Science Granting Councils Initiative
Phase Two (SGCI II)

Research Management
Strengthening the Practices and Resilience of Science Granting Councils in Sub-Saharan Africain Research and Grants Management

YEAR 2 NEWSLETTER
1 October 2024 – 30 September 2025





In April 2025, the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI) proudly marked ten years of strengthening sub-Saharan Africa's national public research funders. Since its launch in March 2015, SGCI has grown into a landmark partnership between the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), and the National Research Foundation of South Africa (NRF-SA). Over the past decade, the Initiative has played a transformative role in enhancing the capacity of Science Granting Councils (SGCs) to support high -quality research and innovation that responds to Africa's development priorities.

The first phase of the Initiative (SGCI-1) focused on building the capacities of SGCs in 15 African countries: Botswana, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe. This phase prioritised improved research management, the design of robust research programmes, knowledge transfer, and collaboration among SGCs and wider science system actors. Building on these achievements, the second phase (SGCI-2) supports SGCs in 17 countries across Eastern, Western, and Southern Africa.

The programme continues to deepen capacity for research management while expanding into additional themes: Evidence in Policy Making, Cooperation Projects, Strategic Communications and Knowledge Uptake, Gender Inclusivity, and Private Sector Engagement. The ten year milestone reflects a decade of sustained investment in stronger, more responsive national research systems across the continent.



Figure 1: SGCI participation countries

RIMAs contribution over the 10 years

SGCI is implemented through various Collaborating Technical Agencies (CTAs). The Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA) participates in the initiative as one of the CTAs. From the outset, SARIMA led Theme 1 on Research Management in partnership with its sister organisations namely, Central African Research and Innovation Management Association (CARIMA), Eastern African Research and Innovation Management Association (EARIMA); and West African Research and Innovation Management Association (WARIMA).

The RIMA network delivered targeted training, technical support, and peer-learning platforms, with strong advocacy for the professionalisation of research management and for the establishment and adoption of online grants management systems. Through these efforts, the RIMAs strengthened skills across the full research grant lifecycle and helped to establish a firm foundation for effective, transparent, and accountable research management practices within SGCs.

In SGCI-2, SARIMA in partnership with WARIMA continues to contribute to Theme 1: Research Management (October 2023–September 2026). This support includes capacity assessments, skills enhancement, in-country technical assistance, collaborative learning, and the dissemination of good practice.

As SGCI celebrates its tenth anniversary, the RIMA community reflects with pride on its foundational contribution to the initiative's achievements and growth. The RIMAs have formalised a collective agreement to establish the Pan-African Network of Research and Innovation Management Associations (PAN-RIMA). This network will deepen African collaboration in research and innovation management, strengthen professional standards, and position the continent as a strategic global partner. These objectives are aligned with the vision and priorities of SGCI.

Looking ahead, the RIMA community reaffirms its commitment to a continued and strengthened partnership with SGCI. Through PAN-RIMA, the RIMAs remain key technical partners in advancing effective research and innovation management. This enduring collaboration will help ensure that SGCI's next decade delivers even greater impact in building resilient, inclusive, and innovative research systems across Africa.

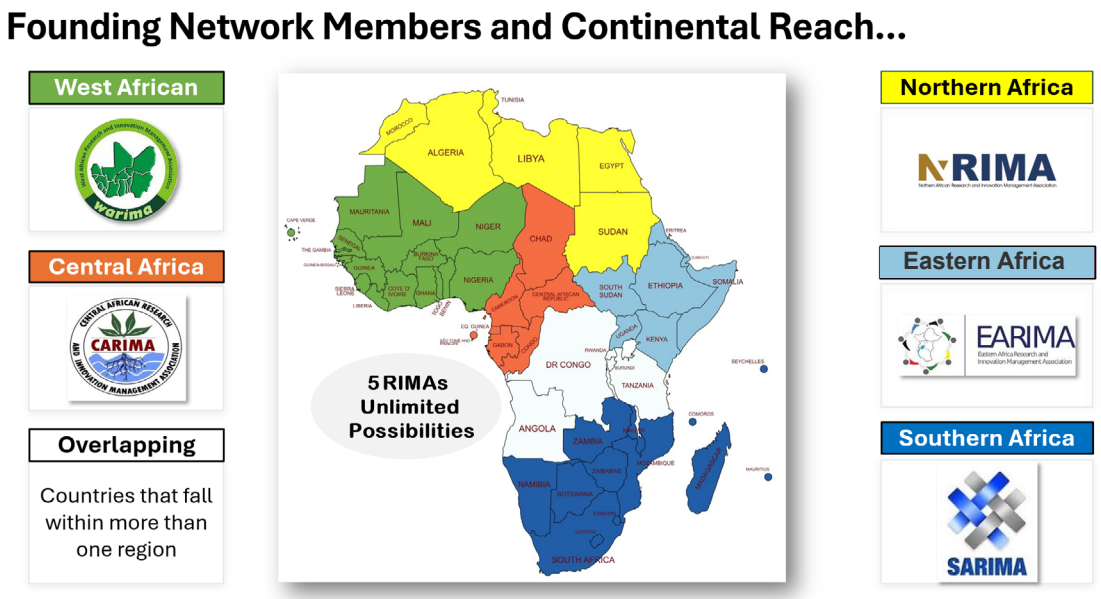


Figure 2: PAN-RIMA

Programme Implementation Approach

"Strengthening the Practices and Resilience of Science Granting Councils in sub -Saharan Africa in Research and Grants Management" is being implemented in a phased approach to ensure that the capacity strengthening interventions are needs-based and context-sensitive. The success of the interventions largely depends on its ability to target specific needs and priorities of the SGCs. The first phase involved a comprehensive assessment of the research and grants management capacities and practices. This was completed during first year of implementation.

The second phase continuously draws on the findings from the assessment and changing needs of the SGCs. These therefore the basis of customised capacity strengthening intervention that is co-designed with the SGCs and considers synergies with areas implemented by other CTAs.

The overall project approach is summarised in Figure 3 below.

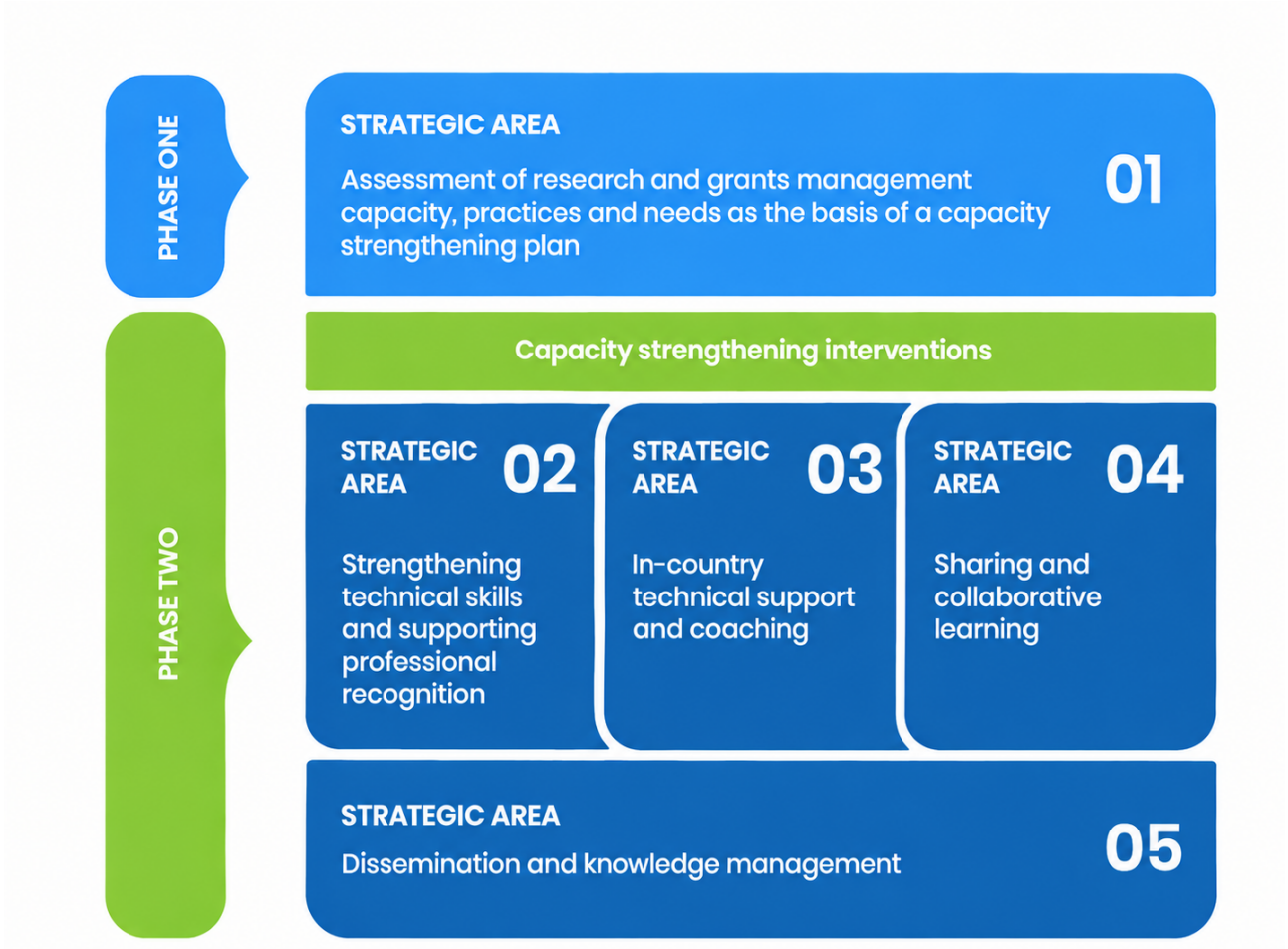


Figure 3: Project approach

Programme Highlights

The Southern African Research and Innovation Management Association (SARIMA), in partnership with the West African Research and Innovation Management Association (WARIMA), continues to lead Theme 1: Research Management under the Science Granting Councils Initiative (SGCI Phase II).

Building on a decade of SGCI, Year 2 focused on strengthening institutional capacity, advancing professionalisation, and reinforcing research management systems across 17 Science Granting Councils (SGCs) in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Research management remains a critical enabler of effective national science systems. Strengthened systems support improved funding allocation, accountability, research quality, and the translation of research into socio-economic impact. In this context, SGCI interventions are designed to be needsbased, context-sensitive, and aligned to both national priorities and broader continental frameworks. During Year 2, the programme delivered nine in-country Technical Assistance Visits (TAVs), alongside multilingual virtual training in English, French, and Portuguese, reaching over 440 participants. More than 90 International Professional Recognition Council (IPRC) training points were endorsed, contributing to structured pathways for professional recognition. These interventions were complemented by peer learning engagements and participation in continental and global platforms, further strengthening collaboration and knowledge exchange.

The programme contributed to measurable institutional and individual-level outcomes. SGCs reported strengthened grant management processes, improved research funding strategies, and enhanced Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems to support evidence-based decision-making. Capacity was strengthened across the research lifecycle, including proposal development, financial management, research uptake, and impact orientation. Importantly, there is growing recognition of research management as a profession, supported by increased awareness and engagement with IPRC pathways and the application of the Professional Competency Framework (PCF).

Targeted technical support and sustained engagement have also contributed to system-level changes. For example, the Research Council of Zimbabwe formalised a Grant Award Appeals Standard Operating Procedure, strengthening transparency and accountability in funding processes. In Burkina Faso, institutional leadership shifted from initial scepticism to recognising the strategic value of research management strengthening. In Zambia, capacity development translated into broader institutional impact, including strengthened roles in gender and inclusion within research systems.

Collaboration remains a central pillar of SGCI's approach. Engagement across regional Research and Innovation Management Associations (RIMAs) has strengthened peer learning and knowledge sharing, while the establishment of the Pan-African Network of RIMAs (PAN-RIMA) positions the continent for more coordinated and strategic collaboration in research and innovation management.

Year 2 reinforces that targeted research management interventions contribute directly to stronger, more resilient research systems. Looking ahead, Year 3 will focus on deepening technical assistance, expanding advanced training, strengthening professional recognition pathways, and scaling knowledge dissemination. These efforts will further position research management as a strategic lever for enhancing the effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of research management across Sub -Saharan Africa.

Strengthening Research Management Capacity

SGCI Phase 1: **Building** Sustainable Research Management Capacity in Science Granting Councils in Sub-Saharan Africa (2016-2019)

SGCI Phase 2: **Strengthening** the Practices and Resilience of Science Granting Councils in Sub-Saharan Africa in Research and Grants Management (2023- 2026)

SGCI Phase 2 Achievements to date

Increased awareness of the SGCs needs and strengthening interventions are needs-based and context-sensitive: Survey conducted in Munyonyo, Uganda (June 2023) accompanied by ongoing gaps identification- informs implementation of activities.

Strengthened Managing Funded Research Skills amongst SGCs and their stakeholders

2 Virtual Training Courses (2024; 2025)

- Managing Funded Research (English), with French and Portuguese interpretation
- Managing Funded Research (French), with English and Portuguese interpretation

Over 450 participants

Strengthened research management practices across SGCs

9 Technical assistant visits:



Research Funding, Managing Funded Research

- Monitoring and Evaluation, Partnerships and Collaboration; Research Uptake, Utilisation and Impact, Policy & Planning

Over 230 participants

Earned 90+ IPRC endorsed training points through virtual courses & technical visits

IPRC International Professional Recognition Council

Increased Awareness and Interest in Professional Recognition through International Professional Recognition Council (IPRC)

- IPRC guidance webinars (English, French and Portuguese)
- Distribution of IPRC promotional material during SGCI events
- Sharing of stories of change from Research Management Practitioners



First SGC staff member IPRC recognised, Showcasing the Growing Importance of Research Management in SGCs

Enhanced knowledge sharing through accessible RM tools and resources

- Needs assessment report (English, French, Portuguese) published on SGCI website
- English Virtual training course recordings on SGCI youtube

https://www.youtube.com/@SGCI-IOSRS

- Newsletters
- Professional competency framework translated to French and Portuguese- published on SGCI website





Ongoing Learning and collaboration

- Actively participate in SGCI Annual Forums and Regional Forums
- Continuously extending learning and collaboration opportunities for SGCs beyond SGCI through our networks

Upcoming activities (Sept 2025 - Sept 2026)

More technical Assistance Visits

1 virtual training

Ongoing RM professionalisation support

RM resources

View RIMA websites for collaboration opportunities beyond SGCI

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

Strengthening technical skills

Virtual training

TRAINING DESIGN THROUGH SEQUENTIAL LEARNING

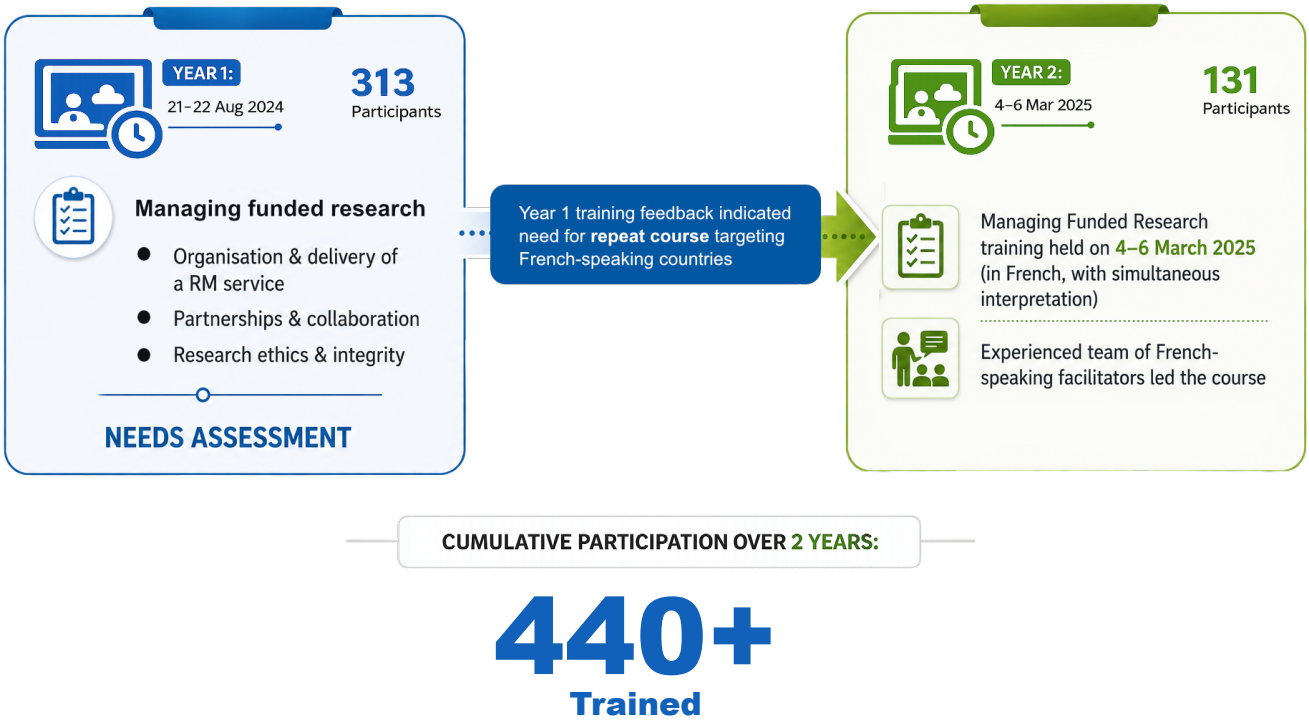


Figure 5: Virtual training overview

The needs assessment conducted in 2024 involving SGCs identified "Managing funded research" as the highest priority topic, with most institutions requesting support at intermediate to advanced levels. This evidence directly informed the training programme design over the past 2 years.

Over the two-year period, two accredited virtual courses were implemented, reaching a cumulative number of over 440 participants.

The first course (21–22 August 2024) was delivered in English with French and Portuguese interpretation. Feedback from the needs assessment and first course informed implementation that there is still a need for a course in Managing Funded research. This led to an adaptation of time, day selection language, and focus areas to suit the needs primarily of the Francophone countries.

The second course was hosted on 4 & 6 March 2025 delivered primarily in French, significantly expanding access for Francophone stakeholders. This course was designed to address critical gaps in research management by providing participants with practical knowledge on funding landscapes, proposal development, financial accountability, ethics, innovation, and research impact communication. The training brought together science granting council staff, research administrators, research managers, directors, and researchers/innovators from across the continent.

An experienced team of experience French speaking facilitators was coordinated to lead the course. The training was well attended with 134 participants. IPRC successfully endorsed 7 training points towards this course. Participants who wish to peruse Research Management can use the certificate of attendance as part of their portfolio of evidence. Over 100 certificates were issue to eligible participants that met the training requirements. Participants pursuing Research Management professionalisation can use the certificate of attendance as part of their portfolio of evidence.

Virtual training

Participant feedback highlights strong relevance **and practical application**

Seventy-three participants from 12 Sub-Saharan African countries completed the training evaluation, with 79% reporting that the course met their expectations. Participants represented universities, research institutions, Ministries of Science and Technology, and Science Granting Councils, reflecting the diversity of the research and innovation ecosystem. Many participants plan to cascade learning through workshops, mentorship, and institutional knowledge-sharing initiatives. The programme has contributed to professionalising research management and enhancing capacity to compete for international funding. Key themes on the most valuable aspects of attending the course for participants personal development included:

01 **Research Management Skills:**
Enhanced understanding of managing funded research, proposal development, budgeting, financial compliance, and ethical considerations in research. Participants gained knowledge on navigating the research funding landscape and learned effective management processes.

02 **Networking and Collaboration:**
Opportunities for networking with peers, renowned experts, and international researchers. Participants recognized the importance of building partnerships and collaborations within and outside academia, fostering interdisciplinary connections for future projects.

03 **Capacity Building and Practical Knowledge:**
Development of practical skills such as grant writing, donor mapping, technological transfer, and commercialization of research results. Participants also increased their awareness of the significance of professional recognition in research management.

The SGCs shared the following regarding the training course Most valuable aspect:
"the right composition of a research team, the different stages of technology transfer and commercialization"
(quote translated from French to English)
Burkina Faso

Sharing of knowledge: "I plan to share the key insights from the funded research training with my peers and community of practice through: Knowledge-Sharing Sessions: Organizing brief workshops or presentations within my institution to highlight best practices in grant writing, funding opportunities, and research management. Resource Development: Creating summarized guides, checklists, or presentations on key takeaways to help colleagues navigate the research funding process more effectively. One-on one mentorship & Support, assisting peers in developing strong research proposals, understanding funding requirements, and improving grant management practices. Collaboration & Networking – Encouraging joint research initiatives and partnerships to strengthen institutional and regional research capacity."
Kenya

The SGCI, in collaboration with SARIMA/WARIMA and expert facilitators, continues to play a pivotal role in professionalizing research management and enabling research management practitioners and institutions to compete effectively for international funding.

Supporting Research Management professional recognition

Positive feedback from the needs assessment highlighted interest among Research Management (RM) practitioners in pursuing professional recognition through the International Professional Recognition Council (IPRC).

Building on Year 1, extensive marketing and awareness efforts continued, including IPRC webinars in 2024, guidance on the online application process, and the re-announcement of SGCI application fee grants with mentorship support.

Promotional materials in English, French, and Portuguese were widely distributed, with the French Professional Competency Framework launched at the 2024 SGCI Annual Forum in Botswana.

Across Years 1 and 2, SGCI activities generated over 80 IPRC training points, strengthening structured pathways for professional recognition and advancing the professionalisation of research management across participating councils.

VIRTUAL TRAININGS

21-22 August 2024
Managing Funded Research (English)
6 Points
Mr Pierre K. N'Guessan (RMP)*

4 & 6 March 2025
Managing Funded Research (French)
7 Points
Mr Pierre K. N'Guessan





TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE VISITS



IPRC International Professional Recognition Council

SGCs connected to 5 IPRC Recognised Profesionals

(RAP)* Recognised Research Administration Professionals
(RMP)* Recognised Research Management Professionals
(SRMP)* Recognised Senior Research Management Professionals

In addition to the virtual training courses and technical assistance visits, Research Management Professionalisation was showcased at SGCI continental platforms as follows:

13 November 2024

A French closed session was held at the SGCI Annual Forum and GRC Africa Regional Meeting, November 11 – 15, 2024(Botswana) targeted at the Francophone SGCs.

9-11 December 2024

A session was held at the First Annual Symposium co-hosted by the African Centre for Technology Studies (ACTS) and Uganda National Council for Science and Technology UNCST), Uganda. Symposium delegates had the opportunity to engage with the following recognised professionals: Dr Robin Drennan (SRMP), Ms Stella Kakeeto (RMP) and the Ms Luiza Mazazire (RMP). This session also served a celebratory moment for the very first SGCI applicant, Ms Luiza Mazazire (RMP) to be awarded.

15-20 June 2025

Rwanda professional recognition session was convened alongside the 12th European & Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) Forum, Kigali. This session engaged comprised of NCST staff members, EDCTP Node of Excellence Project managers namely, the Central Africa Clinical Research Network (CANTAM), the Eastern Africa Consortium for Clinical Research (EACCR), Trials of Excellence in Southern Africa (TESA), and the West African Network for TB, AIDS and Malaria (WANETAM).

28 August 2025

a session was held at the SGCI Peer to Peer Learning Visit, 6 -29 August 2025, South Africa, delegates had the to engage with Ms Cayn (Caz) McNamara (RMP).

These alignments not only maximised efficiency but also extended the visibility of professional recognition to broader continental research networks, strengthening opportunities for collaboration beyond SGCI.



Figure 7: Left Research Management professionalisation session at the National Council for Science and Technology (NCST), Rwanda (20 June 2025); Right Dr Robin Drenan awarding first SGC staff member, Luiza for Mazazire (9-11 December 2024)

In-country technical support and coaching

9 Technical assistant visits



Research Funding, Managing Funded Research

Monitoring and Evaluation, Partnerships and Collaboration; Research Uptake, Utilisation and Impact, Policy & Planning

Over 230 participants

Building on the three visits conducted in Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Ethiopia during the first year, further support was extended to councils in Zambia, Ghana, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Burkina Faso. This brings the total number of supported countries to nine. Together, these engagements strengthened continuity and advanced SGCI capacity development efforts across participating countries.

Across all engagements, the focus has been on advancing work initiated during SGCI Phase 1, ensuring that interventions build on existing foundations rather than duplicating efforts. Preparation for each visit involved thorough consultations with the respective councils to understand their evolving needs.

This approach ensured that the support provided both reinforced existing knowledge and addressed newly identified gaps. Findings from the needs assessments were further explored through virtual engagements, allowing for deeper interrogation of relevance, detail, and prioritisation of identified needs.

To ensure alignment with Research Management professionalisation goals, each programme was designed using the Professional Competency Framework (PCF), providing a structured and strategic basis for strengthening institutional capacity.

Ethiopia

Strengthening Research Fund Sourcing and Managing Funded Research Capacity

15-17 October 2024

The Ministry of Innovation and Technology (MInT) hosted the visit at their offices extending the SGCI support to their stakeholder attracting over 40 participants. Predominately male, diversity was promoted by the different institutions and roles of the participants. Participants represented national institutions entailing Bio and Emerging Technology Institute (BETin), Ethiopian Intellectual Property Authority (EIPA), Space Science and Geospatial Institute (SSGI) and representation from the NRF-South Africa. While MInT participated in SGCI phase 1, there has been a high turn- over off staff members. Delivery of the support was therefore pitched at introductory level to match the needs of the new staff members and stakeholders that have not previously engaged with SARIMA support.

The visit was led by Doug Sanyahumbi and supported by Ms Zimasa Sobuza, with guest contributions from Stella Kakeeto (East African Research and Innovation Management Association (EARIMA)) and Ms Puleng Tshitlho (National Research Foundation (NRF)). Training focused on two key competency areas: Training covered two key competency areas:

- **Research Funding (KCA-5):** funding optimisation, sponsor engagement, opportunity identification, and proposal development
- **Managing Funded Research (KCA-7):** research and grants management

A practical exercise reviewed Ethiopia's grant application guidelines, enabling participants to identify bottlenecks and propose system improvements. The Good Practice Guideline on Research Competitions supported discussions on quality and transparency.

28 certificates issued: 6.5 training points endorsed by the IPRC Increased awareness of Research Management professionalisation and IPRC recognition pathways Improved capacity in fund sourcing, managing funded research, linkages to Technology Transfer

Essential Learnings:

"Key takeaway: Developing clear research management strategies that link institutions research goals with national and regional policies foster coherent, impactful research outputs. 2. Cross border collaboration is an essential for pooling resources and expertise particularly in regions with varying research capacities." -MInT

The training was excellent! I gained a lot of information. I have filled the knowledge gaps I had before, which will be very important for my career, my institution, and the country in general."

"I had no previous knowledge on RMA and IPRC. This training gave me the chance to know both of them. I learnt funding landscape in Ethiopia and Uganda as well as funding optimization." -SSGI



Figure 8: TAV support team (left) Ms Zimasa Sobuza, Ms Puleng Tshitlho, Ms Stella Kakeeto and Dr Doug Sanyahumbi; (right), and the TAV practical group work session in Ethiopia (right).

Zambia

Research Funding and Managing Funded Research

18-20 March 2025

The National Science and Technology Council (NSTC) hosted a three-day SGCI Technical Assistance Visit engaging 15 staff members (9 women, 6 men). The programme created a platform for shared learning, reflection on SGCI Phase 1 progress, and practical strengthening of research funding and grants management systems.

Sessions were facilitated by June-Rose Ngcobo, selected for her NRF-SA experience and previous SGCI support to NSTC. She was supported by Patrick Chiza Chikoti and Ms Zimasa Sobuza, with a virtual contribution from Karin Dyson on professional recognition through the International Professional Recognition Council (IPRC). Facilitators were praised for their clarity, expertise, and engaging delivery.

Training covered the full funding lifecycle, including:

- Research funding strategy, priority setting, and merit-based science granting
- Proposal assessment, funding instrument design, and support for interdisciplinary and multinational research
- Managing funded research for impact, including contract negotiation, financial and project management, and monitoring and evaluation systems.

A researcher case study added practical insight into the lived experience of grant recipients, grounding discussions in real implementation contexts.

The facilitator and presenters were praised for being clear, knowledgeable, and highly engaging. Several comments noted that facilitation "went beyond expectations" thus reinforcing the credibility and relevance of the inputs.

Story of change:

A notable highlight, fitting within SARIMA's 10-year reflection and celebration of impact, was the professional growth of an NSTC staff member who completed SARIMA's online course on Gender in Science, Technology and Innovation (STI). Her journey illustrates how SGCI capacity strengthening translates into lasting institutional change.

"I enrolled in SARIMA's online course on Gender in STI during SGCI Phase 1. The training opened my eyes to gender mainstreaming and inspired me to take action within NSTC. Today, I proudly serve as the Gender Equality and Inclusion (GEI) Coordinator, leading initiatives that promote inclusivity and institutional change." Nsama Chilumbu Mataka, National Science and Technology Council (NSTC)



Figure 9: Technical Assistance Visit at NSTC, Zambia (20 March 2025)

Ghana

Research Planning and Policy Development, **Policy Process and Monitoring and Evaluation;**

2 - 4 April 2025

Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology (MEST) in Ghana hosted the with 27 staff members. The three-day programme brought together council staff members and facilitators, creating an environment for shared learning, practical exercises.

The sessions was led by Dr. Akindele Olupelumi Adebiyi supported by Ms Nana Oye Akuffo were selected of their expertise in Research Management, passion in professionalisation and Western African regional context. The Chief Director officially opened the visit and expressed his gratitude to SARIMA/WARIMA and encouraged active participation during the technical sessions. The 3 days unpacked how to facilitate and support the development and implementation of research policy and strategy, and Monitoring and evaluation of research policy and strategy and promoted Research Management professional recognition.

The IPRC successfully endorsed this capacity strengthening initiative with 12 training points. The visit was successful with MEST receiving he programme with strong enthusiasm. The facilitators skill sets, knowledge and expertise complemented each other and ensured a balanced approach to the visitation. The leadership provided by the Chief Director, Director RSIM and the Principal Technical Officer was also highly commendable. The participants were easy to engage and provided very useful insights and suggestions that gave the impression that they would act on a good foundation established by the visit. Despite the fact that they were a young team with limited experience in research management and governance, they brought to the fore their different capacities and perspectives. This ensured that a rich mix of skill sets needed for the growth of a multi-participatory enterprise such as research governance and management is available. By the close of the visit, MEST and the facilitators had identified concrete action items for strengthening internal processes.



Figure 10: Technical Assistance Visit at MEST, Ghana (2-4 April 2025)

> “The sessions were insightful, practical, and highly relevant to our mandate. Your structured approach to topics such as project planning, stakeholder mapping, resource mobilization, and research utilization has significantly enhanced the knowledge and skills of our team. We particularly valued the open and engaging learning environment, which allowed for meaningful reflection on challenges and emerging opportunities within our context. We are confident that the insights gained will contribute to strengthening research governance, policy alignment, and effective grant management at MEST. We look forward to continued collaboration in building institutional excellence for science and innovation in Ghana.”
>
> **MEST official**

Malawi

Research Management;

2-4 June 2025

The National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST) in Malawi hosted a three-day TAV on 2-4 June 2025 with a total of 16 NCST officials.

The sessions were facilitated by Dr Doug Sanyahumbi Independent(lead) and Ms Rosemary Wolson supported by Ms Zimasa Sobuza. The facilitators were selected because of their extensive experience in research and innovation management in the SADC region and internationally. Also, the are part of the project team that support strengthening Research Offices capacities in Malawi and expertise in technology transfer, research funding, and innovation.

The session began with an opening address from Ms Gift Kadzamira's. The programme featured a mix of presentations, discussions, and group exercises. Sessions addressed the organisation and delivery of research management services, development of research agendas, partnerships and collaboration, research funding processes, managing funded research, and professionalisation in research management.

Key highlights included:

- In-depth reflection on NCST's current research management systems and opportunities for improvement:
- Engagement on partnerships and collaborations to strengthen national research capacity. Practical exercises on grant proposal writing, research contracts, negotiation, and management.
- Sessions on knowledge transfer, research uptake, and monitoring and evaluation of research impact.
- An orientation on Research Management professional recognition through the IPRC, with discussion on submission queries.



Figure 11: Technical Assistance Visit at NCST(2-4 June 2025)

"The visit was influential in offering practical strategies for managing research overall, by connecting them to my current work." NCST official

Rwanda

Managing Funded Research, Partnerships and **Collaboration; Research Uptake, Utilisation and Impact;**

9 - 11 June 2025

The National Council for Science and Technology (NCST) in Rwanda hosted a three-day TAV on 9-11 2025. The sessions were facilitated by Dr Rakeshnie Ramoutar-Prieschl and supported by Ms Zimasa Sobuza. The facilitator was selected because of her unique experience in Research Management. Having previously worked at an SGC(NRF-SA), University and government, the participants benefited from different perspectives. A total of 14 participants participated comprising of employees from NCST (10), at various levels across the organization; as well as key representatives from the University of Rwanda and Rwanda Biomedical Centre.

The participants received the consultative approach well and were able to engage with the theoretical content and find practical solutions to developing their own institutional policies, strategies, procedures and processes. The programme covered the overview of RIMAs, Research Management professionalisation, Overview of Research Management Cycle partnership and collaborations, research funding, managing funded research, research uptake and utilisation (ITT).

Participants equally appreciated the session, praising the insightful and hands -on approach of the facilitators and willingness to share resources and guidance during the breaks.

> “The expert was not only presenting the training materials — she also explained them with practical examples, drawing from real-world experience aligned to the content.” NCST official Lessons learned by NCST stakeholders: “Bring together academics, investors, decisions/policy makers, international organization, and community leaders to know the cost of transdisciplinary research; Universities should reward the researchers publishing in good journals”
>
> **University of Rwanda official**



Figure 12: Technical Assistance Visit at NCST, Rwanda (9-11 June 2025)

Tanzania

Strengthening Research Management Practices for Impact

12 - 14 August 2025

The Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) hosted the visit from 12-14 August 2025, with the aim of enhancing COSTECH's research management practices and ensuring that impact is integrated throughout the entire research management lifecycle.

The three-day program was led by Dr Yolanda Davids, a highly respected leader in research management with decades of experience in strategy, governance, and funding systems across Africa. She was supported by Ms Zimasa Sobuza and the leadership team at COSTECH, whose dedication and coordination were key to the visit's success.

The sessions highlighted the critical role of Research and Innovation Management Associations (RIMAs) in professionalizing research management to align with global best practices. Dr Zamda Geuza, representing the Eastern Africa Research and Innovation Management Association (EARIMA), emphasized the importance of creating awareness, sharing insights, and strengthening networks as the local RIMA.

Participants engaged in exploring and applying strategies to: Embed impact in grant design, from calls for proposals to assessment criteria, strengthen Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) frameworks to enhance decision-making and develop research uptake strategies that ensure findings reach and influence real-world change.

The sessions fostered not only presentations but also interactive discussions, knowledge sharing, challenges to existing practices, and the inspiration for co-created solutions.

By the end of the visit, COSTECH and its partners had taken significant steps towards building stronger systems, sharpening skills, and fostering a culture of impact-oriented research management.

"Improved understanding of on preparation of call design for the better impact" Grant Design: Aligning Budget, Policies and Institutional Mandates with Impact



Figure 13: TAV at COSTECH, Tanzania (12-14 August 2025)

"The expert demonstrated a good technical knowledge and provided clear, practical guidance aligned to the COSTECH needs. Their engagement style including group works encouraged participation, and they adapted well to the local context. While there is room f or more tailored examples, the overall contribution was effective and added value to the visit "

Burkina Faso

Research Funding

30 September - 2 October 2025

Fonds National de la Recherche et de l'Innovation pour le Développement (FONRID) hosted the 3 -day in-country programme brought together 20 participants to engage on key Research Management. WARIMA led the visit represented by Mr Cheick Oumar Tangara from Mali and Mr Jean Pierre K. N'Guessan from Senegal, both recognised leaders in research funding and research management.

The programme focused on professionalisation through the International Professional Recognition Council (IPRC), research funding and resource mobilisation, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) frameworks for research programmes, and engagement with government and community stakeholders. Discussions also addressed fragmented governance, uncoordinated policies, weak institutional support structures, and barriers to sustainable and equitable research funding aligned with national and global priorities. Each day focused on a specific thematic area and included practical, hands-on activities that encouraged active participation, reflection, and institutional application.

An immediate significant change was observed in FONRID's perception of the value of the visit. Before the programme, the Director questioned the need for "another training" in research management. By the end of the visit, this view had shifted significantly, with the Director noting that it "would have been a huge regret if this Technical Assistance Visit had not taken place," and expressing appreciation to SGCI, SARIMA and WARIMA for strengthening FONRID's capacity.



Figure 14: TAV at FONRID, Burkina Faso (30 September – 2 October 2025)

The active engagement of participants and FONRID's institutional commitment demonstrated a strong foundation for sustained strengthening Burkina Faso's research management.

Reflecting on 2024 Technical Visit

Story of Change: **Strengthening Research Management and Building Lasting Partnerships**

Research Council of Zimbabwe (RCZ) case

Support provided to RCZ demonstrates how sustained engagement, grounded in reflection and responsiveness to institutional needs, can strengthen research management systems while fostering meaningful partnerships.

The SGCI technical visit held in 3-5 June 2024 identified a key gap of the absence of a formalised Grant Award Appeal process. Recognising the importance of this function in ensuring fairness, transparency, and accountability in funding decisions, SARIMA worked closely with RCZ to address this gap.

Following the in-person visit, a virtual engagement phase was implemented to deepen this work. SARIMA facilitators introduced the core components of an effective appeals process and shared adaptable Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) templates. RCZ customised these to align with its institutional context, and through ongoing engagement, including expert review and feedback leading to refined SOP. RCZ has since confirmed that the Grant Award Appeal SOP has been formally approved and will be implemented in the next funding call cycle.

Beyond process strengthening, the TAV also enabled expanded collaboration and network development. RCZ demonstrated strong openness by facilitating introductions between SARIMA and the University of Zimbabwe. This engagement led to a collaboration between the University of South Africa (UNISA) and the University of Zimbabwe Innovation Hub, particularly in the area ofW agricultural innovation. The partnership is progressing towards formalisation through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), with joint initiatives already being explored.

These developments also strengthened relationships between RCZ and South African institutions more broadly, including the sharing of grant management processes and practices. This reflects a growing, interconnected ecosystem where institutions actively engage in peer learning and collaboration.

Importantly, the engagement reflects an evolution in the role of the facilitator. Through engagement, reflection, and responsiveness to emerging needs, the facilitator transitioned into a trusted partner and connector, supporting both institutional strengthening and the creation of linkages that extend beyond the immediate scope of the intervention.

The Zimbabwe TAV illustrates that meaningful change is achieved not only by addressing identified gaps, but by maintaining a commitment to continuous learning, adaptation, and collaboration. It demonstrates how strengthening research management processes and building networks can collectively contribute to more robust and sustainable research funding systems.

Sharing and collaborative learning

SGCI Annual Forum and the Global Research Council (GRC) Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Meeting,

11–15 November 2024

SARIMA and WARIMA participated in the 2024 SGCI Annual Forum and the Global Research Council (GRC) Sub-Saharan Africa Regional Meeting, held in Botswana from 11 – 15 November 2024. This platform provided valuable opportunities to gain deeper insights into in -country SGCI initiatives, explore key challenges, and suggest supportive actions through Research and Innovation Management Associations. A particular highlight was the strengthened engagement with Francophone countries, where discussions around professional recognition advanced meaningfully. This in-person interaction marked a significant step forward in relationship-building between WARIMA and the SGCs.



Figure 15: WARIMA engaging with Francophone speaking colleagues, Botswana, (11 –15 November 2024)

SGCI Peer Learning: April 7-10, 2025.

SARIMA participated in the Science Granting Council Initiative (SGCI) Peer Learning event held in Bonn, Germany, from April 7-10, 2025. This 3-day event, a partnership between the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG) and the National Research Foundation (NRF) South Africa, focused on key themes crucial to the advancement of research and innovation across the continent.

The event, held under the auspices of the Science Granting Council Initiative (https://sgciafrica.org/), featured interactive and thought-provoking discussions centred around equality, diversity, and inclusion, research infrastructure, societal and economic impact, and strategic partnerships. Participants delved into these critical areas, sharing insights and best practices to strengthen research ecosystems.

One of the highlights of this event was a visit to the Hochschule Bonn-Rhein-Sieg University of Applied Sciences. Attendees were impressed by the university's innovative and multi-sectoral approaches to research and its commitment to translating research into real-world impact.

Discussions on the future of research culminated in a high note with a focus on curiosity-driven research. The importance of advocating for and incorporating this element into current research policies, strategies, and activities was emphasized. This sparked engaging conversations about fostering an environment where researchers are empowered to explore novel ideas and push the boundaries of knowledge.

SARIMA was represented at the event by Ms Caz McNamara and Ms Zimasa Sobuza, who both attested to the significant benefits of the visit. They highlighted the value for individual professional development, as well as the positive impact on SARIMA's growth, visibility, and ability to remain relevant for its stakeholders in the ever-evolving research landscape.

SARIMA's participation in the SGCI Peer Learning event underscores its commitment to staying at the forefront of research and innovation management in Southern Africa. By engaging with international partners and participating in critical discussions, SARIMA continues to play a vital role in shaping the future of research in the region and beyond.

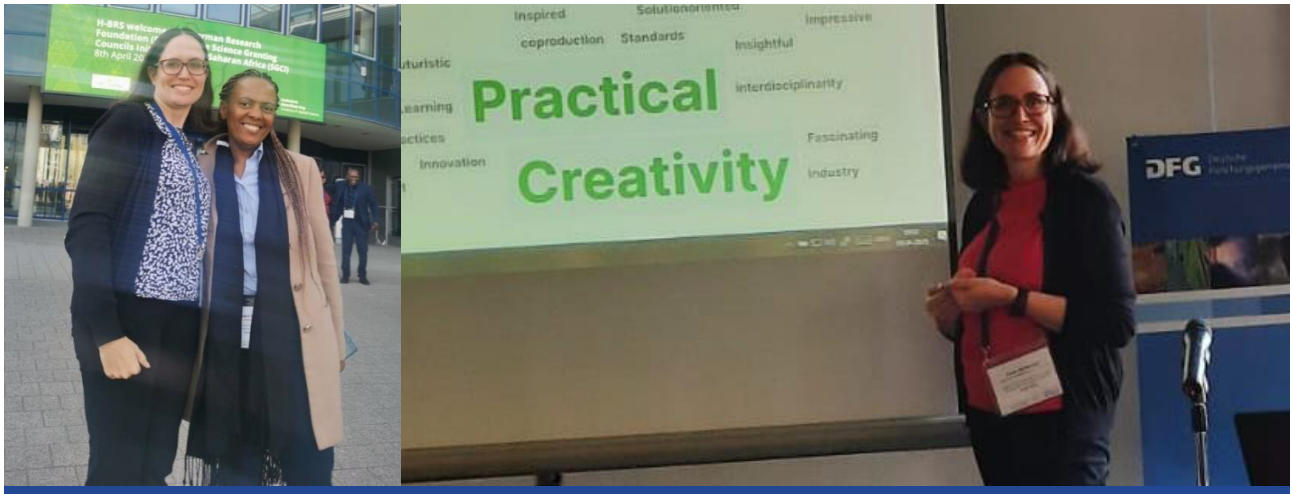


Figure 16: SGCI2 Peer Learning in Bonn, Germany (April 2025)

SGCI Peer Learning Visit:
Strengthening Research System for Societal Impact, 26-29 August 2025

SARIMA and WARIMA took part in the SGCI Peer Learning Visit held in Pretoria, South Africa, from 26 – 29 August 2025. Following the momentum of the April 2025 exchange in Bonn, Germany, the Pretoria programme convened research and innovation leaders to explore high-priority themes, including Scientific Excellence, Impact Assessment, Intellectual Property (IP) and Commercialisation, and Digital Grant Management Systems.

Throughout the 4-day visit, SARIMA contributed actively to strategic discussions on Scientific Excellence, supporting research-performing organisations as well as IP and Commercialisation. SARIMA also engaged meaningfully with peer organisations, funders, and collaborating Technical Agencies (CTAs), strengthening networks through valuable in-person exchange.

Under the Scientific Excellence theme, Ms Zimasa Sobuza showcased SARIMA's Research and Innovation Management Annual Excellence Awards, an initiative that recognises and rewards exceptional contributions within the research and innovation management profes sion in Southern Africa. Past award winners RIMA communities and which the SGCI family could relate to were highlighted, inspiring participating Councils to apply and leverage the platform to showcase excellence within their national ecosystems.



Figure 17: SARIMA contributing to Scientific Excellence session (August 2025)

In the spirit of collaboration, SARIMA hosted a networking dinner, made possible through the support of the "Building It Forward for Research Management Leadership in Southern Africa" project, funded by the Gates Foundation. The dinner enabled SGC representatives to connect directly with the SARIMA team in a more informal setting, fostering stronger understanding, richer dialogue in subsequent sessions, and greater value from the peer learning experience.



Figure 18: SARIMA hosting a networking dinner (August 2025)

SARIMA further led a session titled “Professionalising Research Management: Enabling Leadership and Capacity in African Research Organisations.” The discussion reinforced the vital role of professional and scientific associations in strengthening research management capacity across Africa. Ms Caz McNamara brought global perspectives to the room, emphasising the importance of research management professionalisation and the collective support RIMAs worldwide (including SARIMA and WARIMA) provide to advance the profession. Her presentation encouraged SGCs to confidently recognise themselves as research management practitioners and take available support funded by the SGCI through IPRC application grants available to SGCI participating councils.



Figure 19: RIMAs contributing to the Professionalising Research Management session (August 2025)

Complementing this, Ms Rosemary Wolson shared regional lessons from the "Building It Forward for Research Management Leadership in Southern Africa" project, drawing on practical insights from SARIMA's experience working with research support offices in ten universities in South Africa, Malawi, and Mozambique to strengthen research management capacity. Her contribution highlighted the importance of support for research management at national level and invited SGCs to discuss collaboration opportunities with SARIMA. SARIMA will disseminate key project resources to support ongoing knowledge sharing and capacity strengthening.

In addition, Ms Rosemary Wolson contributed to the session "Strategic Funders' Role in Commercialisation and Innovation: Priorities for Business Development and Industry Partnerships." This discussion centred on funder priorities for accelerating commercialisation, business development, and industry partnerships to grow sustainable innovation ecosystems across Africa.

While no formal inputs were made during the Digital Grant Management session itself, SARIMA later reflected on its foundational contribution to the OGMS. SARIMA did not provide comments during the event and subsequently conducted an internal reflection after the visit on its successful leadership in digital grant management during SGCI Phase 1. This post-visit reflection acknowledged the progress made by partners who have built on SARIMA's initial groundwork, including notable advancements shared by Uganda and Namibia.

Namibia's testimony stood out as a strong indicator of OGMS impact posted on LinkedIn:
"For the National Commission on Research, Science and Technology (NCRST), the benefits are tangible:
the Online Grants Management System (OGMS) has been implemented with trained staff and is already supporting competitive calls, enabling more efficient workflows, stronger data integrity, and evidence-informed funding decisions."

The visit concluded with a powerful networking engagement in Soweto, offering SARIMA and WARIMA to engage freely with the SGCI family. Also, this was meaningful moment of reflection on the resilience and perseverance African countries continue to demonstrate. The experience reinforced a shared commitment to carry forward the strength of the past into shaping a more robust Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) ecosystem, today and for generations to come.



Figure 20: RIMAs engaging with SGCI "family" during networking session (August 2025)

2025 SGCI All Partners Forum and STISA-2034 Advocacy Meeting,
15–19 September 2025

SARIMA participated in the 2025 SGCI All Partners Forum and STISA-2034 Advocacy Meeting held in Ghana from 15–19 September 2025. The organisation was represented by its President, Dr Anna Matros-Goreses, and SGCI Project Manager, Zimasa Sobuza.

During the poster session, SARIMA showcased its key achievements, while actively engaging stakeholders on potential areas for future collaboration and support. Notably, the two (Angola and Togo) new joining SGCs expressed strong interest in SARIMA's initiatives, signalling continued demand for its technical assistance and professionalisation efforts.

SARIMA also participated in the in-person CTA meeting, contributing to collective reflections on SGCI's overall progress. All CTAs provided concise updates on achievements, challenges, and lessons learned, reinforcing a shared commitment to strengthening research and innovation systems across the continent.

Overall, the SGCI@10 celebratory event provided a valuable platform for SARIMA to reflect on its pioneering role in advancing research management among SGCs. It highlighted the association's growth and maturity, and reaffirmed its strong positioning for sustained collaboration and impact within the evolving SGCI partnership.



Figure 21: SARIMA engaging with CTAs, SGCs and delegates, Ghana (15-19 September 2025)

Engagements beyond SGCII

Wider reach was achieved through SARIMA/WARIMA activities beyond the SGCI activities. Amongst others, is the increased awareness of other RIMAs in their region and the SGCs' participation in 2025 SARIMA conference can be highlighted.

EARIMA introduced to the leadership at MInT

Although EARIMA was not an official partner in SGCI Phase 2, SARIMA facilitated collaboration to ensure that the benefits of SGCI engagements extended beyond the formal partner network.

This effort strengthened research and innovation management linkages across Sub-Saharan Africa and created new opportunities for EARIMA, including a direct connection to the MinT.



Figure 22: Official introductions of RIMAs to MInT leadership (October 2024)

COSTECH participation in the Research Managers and Administrators Workshop, 25–27 February 2025

Through its extensive network, SARIMA identified a Research Managers and Administrators Workshop, hosted by the University of Glasgow at the White Sands Resort & Conference Centre in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania (25–27 February 2025). Although this was not a direct SGCI project deliverable, SARIMA recognised the workshop as an excellent opportunity to respond to research management capacity needs previously highlighted by the COSTECH during the 2023 needs assessment.

The workshop brought together participants from higher education institutions, research institutes, and clinical research programmes, and was specifically targeted at Research and Innovation Management practitioners working in finance, administration, contracts, intellectual property, governance, and communications. These areas were closely aligned with the priority gaps identified by COSTECH, making the workshop particularly relevant.

SARIMA facilitated the participation of COSTECH to strengthen the visibility of Science Granting Councils in Sub-Saharan Africa and to support the expansion of networks beyond SGCI. COSTECH was represented by Dr Paulo Ochanga, Manager of Life Sciences, and Dr Erasto Mlyuka, Manager of Technology Management and Transfer. Both representatives benefitted from the opportunity to share COSTECH's experiences and best practices with peers, while at the same time engaging in meaningful dialogue with regional and international counterparts.

> "The workshop provided an excellent platform for expanding my professional network. I established connections with fellow researchers, administrators, managers, and institutions that will be invaluable for future collaborations in STI initiatives." -
> **Dr Paulo Ochanga**

SGCs' participation in 2025 SARIMA conference Story of change: Impactful networks from SGCI: Malawi and Angola SGC colleagues participate in the 2025 SARIMA conference

The participation of Research and Innovation management practitioners participating in the Science Granting Councils (SGCs) from Angola and Malawi reflects the long-term impact of SGCI's efforts to create meaningful connections beyond the SGCI initiative.

For Angola, this journey began in November 2023 when Fundação para o Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (FUNDECIT) engagement with SARIMA at the SGCI annual meeting in Mombasa, Kenya. With SARIMA's commitment to diversifying regional participation, especially from Portuguese speaking countries, this engagement was strengthened by supporting FUNDECIT to attend the 2024 SARIMA conference in Maputo, Mozambique. FUNDECIT found this networking platform to be profound and committed to participate in future conferences. Self-funded, representation increased to three Angola delegation (Dr. Carlos Tuti, Dr. Irineu Gonga and Dr. Francisco Bondo) consisting of strategic decision makers. FUNDECIT expressed enthusiasm to partner with SARIMA to contribute to the strengthening of Research and Innovation Management across the Sub-Saharan region. While language barriers remain a challenge, SARIMA and FUNDECIT are jointly exploring ways to bridge these gaps to ensure more inclusive collaboration across the region.

In Malawi, SARIMA's partnership with the National Commission for Science and Technology (NCST) dates back to SGCI Phase 1(2019). Ms Gift Kadzamira's leadership and vision for research management observed in SGCI positioned as a key stakeholder for another SARIMA project: Building It Forward for Research (Management) Leadership in Southern Africa "Gates project". As Malawi's priorities expanded toward innovation and technology transfer, SARIMA's conferences and networks proved invaluable. With NCST mandate to establish Technology Transfer Offices nationwide, these connections are helping shape the country's future innovation ecosystem.

Together, these experiences highlight how SGCI's investment in regional networks has moved beyond capacity building. Countries are now stepping forward with their own resources and/or strategies, turning collaboration into lasting ownership and embedding research management at the heart of national research and innovation systems.

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Figure 23: Angola and Malawi SGCs at the 2025 SARIMA conference (September 2025)

SGCI Contacts

IDRC| CRDI

Christine Kupeka

Program Management Officer

International Development Research Centre

T +254 796 729 342

E ckupeka@idrc.ca

NRF

Puleng Tshitlho

Senior Specialist: Business Advancement

National Research Foundation, South Africa

T +27 12 481 4061

E pr.tshitlho@nrf.ac.zaUNISA, South Africa

SCGI II Theme 1 - Research Management

SARIMA

Ms Zimasa Sobuza

Project Manager

Southern African Research and Innovation

Management Association

E zimasa@sarima.co.za

Building E, Cambridge Office Park

5 Bauhinia Street, Highveld Techno Park,

Centurion, 0169

www.sarima.co.za

T +27 87 265 0871

E sarima@sarima.co.za



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