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NEWSLETTER

TECHNOPOLICY AFRICA

The Official Newsletter of the African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS)

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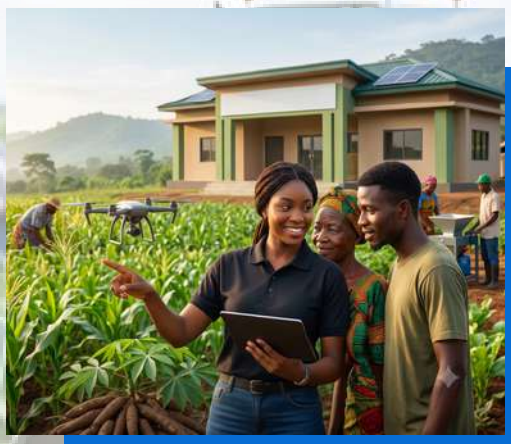

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Editor in Chief:

Prof. Nicholas Ozor

Editor:

Susan Aquila Mburu

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Design and Layout:

- Susan Aquila Mburu
- Ian Njuguna

ATPS Vision:

To use Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) as a means for achieving sustainable development in Africa

ATPS Mission:

To improve the quality of Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) systems research, policy, and practice by strengthening the capacity for STI knowledge generation, dissemination, and use for sustainable development in Africa.

Overall Objective:

To build Africa's capability in Science, Technology, and Innovation for sustainable development

ATPS Motto:

Building Africa's capabilities in Science, Technology, and Innovation policy research, policymaking, and policy Implementation for sustainable development.

Inside:

Chairman's Message

Prof. Crispus Kiamba
Chair, ATPS Board of Directors

As we move through the second quarter of 2026, I am pleased to welcome you to this edition of the ATPS Technopolicy Newsletter. If the early months of this year were about setting a decisive course for action and implementation, this current quarter is about sustaining that momentum, deepening our impact, and translating our shared vision into tangible, lasting outcomes.

The global landscape of Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) continues to present both unprecedented opportunities and complex challenges for our continent. In this dynamic environment, the core mission of the African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS) remains steadfast: to ensure that evidence-based policy not only keeps pace with technological advancement but actively champions inclusive, locally driven development.

Across our network, we are witnessing a powerful consolidation of efforts. The energy and dedication displayed by our national chapters, researchers, and partners reaffirm that African-led solutions are gaining the traction they deserve. We are increasingly focused on strengthening the ecosystems that support innovation, ensuring that our policymakers are equipped with timely, relevant evidence, our researchers are empowered to tackle pressing regional challenges, and our youth and women are positioned as the primary architects of our technological future.

None of this progress is achieved in isolation. It is the direct result of the enduring trust and active collaboration of our diverse community. To our funders and institutional partners, thank you for your continued belief in the transformative power of our work. To our dedicated staff, researchers, and network members, your unwavering commitment and resilience are the true engines of our success.

As we look toward the second half of the year, let us remain anchored to our ultimate goal: fostering an African future where technology bridges divides rather than deepening them, and where sound, forward-thinking policy paves the way for shared prosperity.

Executive Director's Message

Prof. Nicholas Ozor
Executive Director, ATPS

The true measure of our work at the African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS) is not found in reports, but in the fields, communities, and policy corridors where our research endeavour comes to life. This quarter, we took a decisive step from strategy to field-level applications, ensuring that our innovations in climate resilience and artificial intelligence are directly co-created with and for the people they are meant to serve.

In West Africa, the Phase 2 Capacity-Building Workshop for our project, **Strengthening the Capacity of the Extension System to use Proven Knowledge and Technologies to Sustain Equitable Locally Led Adaptation Among Smallholder Farmers (SCALE)**, marked a significant milestone in fostering climate resilience in Podor, Northern Senegal. Collaborating with the **Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rural (IPAR)** Senegal and supported by the **International Development Research Centre (IDRC)**, Canada we worked directly with smallholder farmers and agricultural extension agents. By focusing on innovative climate finance, sustainable indigenous technologies, digital tools, and effective knowledge brokering, we are bridging the critical gap between climate research and grassroots practice to safeguard food security and rural livelihoods.

Technology adoption is most successful when communities are active participants in the process. During our field visit to the Fetentaa community in Ghana, the team behind the **Advancing Responsible Gender Equality and Inclusive Artificial Intelligence Innovations for Agriculture and Food Systems in Africa (AI4AFS+)** project, led by Dr. Patrick Mensah, introduced an AI-driven pest and disease detection tool directly to local cashew farmers. Watching farmers use mobile devices to scan leaves and receive real-time diagnoses of vulnerabilities like anthracnose was incredibly rewarding. The overwhelming enthusiasm from the community has set the stage for our next phase: establishing a network of "lead farmers" to champion this digital tool across smallholder communities.

Beyond the field, influencing the broader STI ecosystem remains a top priority. I was honoured to serve as a featured speaker at the **Science, Technology, Research and Innovation Week for Society (STRI4Society) 2026** in Nairobi, Kenya. Engaging directly with key state and institutional leaders, including the **State Department for Science, Research and Innovation (SDSRI)**, **National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI)**, **National Research Fund (NRF)**, and the **Kenya National Innovation Agency (KeNIA)**, provided a vital platform to align our ongoing projects with national development goals and explore new collaborative pipelines to scale our impact across the region.

On a personal note, I was deeply humbled to be inducted into the inaugural **Hall of Honour** of the Faculty of Agriculture at my alma mater, the **University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN)**, on June 1 2026, as well as received a distinguished leadership award of excellence from my base department, the Department of Agricultural Extension, UNN, on June 3 2026. Sharing these recognitions with distinguished scholars is a proud moment, but I view it as a testament to the entire ATPS family. It reinforces our collective mandate to use knowledge and purpose-driven scholarship for the betterment of society.

I extend my profound gratitude to our funders, particularly the **IDRC Canada, the Andrew Carnegie Foundation, the African Development Bank,** and **the Afreximbank** for their unwavering trust. To our researchers, national chapters, and the farming communities who welcome us into their fields: thank you for your partnership. I invite you to read through this newsletter to see the detailed stories of our impact in Senegal, Ghana, and Kenya. Together, we are ensuring that emerging technologies and innovation that are responsible and homegrown drive equitable and sustainable prosperity in Africa.

The Next Decade of Technology and Agriculture in Nigeria: Bridging the Inclusivity Gap and Advancing Policy Implementation for Proactive Governance

By Chijindu Christian Ahamefula, a researcher and PhD candidate in Management of Technology and Innovation at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka. His work explores the intersection of AI policy, technology governance, social inclusion, food security, and sustainable development in Africa. With multidisciplinary training in sociology, criminology, and innovation studies, he contributes to research on emerging technologies and public policy.

Chijindu Christian Ahamefula

While the food sector in the Global North is positively being influenced by technology-driven agriculture that has stabilised food systems and improved efficiency in the countries, some emerging digital applications in Africa, like the mobile-based advisory system in South Africa and Botswana, have demonstrated measurable gains in input and yield efficiency. Amidst the exposure to some of the recent technology in the case of Nigeria, there remains a huge structural constraint; from issues of rural infrastructure, weak and unreliable digital connectivity, low levels of technological literacy, fragmented extension services, access to finance and funding, all of which hinder widespread adoption/application of modern techniques. As a result of the aforementioned, the existing inequalities within a predominantly smallholder and local farming system across different parts of the country continue to widen. In recent data released by the Centre for AI & Digital Policy(CAIPD), an assessment of Nigeria confirmed that it has low capacity and a fragmented landscape.

Key Challenges Facing Nigeria's Agriculture

Issues such as climate change and farmer-herder conflicts have continued to significantly threaten farming here in Nigeria. What should be the other way-out for such activities that disrupt farming, undermine food security nationwide, and regularly cause food price hikes? Tech-driven innovations must be backed by proactive policy and regulatory frameworks from the government at different levels. Policy Briefs from the African Technology Policy Studies Network continually emphasise the importance of science, technology and innovation as the central pillars for agricultural transformation in Africa and thus advocate for integrated policy frameworks that connect research, innovations and governance structures to facilitate effective technology transfer and adoption.

The Technology-Agriculture Gap

Among researchers, innovators, and agricultural sector agents, there is growing concern about the gap between technology and farming, particularly artificial intelligence and its adoption and application to improve agriculture across African countries, with Nigeria most affected. However, this is a good wake-up call that should encourage more collaboration across sectors, especially inclusive policy-making and implementation.

Immediate Actions Required

To achieve tangible progress in the short term, the following actions are necessary:

- Integrate indigenous methods into everyday farm processes at scale.
- Ensure that finance and funding programs are all-inclusive and accessible to smallholder farmers
- Organize regular training workshops to improve technological literacy and adoption
- Move beyond the distribution of crop-enhancement products by mobilising and training extension agents to actively engage farmers for improved outcomes
- Ensure that relevant research findings are immediately translated into policy guidelines to inform decision-making and implementation

In summary, bridging the technology and agriculture gap requires intentional collaboration across tech, policy,and farming ecosystems. There is a need for stakeholders to organize better and be more intentional, shift from hype-driven innovation to context-driven, farmer-centred solutions for the youth and women at the grassroots. Technology should strengthen agriculture, not compete with or detach from it. With the vast and arable land across the nation, Nigeria must sustainably scale production with the required technology and also maintain a stable food ecosystem. Achieving this will depend on inclusive policies,proactive governance, and purposeful collaboration over the next decade.

Agriculture in the AI Era: Is Artificial Intelligence Reshaping Africa's Farming Systems?

Dr. Cynthia Mwau

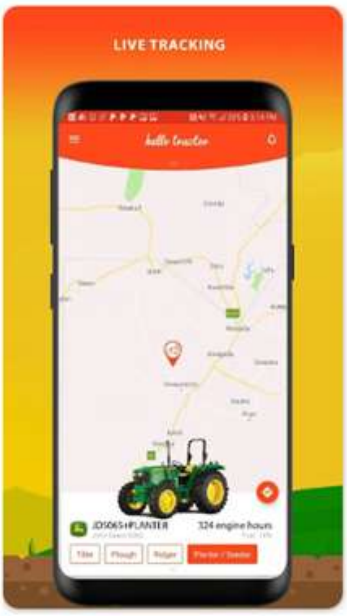
By Dr. Cynthia Mwau, a Lecturer in Actuarial Science at Kisii University, Kenya. She is a researcher specializing in actuarial modeling, artificial intelligence, agriculture, education technologies and sustainable development. She holds a PhD in Actuarial Science from the University of Nairobi and leads interdisciplinary research on AI-driven solutions for food security, post-harvest loss reduction, equitable access to education and digital inclusion.

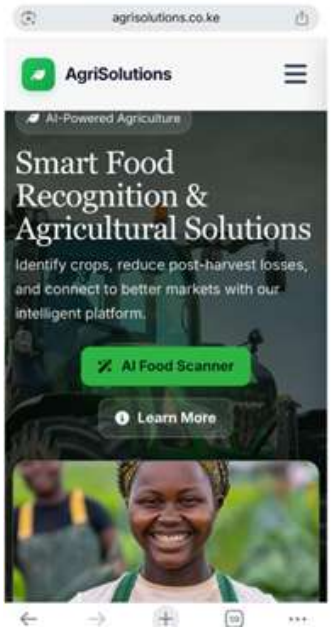
Africa's Food Security Challenge: A Crisis We Can't Ignore!

Climate change has hit Africa hard, and it has widened the challenge of food insecurity. This is not the only challenge driving food insecurity in Africa, but it is worsened by rapid population growth, persistent agricultural inefficiencies, increasing droughts, floods, erratic rainfall and rising temperatures. (Bationo et al., 2007). This begs the question: do we bury our heads in the sand, yet agriculture is the backbone of many African economies? Your guess is as good as mine. The agricultural sector employs about 60-70% of the workforce and supports millions of smallholder farmers who produce most of the continent's food (Sanchez et al., 2005). The pertinent issues affecting agricultural productivity include:

What role is AI playing in African Farming Today?

Since Artificial Intelligence (AI) was introduced to various sectors, including agriculture, there have been noticeable transformations occasioned by it. Africa is gradually becoming part of this technological transition (Elbehri et al., 2021) where it has embraced AI-powered systems that can analyze weather patterns, monitor crop health, detect pests and diseases, optimize irrigation and improve agricultural decision-making (Rufai et al., 2022). Some of the AI systems in African farming include Hello Tractor, PeMOST and AgriSolutions.





Technology has really transformed the agricultural sector, what was unimaginable in the pre-AI period is now a reality. Farmers can now access real-time data for efficient and climate-smart farming practices through mobile phones, drones, sensors and satellite technologies (Elbehri et al., 2021). We are truly living in the future we imagined with the capabilities AI has shown in the agricultural sector. Further, AI-driven advisory systems help farmers make informed decisions on planting seasons, fertilizer application and market opportunities (Rufai et al., 2022).

The overlooked problem of post-harvest losses

When we talk about improving agriculture, we cannot afford to overlook what happens after the crops have matured. Yes, post-harvest, are we really prepared? Are we adding with one hand just to subtract with the other? Agriculture cannot be fully successful if the effort put into production is not backed up by the same effort to reduce post-harvest losses. Studies estimate that between 30% and 40% of food produced in sub-Saharan Africa is lost before reaching consumers due to poor storage, spoilage, pests, weak transportation systems and limited market access (FAO, 2011; CGIAR, 2023). Perishable goods such as fruits and vegetables are at greater risk, and losses can exceed 50% due to inadequate cold chain infrastructure (Atanda et al., 2011). Climate change further worsens the problem by accelerating spoilage through rising temperatures and unpredictable humidity levels (Atanda et al., 2011).

Can AI in Agriculture Be Truly Inclusive?

Women…yes, women, you read that right, constitute approximately 70-80% of the agricultural labour force in many African countries, yet they continue to face persistent barriers in land ownership, financing, technology access and participation in agricultural decision-making. Why is this so, despite their high participation in agriculture? Here is why: studies on gender-responsive digital agriculture and AI-driven food systems show that women have significantly less access to digital tools, extension services, and innovation platforms, despite their central role in food production (Ozor et al., 2025; Okaka, 2025). This contradicts what studies have consistently indicated, that empowering women farmers improves household food security, nutrition and rural development outcomes. This discovery makes gender inclusion essential for sustainable agricultural transformation. So, how do we achieve equity in this era of AI? Equity will only be achieved through targeted investment in digital literacy, inclusive design of AI tools and improved access to climate-smart technologies.

From innovation to action: The policy interventions Africa must prioritize

African governments and development partners must move beyond short-term pilot projects toward long-term investment in sustainable agricultural innovation. They must:

- Invest in rural digital infrastructure, renewable energy systems and climate-smart cold storage facilities to expand access to AI-powered agricultural solutions.
- Support partnerships between researchers, technology developers, farmer cooperatives and policymakers.
- Develop inclusive AI governance frameworks that promote responsible innovation while protecting farmers' data rights and interests.

Africa stands at a turning point in agriculture: Let's build resilience together

Africa does not lack agricultural potential; it lacks sufficient systems to protect farmers from growing climate and market uncertainties. That is why Africa must leverage AI to transform agriculture into a more resilient, efficient, and sustainable sector capable of supporting long-term food security. AI, in conjunction with inclusive policies and strategic investment, can help African smallholder farmers move from vulnerability to resilience and from food loss to food security. The future of African agriculture will depend not only on what farmers grow, but also on how technology and policy work together to protect what they produce.

Chepkemoi Chepkwony

In this issue's Innovator's Spotlight, we feature **Chepkemoi Chepkwony,** founder of **Vumah Labs.** As a digital transformation leader and deep-tech entrepreneur, she is building vital trust infrastructure for Africa's digital economy.

Through Vumah Labs, she developed **Kweli**, an AI and zero-knowledge-powered deepfake verification platform that was shortlisted by UNICEF and is currently live on Starknet. She is also developing the Vumah SDK to ensure content integrity and secure digital claim verification. By bridging blockchain, AI, and privacy-preserving technologies, her work combats disinformation, protects vulnerable communities, and enables secure digital identities for marginalised groups.

Beyond software development, Chepkemoi champions AI literacy, provides blockchain and stablecoin education for SMEs, and advocates for girls in STEM pathways. She is also deeply passionate about AI safety for children and teenagers, actively developing policies and frameworks to protect young people from synthetic media, online harms, and algorithmic exploitation. In this feature, she discusses how building digital trust and child-centered AI safety can drive inclusive development across Africa.

Q. What first drew you to the intersection of blockchain, AI, and privacy-preserving technologies? Was there a defining moment, experience, or person that sparked your commitment to building trust infrastructure for Africa's digital economy?

A. What drew me in was not the technology itself. It was the gap I kept seeing on the ground. I have spent my career building systems where trust and security are not optional. A failure in identity verification or data integrity has real consequences. I carried that same lens into emerging technologies.

The defining moment came when I saw how easily deepfakes and synthetic media were being used to manipulate information, target women in public life and erode trust in digital content. At the same time, Kenya's Data Protection Act was coming into force, and businesses had no affordable way to comply. I realized that Africa's digital economy was being built on a fragile foundation, no trust layer, no privacy-preserving verification, no consent framework that ordinary businesses could use.

That is why I built Kweli and Consent Gateway. Not because blockchain or AI are trendy, but because they solve real problems: proving what is real, protecting what is private, and giving people and businesses control over their own data. My commitment is not to any single technology. It is to build the trust infrastructure that Africa's digital economy desperately needs – and making sure it serves the most vulnerable first.

Q. Building solutions like Kweli and the Vumah Consent API requires navigating complex technical, regulatory, and social landscapes. When you encounter a seemingly intractable challenge, whether technical debt, policy ambiguity, or community skepticism, what's your personal process for moving forward?

A. I do three things.

First, I go back to the user. When I get stuck, it is almost always because I have drifted away from the actual problem. I ask myself, who is this for? What do they need right now? That usually cuts through the noise. For Consent Gateway, the problem was not complex cryptography. It was a Grocery vendor in Nairobi who needed to send SMS to her customers without getting fined. Remembering her kept me focused.

Second, I break the problem into smaller pieces. A deepfake detector on Starknet sounds impossible. A ZK proof generator that runs on a mobile phone? That is still hard, but I can build one piece at a time: AI model, then proof generation, then blockchain anchor. I do not try to solve everything at once. I solve the next small thing.

Third, I test and learn. I do not wait for perfect policies or perfect code. I build a small prototype, put it in front of real users and see what breaks. For Kweli, that meant getting a working model in front of UNICEF early. For Consent Gateway, that meant a landing page and a waitlist before writing any compliance logic. Community skepticism is usually fear of the unknown. I do not argue. I show them something that works.

Technical debt, policy ambiguity and skepticism are all the same problem in different clothes: uncertainty. I move forward by reducing uncertainty one step at a time through user focus, small pieces, and real feedback

Q. Your work consistently centers vulnerable communities, marginalized groups, and children. How do you ensure these values remain at the core of Vumah Labs' product development and partnerships, especially when commercial pressures or scaling demands arise?

A. My mantra is simple: build with, not for.

That sounds obvious, but it changes everything. For Consent Gateway, I did not start with code. I started with small business owners, grocery vendors, restaurants, caterers to understand their fear. The fines are real. The confusion was real. One woman told me she had stopped sending SMS to her customers entirely because she was terrified of the ODPC. That shaped the product: low pricing, simple language, one-line-of-code implementation. I did not validate my idea. I listened to their problem.

The same principle applies to Kweli. The deepfake detector is still a prototype, but it was not built in a lab. It came from real conversations with young people, journalists, and women activists who kept asking "How do I know what is real?" I built for them first not for enterprises or governments. And we continue to refine, test and pivot based on feedback. That is how a prototype becomes a product that actually serves people.

When commercial pressure comes, I ask one question, does this decision make it harder for a vegetable vendor to comply with the law, or easier? I also bake values into the product. Kweli is open source. The Vumah SDK is privacy by design. That is accountability. When your tools are private by design, you cannot exploit user data.

Beyond technology, I also founded EA-AICS, a child-centered AI safety initiative. But that is still new. The core values, build with, not for come first.

Q. You actively champion Girls in STEM pathways and AI literacy for SMEs. Who were your early mentors or role models, and what lessons from them shape how you now lift others as you climb? What kind of legacy do you hope to leave for the next generation of African women in deep tech?

A. I did not grow up with money or connections. There were long stretches when the future felt like a closed door, when I questioned whether someone like me had any place in technology. But I refused to walk away. I stayed enrolled. I showed up. I finished my degree even when I could not see the path ahead. That stubbornness came from somewhere.

I was fortunate to have Dr. Myra as a lecturer during my undergraduate studies in Computer Science. She was kind, patient, and believed in me when I was struggling with my projects. She did not just teach me code, she taught me that technical ability is not about getting it right the first time. It is about persistence. That kindness stayed with me. It shaped how I mentor young women today. I do not judge. I sit with them. I walk through the errors together.

Beyond her, I look up to women who have broken ceilings in STEM globally. Women who championed human-centered AI and leaders in data science. And Dr. Anne-Marie Imafidon, who has worked tirelessly to get more girls into STEM from a young age. They showed me that African women and women of colour belong in every room where technology is being shaped.

The legacy I want to leave is simple. I want more African women in STEM who are not afraid to build. Not just consume technology but write the code, train the models, deploy the smart contracts and sit on the boards. I want the young woman who joins my Girls in STEM workshop to look back in ten years and say: "Someone showed me it was possible. Now I am showing the next one."

That is my legacy. Not what I built. Who I helped build.

Q. Innovation rarely follows a straight line. Could you share a setback or "failed" experiment from your journey with Vumah Labs that ultimately taught you something invaluable about technology, leadership, or yourself?

A. Yes. We started as Owl Innovation. Not a formal company, but a mission, to train, evangelise and onboard young people mostly youth into Web3 and AI. We ran workshops, brought in developers and tried to build a community around emerging tech. But the business model did not work. We could not sustain it. We were educating people, but no one was paying for the education.

That failure taught me something I still carry, passion does not pay rent. You can have the best mission in the world, but if you do not have product-market fit, you will not survive.

That failure taught me something I still carry, passion does not pay rent. You can have the best mission in the world, but if you do not have product-market fit, you will not survive.

So we pivoted. Owl became Vumah. We stopped selling training and started building products. That is when Kweli was born, an AI and ZK-powered deepfake detector. Then Consent Gateway, a compliance tool for Kenya's Data Protection Act. Then AI agents for businesses. And on the roadmap, still, the Vumah SDK, a privacy-preserving verification layer.

We are flexible. We pivot when we need to. The mission did not change, building trust infrastructure for Africa. But the model changed completely. We went from selling hope to selling solutions. And that is the difference between a dream and a sustainable business.

The setback taught me that failure is not the end. It is just a signal to change direction. Owl did not die. It grew up.

Q. You wear many hats: founder, technologist, educator, policy advocate. How do you personally navigate the tension between building cutting-edge tools and advocating for inclusive, human-centered regulation? Where do you find clarity when priorities pull in different directions?

A. You cannot build ethical technology in a vacuum. And you cannot write good regulation without understanding how the technology actually works. I sit in the middle. That is my advantage.

When building Consent Gateway, I just don't write code. I am still learning Kenya's Data Protection Act, talking to businesses about their compliance burden and thinking about how regulation could be implemented without crushing small enterprises. The product and the policy informed each other as I go.

When I advocate for child-centered AI safety through EA-AICS, I am not just writing policy briefs. I am building Kweli, a practical tool that detects deepfakes. The regulation tells me what problem to solve. The technology tells regulators what is possible.
Where do I find clarity when priorities pull in different directions? I go back to the user.

Q. At its core, Vumah Labs is about enabling trust in digital systems. Beyond the code and cryptography, what does "trust" mean to you personally, and how do you cultivate it in your teams, partnerships, and community engagements?

A. Trust, to me, is not a feature. It is not something you add at the end. Trust is the foundation.

Personally, trust means that what I build does what I say it does, no more and no less. It means that when a small business uses Consent Gateway, they can be certain that their compliance record will hold up before the ODPC.
But trust is not just technical. It is personal.

I cultivate trust in my teams and partnerships by being honest about what I do not know. I do not pretend to have all the answers. I ask questions. I admit when I am wrong. I share credit for wins and take responsibility for losses. That sounds simple, but in a space full of hype and ego, it is rare. People notice when you are real.

In community engagements, I run workshops even when no one is paying. I keep my code open source so anyone can verify what I claim. Trust is not built in grand gestures. It is built in small, repeated acts of honesty and follow-through.

Q. If you could send a short note back to the version of you just starting out in tech, before Vumah Labs, before Kweli, what would you say? What do you wish you had known sooner about innovation, impact, or staying true to your mission?

A. I would say: you belong here. Do not wait for permission.

I would also say: passion is not enough. You can want to help people with every bone in your body, but if you do not build something they will actually pay for, you will not stay in the game long enough to help anyone. So find the intersection between what you care about and what someone will open their wallet for. That is not selling out. That is sustainability.

I would tell myself: you do not need to know everything before you start. I spent too much time worrying that I was not ready, not technical enough, not connected enough,not funded enough. The truth is, you learn by building. Start small. Launch ugly. Listen hard. Pivot fast.

And finally: trust your gut about people. Not everyone who smiles at you wants you to win. Protect your energy. Protect your vision. But stay open because the right collaborators will show up when you are busy doing the work.

The ATPS National Chapter Coordinator in Ethiopia, Mr. Wondwossen Belete Selected for a prestigious UN Technology Bank Assignment

The African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS) is thrilled to celebrate a remarkable achievement by one of our own! We are proud to announce that **Mr. Wondwossen Belete**, the dedicated ATPS National Chapter Coordinator for Ethiopia, has been successfully selected as an International Consultant for the **United Nations Technology Bank.**

Mr. Belete will soon embark on a significant one-year assignment in Nepal, where he will be working on the Technology Needs Assessment. This prestigious selection underscores his exceptional expertise, professional capacity, and commitment to advancing science, technology, and innovation on a global scale.

This milestone not only highlights Mr. Belete's outstanding individual achievements but also beautifully reflects the strong culture of mentorship, collegiality, and mutual support that thrives within the ATPS community.

On behalf of the entire ATPS family, our stakeholders, and partners, we extend our warmest congratulations to Mr. Wondwossen Belete. We wish him the very best as he takes on this vital international assignment in Nepal and look forward to the impactful contributions he will undoubtedly make to the UN Technology Bank's mission.

Congratulations, Mr. Belete! We are incredibly proud of you.

ATPS and Partners Advance Climate Resilience with SCALE Phase 2 Workshop in Podor, Senegal

On 4–5 May 2026, the **African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS)**, in partnership with **Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rural (IPAR)** Senegal, officially launched the second phase of the SCALE Capacity-Building Workshop in Podor, Northern Senegal. Funded by the **International Development Research Centre (IDRC)** Canada and the **Government of Canada's Ministry of Foreign Affairs**, this pivotal event marks a major milestone in the ATPS's ongoing mission to foster climate resilience across West Africa.

The Podor workshop represents the culmination of an extensive, collaborative regional effort. Building on foundational work that included co-needs identification, validated field data, and co-designed training modules, the Phase 2 workshop follows successful prior deliveries in both Nigeria and Senegal.

The core objective of the Strengthening the Capacity of the Extension System to Use Proven Knowledge and Technologies to Sustain Equitable, Locally Led Adaptation Among Smallholder Farmers (SCALE) Project Phase 2 workshop was to strengthen equitable and inclusive resilience among marginalised communities, with a particular focus on smallholder farmers who are on the frontlines of climate change. By actively bridging the gap between academic research and on-the-ground practice, the initiative ensures that climate solutions are both accessible and actionable for those who need them most.

The workshop's agenda was anchored by three strategic pillars designed to create lasting, systemic change:

- **Innovative Climate Finance:** Unlocking and demystifying accessible financial mechanisms tailored for vulnerable rural communities.
- **Sustainable Indigenous Technologies:** Validating and scaling traditional, time-tested agricultural practices that are inherently adapted to local ecosystems.

- **Effective Knowledge Brokering:** Strengthening agricultural extension systems to ensure seamless, two-way knowledge transfer among farmers, researchers, and policymakers.

The two-day event featured dynamic sessions led by distinguished expert speakers, including Prof. Amadou Ndiaye, Ndeye Coumba Diop, Aboubacry Diallo, and Prof. Abdou Khadre Dieng. Their contributions provided critical insights into integrating local knowledge with modern climate adaptation strategies.

The outcomes of the Podor workshop extend far beyond the event itself. By empowering the agricultural extension system to act as a dynamic knowledge broker, the ATPS, IPAR, and their global funders (IDRC and the Government of Canada) are actively shaping a climate-resilient future. This collaborative model ensures that innovation translates into lasting, on-the-ground impact, ultimately safeguarding food security and rural livelihoods across West Africa.

ATPS Executive Director Features as Key Speaker at STRI4Society Week 2026 in Nairobi

From 18–22 May 2026, the Executive Director of the African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS) participated as an invited featured speaker at the **Science, Technology, Research and Innovation Week for Society (STRI4Society) 2026**. Held at the Kenyatta International Convention Centre (KICC), the landmark event was organized by the **State Department for Science, Research and Innovation (SDSRI)**, in collaboration with the **National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation (NACOSTI)**, the **National Research Fund (NRF)**, and the **Kenya National Innovation Agency (KeNIA)**.

The week-long summit convened key stakeholders to align scientific research and technological innovation with broader societal development goals. The invitation, extended directly by the Chair of the National Organizing Committee on behalf of the Principal Secretary, underscores the ATPS's prominent standing and the Executive Director's recognized thought leadership within the national Science, Technology, and Innovation (STI) ecosystem.

During the event, the Executive Director delivered a compelling speaking engagement, sharing expert insights aligned with the session's core theme. The presentation highlighted the ATPS's current initiatives, demonstrating their direct relevance and impact on society. Crucially, the engagement successfully positioned the ATPS's ongoing research and innovation projects as vital pillars that directly support the national development goals championed by the SDSRI, placing the network at the center of national dialogues on research impact.

Beyond the speaking engagements, STRI4Society Week provided a high-level platform for strategic networking. The Executive Director engaged directly with institutional heads from key national agencies, including NACOSTI (regulators), the NRF, and KeNIA.

These targeted interactions focused on partnership development, exploring collaborative pipelines with national funding bodies and commercialisation drivers. By engaging with these key players, the ATPS laid the groundwork for scaling future projects and translating research into tangible societal benefits.

The ATPS's participation at STRI4Society Week 2026 successfully achieved critical institutional objectives. By enhancing the organization's brand and reputation before state officials, international delegates, and industry peers, the event reinforced the ATPS's role as a premier catalyst for STI. Through policy influence, high-level networking, and strategic visibility, the ATPS continues to champion science and innovation that drives equitable societal development across the continent.

AI4AFS+ Field Visit Empowers Ghanaian Cashew Farmers with AI-Powered Pest Detection

On 25 May 2026, the Advancing Responsible Gender Equality and Inclusive **Artificial Intelligence Innovations for Agriculture and Food Systems in Africa (AI4AFS+)** project team, led by Lead Researcher Dr. Patrick Mensah, conducted a highly successful field visit to the Fetentaa community in the Berekum West Municipality of the Bono Region, Ghana. Focused on direct farmer engagement and technology demonstration, the visit marked a critical step in introducing AI-driven pest and disease detection to local cashew farmers.

The visit commenced with a community entry meeting that brought together Fetentaa elders and local cashew farmers. Rather than presenting the AI tool as a finished product, Dr. Mensah introduced it as a collaborative instrument. This co-design approach allowed farmers to actively participate by sharing the visual symptoms of their most pressing agricultural challenges, specifically identifying threats like the cashew stem miner and anthracnose. This direct, on-the-ground feedback is invaluable, helping the research team refine the AI's detection focus to address the specific realities faced by smallholder farmers.

A major highlight of the day was the live, interactive technology demonstration. Several farmers were handed mobile devices equipped with the AI software to test the scanning feature themselves. The tool successfully identified leaf vulnerabilities in real time, generating significant excitement and engagement among the participants.

Farmers quickly recognized the practical, economic value of the technology. They noted that early, accurate detection would allow them to target interventions precisely, saving significant time and financial resources that are currently wasted on broad, late-stage chemical applications.

The overall reception to the AI4AFS+ tool was overwhelmingly positive. Because localized, expert agricultural advice is scarce in the municipality, farmers expressed a high willingness to adopt the digital tool. Participants also voiced a strong desire for continuous training sessions to ensure they become fully proficient in using the technology throughout the entire cashew farming cycle.

The deep interest and strong community buy-in demonstrated on Day 1 confirm the project's high potential for impact. Moving forward, Dr. Mensah's team will leverage this enthusiasm to establish a local network of "lead farmers." These community champions will play a pivotal role in driving the adoption and success of the digital tool during the upcoming phases of the AI4AFS+ project, paving the way for smarter, more resilient agroforestry systems in Ghana.

ATPS Executive Director Prof. Nicholas Ozor Inducted into UNN Faculty of Agriculture Hall of Honour

In a historic milestone celebrating academic excellence and institutional legacy, the Faculty of Agriculture at the **University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN)** officially inaugurated its **Hall of Honour** on 1 June 2026. The African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS) is absolutely delighted to announce that our Executive Director, Professor Nicholas Ozor, was among the four distinguished inaugural inductees into this prestigious hall.

The maiden Hall of Honour ceremony was established to recognize a select group of scholars whose exceptional contributions have significantly advanced the growth of the faculty, the university, and society at large. Prof. Ozor's induction is a fitting recognition of a leader who has dedicated his career to advancing science, technology, and innovation for Africa's development.

Prof. Ozor was inducted alongside a highly distinguished cohort of scholars who have shaped the faculty's proud institutional memory. The inaugural class of honourees includes:

- Professor Michael Madukwe
- Professor Anthonia Achike
- Professor Nicholas Ozor (Executive Director, ATPS)
- Professor Nnaemeka Chukwuone

The landmark ceremony was graced by the Vice-Chancellor of UNN, Professor Simon Uchenna Ortuanya, who commended the faculty for instituting the award to honor individuals whose services have positively impacted the university community.

In his keynote remarks, the Vice-Chancellor expressed immense pride in the faculty's commitment to excellence. He called upon the award recipients to view the induction not as a final destination, but as a renewed mandate. He urged them to continue making meaningful contributions to scholarship, research, mentorship, and national development.

The Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture, Professor John Ikechukwu Eze, also expressed deep appreciation to the awardees for their dedicated and outstanding service over the years. Highlighting their achievements as a benchmark for future generations, the Dean challenged younger academics to emulate the selfless service, commitment, and professionalism demonstrated by the inaugural inductees.

For the ATPS, this induction is a moment of immense joy and pride. Prof. Ozor's recognition by his alma mater is a testament to a life of purpose-driven scholarship and an unwavering commitment to using knowledge for the good of society.

The Hall of Honour serves as a celebration of excellence, legacy, and inspiration. As Prof. Ozor takes his place among this inaugural group of academic giants, it fills the entire ATPS team with immense pride. This historic honour not only celebrates his individual legacy but also reflects the high standards of leadership and impact that define our network.

ATPS Hires a New PostDoc on Artificial Intelligence

Dr. Azubuike Nzubechukwu Aniedu

The African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS) has hired **Dr. Azubuike Nzubechukwu Aniedu** as its newest Postdoctoral Research Officer, strengthening the network's growing work on artificial intelligence in Africa.

Dr. Aniedu brings a strong background in engineering and computing to the role. He holds a Bachelor of Engineering and Master of Engineering in Electrical/Electronic and Computer Engineering, as well as a PhD in Computer and Control Engineering, all from Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria. He also completed a certificate course in Data Science and Machine Learning at the Institute of Data, Systems, and Society, MIT, USA, alongside several other certifications in AI, data science, and computer networks. His research interests span computer and control engineering, machine learning, data science, and computer networks.

Prior to joining ATPS, Dr. Aniedu served as a Lecturer and Professor at Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka, and as the university's Director of ICT. He is also Chair of the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE), Nigeria Southeast Subsection. His recent research has focused on developing automated systems, mining data for actionable insights, and applying computer vision technology to solve pressing societal challenges. He is a member of several national and international professional organisations and has published widely in reputable journals.

At ATPS, Dr. Aniedu will provide support and leadership in managing the ARISE project — Advancing Responsible and Gender-Inclusive Artificial Intelligence Capacity in Africa's Higher Education Ecosystem. The project aims to build a critical mass of doctoral and postdoctoral AI researchers across the continent by mapping institutional capacity, supporting fellowships, strengthening AI curricula, delivering training and mentorship, and contributing to AI policy development in Africa.

Beyond ARISE, Dr. Aniedu will support the wider ATPS research team in implementing projects across the network's thematic priority areas and will play a role in planning and running network workshops, training the ATPS stakeholders, and providing leadership in research design, fieldwork, data collection and analysis, research synthesis, policy engagement, and publications.

The ATPS looks forward to the expertise and energy Dr. Aniedu brings to advancing responsible, ethical, and gender-inclusive AI research across Africa.

Federal Government of Nigeria Plans $500m Annual Research Fund to Boost Economy, Innovation

Nigeria's **Federal Executive Council (FEC)** has approved the establishment of a **National Research and Innovation Council (NRIC)** and a **National Research and Innovation Development Fund (NRIDF)**, targeting up to $500 million annually to power research, innovation and Nigeria's drive toward a $1 trillion economy.

Announced by **Education Minister Dr. Tunji Alausa** after the FEC meeting in Abuja, the initiative will be chaired by **Vice President Kashim Shettima** and supervised by the **Federal Ministry of Innovation, Science and Technology (FMIST)**. It will fund competitive research grants, upgrade laboratory infrastructure, support commercialisation of research, and deepen Nigeria's global research partnerships, drawing lessons from South Korea and Singapore's coordinated national funding models. An executive bill is now being prepared for the National Assembly to give the fund legal backing.

For the **African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS)**, this is a direct outcome of years of technical and policy advocacy work. Under the Science Granting Council Initiative (SGCI) funded by the **International Development Research Centre (IDRC) among other donors, a special project tagged "Strengthening the National Research and Innovation Funding Agencies in West Africa (SRIFA)"** was designed and implemented by the ATPS in partnership with the **African University of Science and Technology (AUST)** in six (6) West African countries namely, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Sierra Leone. The aim was to strengthen or establish the national research and innovation funding agencies in the countries. By the end of the three-year project in 2025, five of the six countries now have Research and Innovation Councils and Funds established, while Nigeria is about to establish one. A lot of work has been done in Nigeria to achieve this purpose, culminating in a high-level policy dialogue held in Abuja where President Bola Ahmed Tinubu agreed to adopt the Bill establishing the National Research and Innovation Council and the National Research and Innovation Development Fund as an Executive Bill. Details of this process have been captured in an earlier policy brief published by the ATPS. Technopolicy Brief No. 99 (Access Policy Brief 99 here, "Towards the Establishment of a National Research and Innovation Council and a National Research and Innovation Fund in Nigeria," laid out the policy roadmap that closely mirrors what FEC has now approved.

The **FEC** decision marks that roadmap taking institutional form. The ATPS looks forward to engaging with the NRIC and NRIDF to ensure that the resulting research agenda remains inclusive and responsive to the needs of smallholder farmers, women, youth, and other underserved communities.

Australia
Mr. David Doepel
Chair, Africa Research Group,
Murdoch University
90 South Street Murdoch
Western Australia 6150
Tel: +61418912287
Email: d.doepel@murdoch.edu.au

Benin
Dr. Roch L. Mongbo
Senior Lecturer & Researcher Director of LADyD (Lab for Social Dynamics and Development Studies)
Universite' d'Abomey-Calavi,
Benin 02 BP 778 Gbe'gamey
Cotonou, Benin
Tel: +229-21360126
Cell : +229-95966446 / 97374797
Email: roch.mongbo@fsa.uac.bj rochl_mongbo@yahoo.com roch.mongbo@cebedes.org

Botswana
Mr. Abraham Mathodi
P.O Box 550203, Mogoditshane,
Botswana.
Cell: +26772449035
Email: amathodi@gmail.com

Burkina Faso
Dr. Aminata Kabore
BP 8645 Ouagadougou 04
Burkina Faso
Tel: +226 70 38 56 99/ 78 95 93 89
kab.amina@yahoo.fr

Cameroon Prof. Sylvester Ndeso Atanga Senior Visiting Lecturer, Epidemology & Public Health Faculty of Health Sciences University of Buea P.O. Box 63 South West Province Republic of Cameroon Tel: + 237-653774599/ 243094176 Cell: +237-99841433
Email: silawrence2011@gmail.com or ndesoatpscamnet@rocketmail.com

Cote d'Ivore
Dr Eric Tra Bi,
Legal Advisor at the Large Enterprises Control Service
Directorate of Customs
Investigations and Intelligence
esearch Officer at the Strategic
ScientificProgram for Support

Research in Côte d'Ivoire (Swiss Center for Scientific Research)
Research Professor at the Faculty of Legal Sciences of Jean Lorougnon Daloa University Tel : +225 07 44 25 73
E-mail: erictrabi78@yahoo.fr

Egypt
Ms. Manal Moustafa Samra
Mobile: +20 01014467049
Email: mmsamra@gmail.com

Ethiopia
Mr. Wondwossen Belete,
Managing Director,
Society for Technology Studies
P.O.Box 25453, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Mobile: (+251)911886709
Email: wondwossenbel@yahoo.com stsethiopia@gmail.com

Gambia
Vacant

Ghana
Dr. Fred Amu-Mensah
Senior Research Scientist CSIR
Water Research Institute
P.O. Box M.32
Accra, Ghana
Tel: +233-24-4748197
+233-26-4748197
Email: obeyie@gmail.com

Kenya
Vacant

Lesotho
Mr. Denis Sekoja Phakisi
Acting National ChapterCoordinator
Manufacturing Manager Loti Brick
P.O. Box 8008, Maseru 100, Lesotho Tel: +266 5885 3389
Fax: +266 22310071 **Email: ds.phakisi@lycos.com**

Liberia
Vacant

Malawi
Dr. Kingdom M. Kwapata
Lecturer,
Molecular Genetics and Biotechnology for Horticulture and Forest Crops
Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Bunda College, P.O. Box 219, Lilongwe, Malawi
Tel: +265 999195477
E-mail: kwapata@yahoo.com

Mali
Dr. Sidiki Gabriel DEMBELE
Agrochimie/Agroforesterie et Fertilité des sols
Bureau Ouest-Africain d'Appui Organisational et de Technologies Appropiées
B.P. E 3730, Bamako,Mali Tél. : (223) 226 2012 Fax : (223) 226 2504
Cell:(223)713806
Email: sidikigabriel@hotmail.com/ ousmanenia2000@yahoo.fr

Morocco
Prof. Dr. Saïd Boujraf
National Coordinator
Clinical Neurosciences Laboratory
Faculty of Medicine and Pharmacy,
University of Fez,
BP. 1893; Km 2.200, Sidi Hrazem
Road, Fez 30000, Morocco
Tel: +212 667 780 442
Fax: +212 535 619 321
E-mail: sboujraf@gmail.com

Mozambique Eng. Lourino Alberto
Chemane ICT and Planning Advisor
Executive Secretariat, ICT Policy
Commission Bairro da Coop
Rua Particular Dr. Antonio de
Almeida 61 R/C Direito, Maputo Moçambique
Tel: +258 21 309398 Fax: +258 21 302289
Cell : +258 82 3110700
Email: Lourino.chemane@intic.gov.mz

Namibia
SurveyorUzochukwu Okafor
Surveyor- General
Directorate of Survey and Mapping
Ministry of Land Reform
Tel: +264(0)2965036
Mobile: +264811223311
Email: uzo.okafor@mlr.gov.na

Nigeria
Prof. Michael C. Madukwe
Professor, Department of Agricultural
Extension University of Nigeria
Nsukka, Enugu State Nigeria
Tel: +234 8037006968
Email: madukwemichael@yahoo.com; michael.madukwe@unn.edu.ng

Prof. Femi Olokesusi
Nigerian Institute for Social and Economic Research (NISER)
P.M.B 5 UI Post Office
Oyo Road, Ojoo, Ibadan, Nigeria
Tel: 234-8023322052/ 8073132917
Fax: +234 2 2413121
Email: femioloke@yahoo.com

Rwanda
Vacant

Senegal
Vacant

Sierra Leone
Prof. Kelleh Gbawuru Mansaray
Deputy Vice Chancellor Fourah Bay College – University of Sierra Leone
Phone: +232 78476527
Email: Kelleh.mansaray@usl.edu.sl mansaraykg@gmail.com

South Africa
Professor Mark Swilling
Stellenbosch University, Private Bag X1, Matieland, South Africa
Cell: +27(0)83-459 7417
Tel: +27(0)21-881 3196
Fax: +27(0)21- 881 3294
Email: swilling@sun.ac.za

Sudan
Mrs.Nadia Hassan
Economic DepartmentStudies
Sidahmed Industrial Research & Consultancy Centre (IRCC), Sudan
Tel: +249 911449106
Email: nadiahsh@yahoo.co.uk

Swaziland
Prof. Musa Dube
Senior Lecturer Faculty of Agriculture
University of Swaziland
Luyengo Campus
Tel: +268 527 40 21
Cell: +268 618 15 79
P. O. Luyengo,Swaziland
Email: madube@uniswa.sz

Tanzania Dr Amos Nungu Director General Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology P.O Box 4302, Dar-es-Salaam Tel: +255222774023
Email: amos.nungu@costech.or.tz; amos.nungu@gmail.com

Uganda Dr. Engr. John Okuonzi National Coordinator Kyambogo University
Faculty of Engineering, Department Electrical and Electronic Engineering,
P.O Box 1, Kyambogo, Kampala, Uganda
Tel: +256 782 353034
Email: jokuonzi@kyu.ac.ug okuonzijohnie@yahoo.com

United Kingdom
Mrs. Martha Ada Ugwu
National Coordinator
Kent, ME5 7SF, UK
Tel: +447909327708
Email: martha.ugwu@nhs.net

United States of America

Dr. Anthony C Ikeme National Coordinator President & CEO Clintriad Pharma Services 102 Pickering Way, Suite 200 Exton, PA 19341 Tel: 484.753.3405 Cell: 215.380.9920 Fax: 610.384.5455

Email: aikeme@clintriad.com

Zambia

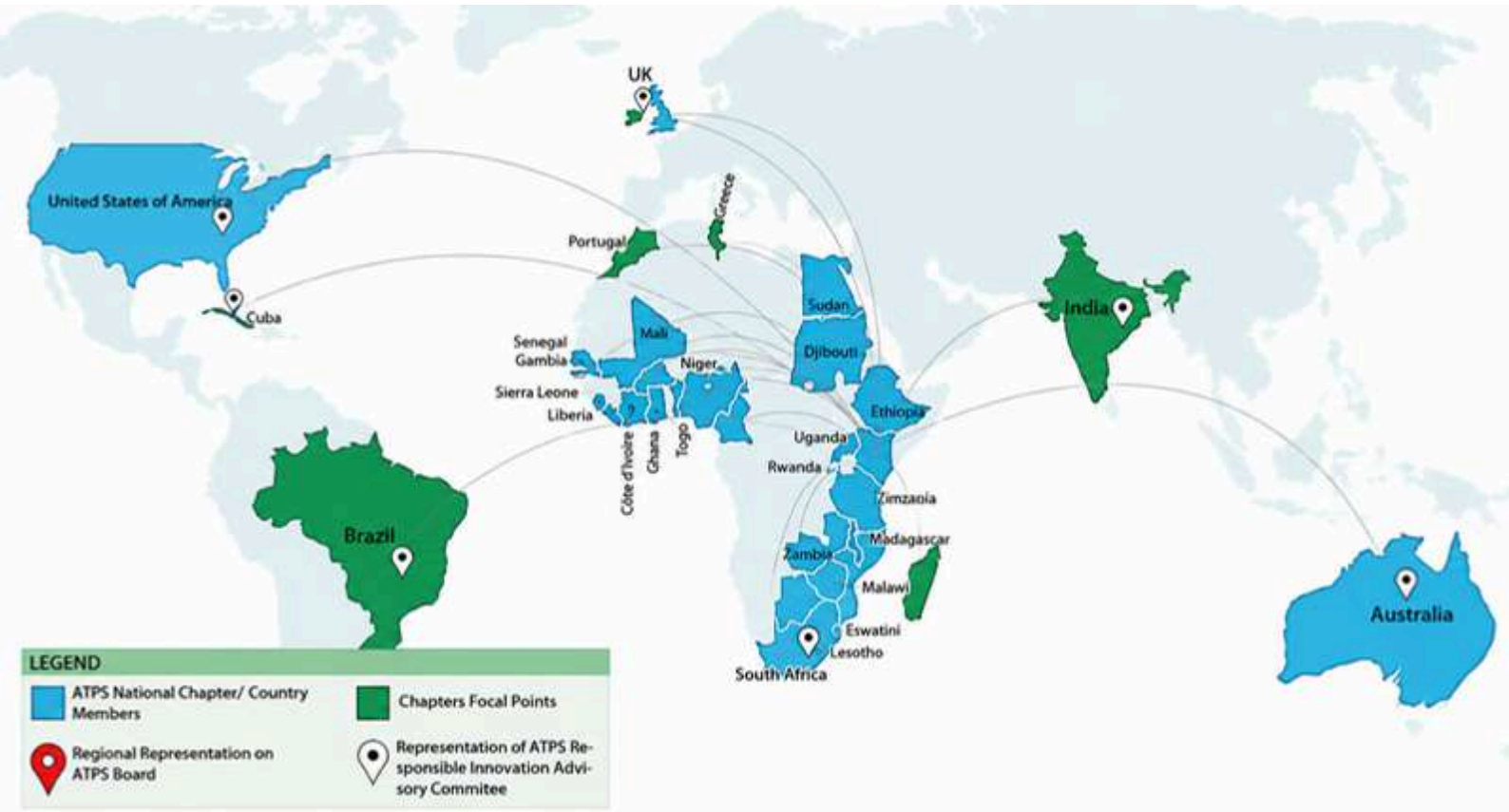
Prof. FrancisYamba Director, Centre for Energy and Engineering (CEEEZ) Ltd,
176 Parirenyatwa Road Suite B. Fairview, P/B E721 Lusaka, Zambia
Tel: +260977856167

Email: ceeez@zamnet.zm
ceeez2015@gmail.com

Zimbabwe

Mr. Benson Zwizwai
Economics Department, University of Zimbabwe
P. O. Box Box M.P. 167, Mount Pleasant, Harare
Tel: +2637772494902
Mobile: +263776413357

Email: bmutzwizwai@yahoo.com



For further information, contact:

African Technology Policy Studies Network (ATPS)

8th Floor, The Chancery Building, Valley Road

P.O. Box 10081-00100, Nairobi, Kenya

Tel: +254 20 271 4092

Email: info@atpsnet.org

https://atpsnet.org/