targeting gendered themes

None of the 6 funded projects are explicitly described as gender themed (projects that address women-specific subjects/ research problems).

Other innovative GEI strategies and Best Practices

MESRI has revised the documents of the call for proposals, namely the manual of procedures, the application form, among others, and the gender and inclusiveness dimension is well taken care of. They also have a gender unit at the MESRI that works with the HSRC to better manage gender and inclusivity issues.

9.9 COTE D' IVORE

Inclusivity e.g PhD Students and Early Career Academics

Inclusivity within the context of the FONSTI funded projects is showcased through the deliberate incorporation of diverse participants in research teams. A total of five masters theses were defended as part of the output of the projects.

Women Led Projects

FONSTI included specific measures to ensure that gender and inclusivity were assimilated in the project; First, one of the main project objectives on this funding grant was to "To support the participation of women in research and innovation", Second TORs were designed to encourage female researchers and early career academics to apply. Finally, FONSTI mandated that each selected project team have at least one woman involved by rejecting projects that did not include women or early career researchers (students). This further ring-fenced inclusivity and led to an increase in number of female researchers overall.

The statistics in Cote D'Ivore are as follows: One project had a female PI out of a total of 6 project and a total of 11 female researchers were part of the research team.

Composition of Research Team

Every project team included at least one female researcher, as required by the call for proposals. For instance, the project coordinated by Dr. Assamoi Allah Antoine included Dr. Kamo Irié Lou Bohila Emilie as a female co-investigator; the project led by Dr. KIPRE Gueyraud Rolland included two female team members (Dr. AGRE DON JOSETTE Epse KOUADIO and Dr. KAMO IRIE LOU BOHILA EMILIE); the team for Dr. SEYHI Brahima included two female members (OULAÏ Déhegnan Penan Patricia and ASSI Awo Marie Florence); and the project led by Dr. BENE Kouadio had one female team member (Mlle FAH Monh Alice). Overall, there were approximately eight female team members designated as co-investigators or significant contributors across the projects, aside from the one women-led project.

Research projects targeting gendered themes

FONSTI set out a call to fund projects that meet the needs of the communities while ensuring sustainability and boosting development in Côte d'Ivoire. By selecting projects that relate directly to priority fields in Côte d'Ivoire, the initiative promotes inclusivity by addressing local needs and involving local researchers who understand their communities' specific contexts and challenges.

Other innovative GEI strategies and Best Practices

From the reports, there was no evidence of a National Gender Research Framework in Côte d'Ivoire. Such a policy would ensure that women's voices and perspectives are included in scientific research and encourage promotes gender equity in research fields that may have traditionally been male dominated.

9.10 ZIMBABWE

Inclusivity e.g PhD Students and Early Career Academics

RCZ established guidelines to promote young scientists through several initiatives such as the Small Grant to fund Masters Students through targeted scholarships. A total of eleven (11) students benefited from the scholarship with 5 of these being female students. Additionally, RCZ implemented a staff development program to equip staff with skills that enhance research management. Six (6) staff, two (2) of those being female, have undergone the human capital development training by enrolling in either diploma, undergraduate or post-graduate training.

Women Led Projects

The Research Council of Zimbabwe (RCZ) received many applications, with an almost equal distribution of

male to female applicants (60:54). Further screening brought the final selection to 15 projects with 5 of those being led by female PIs.

It is clear that RCZ has prioritized gender equality and inclusivity, by prioritizing research teams with gender balance as well as using direct statements such as “Female applicants are encouraged to apply”.

The statistics in Zimbabwe are as follows: Five (5) projects had a female PI out of a total of 15 project. It was not immediately clear how many female researchers were in these teams since the reports did not provide team composition.

Composition of Research Team

The report does not delve into team compositions or research roles allocated to researchers.

Research projects targeting gendered themes

RCZ prioritized calls that were demand driven such that the research could be relevant to industry and community.

Other innovative GEI strategies and Best Practices

RCZ adopted the SGCI Gender Mainstreaming Framework and Action Plan made it mandatory for prospective research teams to demonstrate how gender equality and inclusivity would be included in the implementation of their proposed projects.

They also awarded additional scholarships to women researchers in the joint Calls with NCST and BIH with three (3) out of five (5) of the awardees being female.

9.11 BOTSWANA

Inclusivity e.g PhD Students and Early Career Academics

The projects selected were expected to be evaluated on number of students trained and the participation of researchers and/or students from under-represented groups (i.e. black, female and disabled. This led to a high incorporation of graduate students into the research with projects. A total of seven students were supported whereby 3 were master’s students and 4 Ph.D. students.

Women Led Projects

None of the projects had a female PI

Composition of Research Team

Among the total 19 researchers involved in the three projects, 5 were female, with all these female researchers being part of the Coal Beneficiation Project. Additionally, within the graduate students, 3 out of 8 were female, and two of the co-investigators in the Coal Beneficiation and nano-engineered reagents projects were female.

Research projects targeting gendered themes

The research themes were structured around challenges around Botswana and Zimbabwe Mining industry, with a focus on finding relevant technological and scientific solutions for Value Addition and Beneficiation challenges. This research is important as findings could include commercially viable solutions that have economic benefits leading to creation of downstream employment opportunities

Other innovative GEI strategies and Best Practices

From the reports, there was no evidence of a National Gender Research Framework in Botswana. Nonetheless, the council set out regulations where proposals were expected to involve students especially from underrepresented groups (i.e. black, female and disabled) in Botswana.

The council has also established a guideline on Ethics and gender/ inclusivity, which highlights the need to

"avoid discrimination against colleagues based on sex, race, ethnicity, or other factors not related to scientific competence and integrity".

9.12 NAMIBIA

Inclusivity e.g PhD Students and Early Career Academics

Only one project was reported to have supported early career academics including 1 Masters student. No further information is available regarding other projects.

Women Led Projects

As part of the call for proposals guidelines, NCRST set pre-conditions that encouraged women to participate. Additionally, during the evaluation of the proposals, there was a specific score dedicated to enhancing gender diversity or inclusivity in the research teams. NCRST also has a targeted intervention called the Women Innovators Programme in line with the Science Granting Councils Initiative priority areas, which is only open to women. The aim is to empower female innovators in various business concepts under the SGCI with an ultimate aim to empower women to run and spearhead Science, Technology and Innovation focused businesses in Namibia. The NCRST also ensured that during the evaluation of the submitted proposals, women were part of the decision-making body. The project team of the NCRST was also led by a woman and included women as members of the team.

There were 5 projects and three (3) projects for women innovators in the SGCI priority areas. During the Inception workshop the NCRST discussed the matter of gender and inclusivity with all project teams. The NCRST proposed to the project team of the project titled "Food security and Nutrition Improvement by Fostering Protein-rich Legume using low-cost Biotechnology in Namibia (FOODSECBIO)" to take on more women in their project team.

Composition of Research Team

NCRST proposal committed to aligning with Namibia's national and international frameworks promoting gender equality. They explicitly stated that efforts would be directed towards equal representation of genders within research teams. They acknowledged that globally, women constitute only 30% of professionals in science and technology and thus indicated that gender balance in research teams would be promoted explicitly as part of the call guidelines.

Research projects targeting gendered themes

NCRST selected projects that respond to Namibia's national priorities. Project under the thematic area "Emerging Technologies and Development" focusing on sustainable agriculture and 40% towards gender inclusivity by increasing women's participation in Science, Technology and Innovation was funded with the aim of strengthening the participation of women innovators in the SGCI priority areas.

Other innovative GEI strategies and Best Practices

The NCRST constituted a Change Management team for the SGCI Gender Inclusivity Project conducted by Gender at work and worked with the CTA on this project. The team had a meeting and attended a workshop on Gender and Inclusivity.

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