

North Eastern Africa Workshop Series on the Role of Science in Assisting Regional Policy Development

(28th-31st October 2019, Addis Ababa)

Highlights of Day One Presentations

1. Recent reform initiatives in Ethiopia have been creating space for policy-research nexus;
 - The adoption of the Ethiopian Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) Policy in 2012, which provides a policy framework for research in national priority areas;
 - The initiative to establish a national research Council within the STI framework, which can facilitate the setting of government research agendas and provide entry points for both collaborative research with state actors and science advice to policy/decision makers;
 - The collaboration between MoST and the Ethiopian Academy of Sciences (EAS) in the development and implementation of a Science and Technology Terminology Project in line with the STI Policy;
 - The establishment of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (MoSHE) with a broad mandate in Science and Research, which is a significant milestone for effecting institutional linkage between researchers and policy actors and between research and development activities;
 - The structural set up of MoSHE reflects the Ministry's commitment to strengthen research especially in higher education institutions, to advance the research-development nexus, and to foster active collaboration between the Ministry and diverse research actors, such as the EAS, learned societies, the Diaspora, HEIs and research institutions;
 - The MoU between EAS and MoSHE has created new opportunities for collaboration in providing evidence-based advice, enhancing research quality, building research capacity, and improving the research environment;
 - The Ethiopian reform initiatives illustrate the potential of such policy and institutional frameworks for creating space for researchers to work in partnership with policy actors in addressing society's needs.
2. There is hardly any sector or domain of public life that cannot benefit from scientific advice – whether social or economic, political or diplomatic – irrespective of whether the agendas emerge at local or international levels.
3. The complexities of issues necessitating scientific advice also imply the need for identifying and forging collaboration with diverse science structures. It also requires assessing the strengths and limitations of potential partners and ensuring coordination among the partners' interventions to maximize impact. Depending on the magnitude and scope of the issues to be addressed through scientific evidence, these structures can be identified at

- the national levels – research institutions (public and private), think tanks, academies and other learned societies, HEIs, government agencies, national committees, research advisors, etc.;
 - the sub-regional levels – regional research networks and organizations;
 - the global level – international organizations, multilateral organizations, etc.
4. Fostering a science-policy nexus perceived as a cyclical process wherein scientific research informs policy/decision-making, which in turn necessitates assessment of impact of policy implementation to set the agenda for subsequent research.
5. Factors to consider for enhancing the potential of research advice to inform/influence policy:
- Reliability and robustness of the research data and evidence as well as the soundness of the research methodology used to generate these;
 - Involving research evidence users in setting the research agenda and in the design of the research;
 - Timeliness of the research and its responsiveness to policy/decision makers' needs and priorities;
 - Understanding political complexities, especially the competing interests either vying for policy influence or determining policy priorities;
 - Need for demonstrating empathy for public concerns;
 - Building capacity of policy/decision makers to stimulate demand for research advice and/ or to use research evidence effectively;
 - The need to provide options in policy advice to create more space and choice for policy/decision making;
 - Need for dialogue and the potential of harmonious, often personal, relations in fostering trust between policy/research actors;
 - Need for tempering optimism with pragmatism when proposing research advice;
 - Need for acknowledging uncertainties in the research findings and conclusions that lead to research advice;
 - Need for communicative skills to get the research advice across to policy/decision makers; need for use of simple language and creative medium that enables both the public and policy makers to easily understand or grasp the essence of the advice.