

INTRODUCTION:

SADC countries like all other regions over the world face many challenges in the social, economic, technical and economic spheres. Most of which are due to climate changes; especially social and economic challenges. Some of these rising issues are influenced by what is known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution which is the term referring to the current dynamic environment such as Internet of Things (IoT), Robotics, Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI). In order to keep up with the Dynamic world, it has been a mandate for every continent, region and nation to prioritize Research and Innovation (R&I) as key activities to mitigate and solve any pressing issues that the world is facing at the moment or issues that may arise in future. COVID-19 pandemic for instance, has shown the world that no one can ever certainly predict challenges of tomorrow and that has highlighted the need for timely and accurate data for governments to make rapid and informed decisions which are all results of relevant research.

Research and innovation and the fresh ideas and solutions that flow from them are needed now more than ever before (SARIMA, 2018). It is now against this background that Research Management and Innovation Management are emerging as professions in the world to ensure relevance and value of research undertaken and innovations made. In short, Research Management simply mean set activities undertaken by research managers that coalesce around the strategic desire to ameliorate the impact of research undertaken while on the other hand means organizing and managing innovations that are deemed to add value to existing devices or methods which in turn enhances the growth and survival of organizations, companies and thus the economies of the nations.

In order to accelerate or set enabling environment towards the objectives of Strengthening Research and Innovation Management II (SRIM II) project by SADC and SARIMA, Lesotho and other SADC region countries have to bridge the collaboration divide in Research and Innovation Management (RIM) amongst them as collaborations and being at almost same level would make it easy for collective development. Lesotho is one of the countries whereby RIM has not really been much known and considered important mostly due to little knowledge about it.

Moreover, little is known about collaboration efforts by those in the research and innovation management spaces either locally, regionally or globally. Lesotho would like to bring together those in the RIM space inside and outside of the country to collaborate especially on aspects of data and information sharing to help better understand our local, regional and global RIM landscape. This will in turn inform our science, technology and innovation policies and help to harmonize them where there are major variations. The theme of the symposium is therefore "Bridging the collaboration divide in Research and Innovation Management". It is anticipated that after this event there will be visible collaboration among local and international institution to advance research and innovation management and science, technology and innovation ecosystems as a whole.

KEY OBJECTIVES:

- To sensitize researchers and non-researchers about the roles of RIM and importance of having Research Management Offices (RMOs)
- To encourage, enhance and lay a conducive environment for regional collaborations in RIM
- Inform government officials and decision makers about SRIM II Project and its importance and hence secure their support

SYMPOSIUM PARTICIPANTS:

The symposium will bring together about 100-150 key actors across national and regional research and innovation (R&I) ecosystems to engage on key issues,

challenges and opportunities within the respective R&I ecosystems with the following objectives:

- Engaging on the current state of the R&I ecosystems in respective countries
- Sharing lessons learnt and successes for best practice in R&I Management
- Identifying relevant and informative data for collection on the state of national R&I ecosystems that will be incorporated into country reports and used for benchmarking.
- Used as a forum to advocate for the importance of R&I management
- Allow programme partners to connect with participants, maintain links and help strengthen local and regional R&I management networks

More specifically, participation will be targeted at:

- Senior government officials
(from Science, Technology, Research and Innovation/Education/Environment/Youth/Agriculture/Health and National Statistics Offices) and key innovation stakeholders (regulators, private sector, and change makers, academia and civil society) from Lesotho and other SADC countries.
- Selected key stakeholders from across the region.
- Representatives from partner organizations.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES OF THE SYMPOSIUM:

- Enhanced awareness and recognition of the importance of R&I management as a priority at institutional and national levels
- Strengthened local R&I management network to contribute to regional R&I policies and local socio-economic development.
- Shared data to understand the status of respective local R&I ecosystems.