African Centre for Technology Studies

ACTS
Knowledge for Better Livelihoods

About ACTS

The African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) is a non-profit and non-partisan Inter-governmental think-tank, whose core mandate is to pursue policy-oriented research to strengthen the capacity of African countries and institutions to harness science, technology and innovation (STI) for sustainable development. Founded in 1988 by the renowned African scientist and scholar, the late Prof. Calestous Juma, the Centre is mandated to undertake capacity building, conduct research, provide advisory services and disseminate information on the policy aspects of the application of STI for sustainable development in Africa.

Since its founding, ACTS has been instrumental in enlarging the range of policy choices for sustainable development in Africa. Over the last quarter century, ACTS' work has influenced patent (i.e. industrial property) legislation and policy (Kenya); environmental impact assessment standards (Eastern and Southern Africa); bio-energy and biofuels policy (Kenya, Eastern Africa, West Africa); agricultural policy, bio-diplomacy, biotechnology and biosafety (Africa-wide); climate change adaptation and mitigation (Africa-wide).

ACTS remains among the leading institutions working on sustainable development in Africa. In 2013, it was rated amongst the top environment think-tanks in Africa and the world. ACTS is also a past winner (1991) of the Justinian Rweyemamu Prize from CODESRIA (Africa's Social Science Research Council) for its work in expanding the knowledge base for Africa's development.

VISION

Knowledge for better livelihoods

MISSION

To strengthen the capacity of African countries and institutions to harness science, technology and innovation for sustainable and inclusive development.

ACTS' Programmes

ACTS is committed towards supporting African countries and institutions to tap into the enormous potential of STI for sustainable and inclusive socio-economic development through five programmatic areas:

- Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Security (AFNS);
- Climate Resilient Economies (CRE);
- Science, Technology, Innovation, Knowledge and Society (STIKS);
- Digital Innovation and Knowledge Economy (DIKE); and
- Gender, Youth and Inclusive Development (GYID).

Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Security (AFNS)

This programme aims to accelerate sustainable, inclusive agri-food systems' transformation for food and nutrition security through cutting-edge STI-focused, policy-relevant research and knowledge brokerage. The programme contributes to the efforts of the African Union (AU) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to enhance food and nutrition security and improve livelihoods in Africa through harnessing STI for sustainable and inclusive agri-food systems. Activities under the AFNS programme are motivated by food insecurity, under nourishment and dietary transitions; Impact of climate change and other emerging shocks on resilience of agri-food system; regionalisation and agri-food systems' transformation through trade; and the challenge of post-harvest loss and waste and the imperative to accelerate sustainable agro-industry.

The programme focuses on five key areas:

- Resilient and climate smart small-holder agri-food systems;
- Digital innovation for sustainable and transformational agri-food systems;
- Supporting regional trade through sustainable and inclusive agri-food systems;
- Innovation-driven, market-led, healthy and sustainable agri-food systems;
- Cross-cutting issues on inclusive, gender-transformative agri-food sector transformation through strategic partnerships.

Climate Resilient Economies (CRE)

The programme provides policy choices that support the generation, uptake and harnessing of climate change-related STI for sustainable and diversified livelihoods, socio-economic development and bio diversity conservation in Africa. Through these efforts, the programme expects to create an inclusive, pro-poor and thriving climate change resilient economies for economic, social and environmental sustainability in Africa. The programme is keen on supporting development of enabling capacities, policies, organisations and institutions for harnessing applications of climate change-related sciences, technologies and innovations for energy access and security, water quality and security, bio diversity and natural resource management in Africa by:

- Mobilising resources and funds for building climate-resilient economies;
- Strengthening the research quality and messaging within international discourses through the climate change policy laboratory;
- Strengthening knowledge and learning systems on climate change through the virtual academy;
- Leveraging strategic partnerships for influence and outreach on policy, research and training.

Science, Technology & Innovation, Knowledge and Society (STIKS)

The STIKS programme envisions an African continent that effectively creates and utilises research findings on the interplay between STI, knowledge and society to formulate development strategies, policies and practice. To achieve this vision, the programme undertakes key STI research and supports the development of a cadre of researchers, analysts, policy makers, entrepreneurs, businesses and communities in Africa on the interplay of STI, knowledge and society, specifically related to the African context. The programme focuses on research, policy and capacity building activities in six areas:

- Use of evidence in STI policy making in Africa;
- Innovation and development of postgraduates and academic professionals;
- Innovation and development mentorship and training for innovators/ entrepreneurs/ policy makers and civil society;
- Promoting sustainable circular innovation;
- The forth industrial revolution and new technological innovations (expanding the ongoing projects); f) Intellectual property and technology transfer;
- Evaluation of the socio-economic impact of STI;
- Development and implementation of STI roadmaps for SDGs.

Digital Innovation and Knowledge Economy (DIKE)

The programme aims to enhance the development, deployment and adoption of responsible digital technologies for sustainable and inclusive development in Africa through capacity building, policy research and technology brokerage. To unlock the potential of state-of-the-art digital technologies - such as 4th industrial revolution technologies for driving the economies of African countries - the programme focuses on five key activities:

- Conducting policy research in enhancing effective application of digital solutions in Africa;
- Strengthening post-graduate training and research in responsible digital technologies in Africa for sustainable development;
- Promoting uptake, deployment and adoption of digital technologies for sustainable development;
- Enhancing the growth and financial sustainability of the digital innovation and knowledge economy programme;
- Building the required human resource capacity for the digital innovation and knowledge economy programme.

Gender, Youth and Inclusive Development (GYID)

The programme aims to empower women, youth and vulnerable groups to harness science, technology and innovation for economic, social and environmental sustainability in Africa. It strives to achieve this goal by providing policy choices that exploit the potential of women, youth and other marginalised groups to harness STI for sustainable and diversified livelihoods and socio-economic development in Africa. The programme recognises the potential of STI's role in enhancing the contribution of women to sustainable development in Africa. The programme works closely with the other programmes to ensure gender issues are mainstreamed into programmatic activities. It focuses on 3 key activities:

- Undertaking policy research that promotes the uptake of STI solutions (by youth, women and marginalised persons) to self-reliance;
- Packaging research results into knowledge products for dissemination, outreach and policy engagement;
- Undertaking technology brokerage and transfer of innovations that provide sustainable solutions to meet the needs of women, youth and marginalised communities.

Programme Implementation Strategies

Research and Innovation
ACTS recognises the role of reputable research and innovation, and the promotion of internationally-competitive research as a core strategic goal. To ensure the Centre can compete in a globally competitive environment, this commitment to research is aligned with the Centre's imperative to support the development of a cadre of Africa-centred researchers, analysts and policy makers on STI, knowledge and society.

Cultivating Partnerships
ACTS has established an extensive list of partners, ranging from development partners, universities, research organisations, international NGOs as well as community-based organisations. These organisations enhance the value of the Centre in delivery of its mandate.

Capacity Building
For ACTS to achieve its vision, it is imperative that its partners and stakeholders – both public and private – have the knowledge and skills in areas related to the Centre's programmatic focus. For this reason, ACTS is continuously engaged in building the capacity of its stakeholders in key areas related to the Centre's mandate.
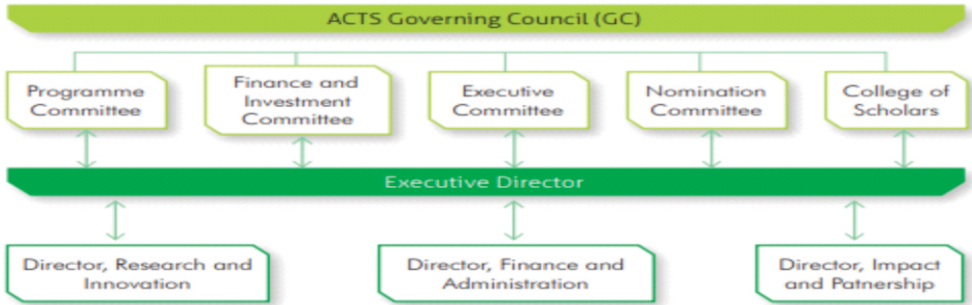
Monitoring and Evaluation
ACTS considers Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) as key to enhancing its overall efficiency and effectiveness. This encompasses tracking of the implementation of the research activities and outputs and measuring their contribution to outcomes. Monitoring of outcomes helps to determine the success of ACTS' interventions.
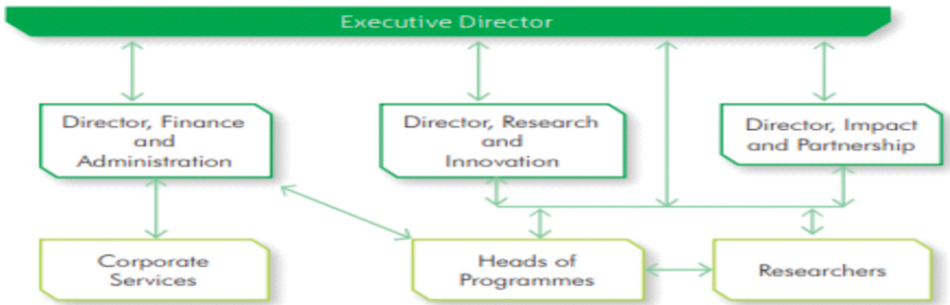
Policy Dialogues
As part of its mandate to influence policy, ACTS engages in regular policy discussions with its stakeholders to raise critical issues, share perspectives, find common ground and reach agreement or consensus on policy solutions touching on its mandate.

Governance of ACTS

ACTS is led by a Governing Council (GC) whose role is to provide oversight, insight and foresight to the centre. The primary mandate of the Governing Council is to provide governance oversight in ensuring ACTS function to the highest standards to execute its mission. The Council has delegated the day-to-day management of the Centre to the Executive Director who is assisted by the Senior Management Team (SMT).

The Secretariat Structure

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