STIPRO
Fostering economic growth and development through innovation

Research by the *Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Research Organization* (STIPRO) is helping the Government of Tanzania harness innovation to drive inclusive growth.

**SETTING THE SCENE** — Innovation typically refers to the successful development and marketing of new or improved products and services, or the use of new techniques to improve the effectiveness of an organization. It has the potential to generate economic growth in developing countries – witness the emerging economies of China, India and Brazil. And when innovation occurs in sectors that involve the poor, such as agriculture and agro-processing industries, it also has the power to reduce poverty. While investments in research and development are important for fostering innovation, the system that links the private enterprises, universities and public research institutes involved in a country’s innovation processes - known as its national innovation system - is of critical importance. How well a country is able to benefit from innovation depends to a large extent on how well this system functions.

For a low-income country like Tanzania, innovation in key sectors could generate significant economic and social leaps. The country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) grew by a healthy 6.5 percent in 2012 and the business environment is friendly compared to many other African countries. However, Tanzania has not yet been able to embrace innovation effectively as a development strategy. Although the country possesses many of the components of a national innovation system, it lacks explicit policies on how to facilitate the interaction of the actors in the system.

**WHAT STIPRO DID** — Science, Technology and Innovation Policy Research Organization (STIPRO) was established in Tanzania in 2001. It works to improve human capacity in science, technology and innovation research while raising awareness of the importance of research for evidence-based policies. Until 2009 STIPRO operated as part of a network and, with few resources at its disposal, was little known in the policy arena – with one exception. In 2007, an article written by STIPRO’s Executive Director about the state of innovation in the country was published in national newspaper *Majira* and caught the attention of Tanzania’s President. Soon after, the President commissioned a review of the country’s national innovation system and STIPRO was subsequently invited to play a role.

The review revealed that Tanzania lacked sufficient evidence to assess the performance of the national innovation system and to generate viable solutions for improving it. STIPRO used the opportunity of being on the
Task Force on the Review of National Innovation Systems to contribute some of its research findings, convincing decision-makers that the country needed a well-organized research program that would provide continuous monitoring of the country’s national innovation system. Based on the results of the review, the government is currently developing a new science, technology and innovation policy that will potentially incorporate that very model.

THE OUTCOME — With financial resources and capacity development support from the Think Tank Initiative (TTI) since 2009, STIPRO has since been able to leverage its new rapport with the government and other stakeholders through increased research, dissemination workshops and meetings with decision-makers. As a result, STIPRO has been invited to join other task forces, most notably the 2013 Smart Partnership’s Global Dialogue on Anchoring Technology for Africa’s Social Economic Transformation. This task force is spearheaded by the President of Tanzania and comprises 20 representatives from the private sector, government, academia and non-governmental organizations. STIPRO was also invited to join the task force on the Tanzanian Industrial Competitiveness Report, co-produced by the Ministry of Industry and Trade and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. The report proposed short-, medium- and long-term industrial development strategies, where issues of technological capability building featured prominently.

Along with STIPRO’s increased credibility and visibility, national concern and understanding about issues surrounding the role of science, technology and innovation policy in the country’s development have also grown. There is now a better understanding of the importance of research for evidence-based policies. The policy approach has also moved from being driven predominantly by supply (production of knowledge) to also taking into account the demand side (users of knowledge). Through its participation in task forces and other activities, STIPRO has been able to influence these changes and with its ongoing research, STIPRO will continue to provide new evidence for national innovation policy reviews and implementation.

For more information on STIPRO, visit http://www.stipro.or.tz

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