



## **Interview of the Minister for Scientific Research and Innovation**

**from the Republic of Burkina Faso**

**For the First African STI Forum on Science Technology and Innovation for  
Youth Employment, Human Capital Development and Inclusive growth**

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To date, the African continent is the only one where the contribution of science, technology and innovation (STI) to improvement of the living conditions of its population is not significant.

### **Why this situation?**

-Because in our development policies and plans on STI, has never been actually considered as a priority. This state of fact has two consequences:

First, the low level of financial and human resources devoted to STI.

Second, the lack of a clear strategic orientation of STI in addressing development issues such as food security, health, water, energy and natural resources management.

### **How is Burkina Faso addressing this issue?**

The creation of the Ministry in charge of STI is a clear signal that the authorities of Burkina are aware that STI is key for development. The Ministry has been created with a clear mission, i.e. to play a key role in the qualitative transformation of the productive system in the country, which is primarily based on agriculture. The Ministry is currently elaborating a STI policy accompanied by strategic and operation plans.



Secondly the Ministry is committed to set up a strategic plan for the promotion of the results of STI.

This strategic plan comprises several pillars oriented towards reaching significant results for development.

The first important pillar is to enforce the copyright of the STI results.

The second important pillar is the use of STI results to promote public and private partnerships. For example, we have in one of our research institute, a pharmaceutical unit able to produce generic and pharmacopoeia medicine. At this moment, we are in contact with a pharmaceutical company for a better promotion and marketing of the pharmacopoeia medicines developed by this unit.

The third pillar is the creation of innovation and techno- poles in the main cities of the country, and particularly in the growth poles, as part of the government global development plan.

The fourth pillar is the acceleration of technological transfer taking into account the interest of the different users. For example, we are developing an important program around a well-known plant called “Morenga”.

All actors (public and private, NGO’s, ministries) are involved in the program. Its objective is the use of MORENGA as a mean to improve nutrition status in the country and contribute to food security.

The fifth pillar consists in developing an efficient strategy of communication. This component is very important in the sense that having a knowhow is not enough, one has to make it known.

### **What are the challenges for Burkina Faso as far as STI is concerned?**

As I said before, STI must contribute to improve qualitatively the productive systems in Burkina Faso. This is a major challenge because STI suffered for a



long time from dispersion and lack of strategic orientation. Today, our main challenge in the Department is to reverse this situation based on development objectives and priorities set with all stakeholders in order to address development issues. As far as the MORENGA program is concerned, we are targeting universities, public and private research centers and all those operating in the domain of STI to partner around clear objectives. This is another challenge because people are used to their habits which are not easy to change. But we hope we'll be able to do it by associating all the actors in the process of elaborating the policies. In addition, a STI fund has been set up by the government which aims at providing the country with resources to have ownership over its STI policy, namely by orienting its actions to the country's priorities.

We are also counting on the support of our multilateral and bilateral partners in the implementation of this policy. We are preparing a donors meeting with the actors and partners of STI. The international cooperation has a key role to play in our strategy. We are aware that the innovation and technology needed for our development will not come only from Burkina Faso, but also from other partner countries. Promoting STI results also means compiling all the researches and technologies that exist and make them available to stakeholders.

As far as innovation and entrepreneurship is concerned I would say this is not something you can build up at once. It is a whole process to be developed.

The techno-poles we advocated as part of our strategies can attract the younger generation to STI. We can create within these technopoles, centers of creativity, innovation or discovery.

It is also important that STI be part of our educational system. Burkina Faso has developed and is still developing professional secondary schools and technical training centers. The government is planning to create technical training



centers in all the thirteen regions by 2015. The introduction to and training on science and technology must be the main driver of this culture among the younger generation.

In our universities, I think that it is important to be aware that the educational system is inadequate, regarding the y growing number of students and the scarcity of financial resources to recruit lecturers, build infrastructures in order to satisfy this huge demand.

We have to think about adopting other ways of teaching such as distance learning as a way of reducing investment in infrastructures and human resources.

It is obvious that our educational system does not meet the need of the private sector even though this private sector in our counties is just taking shape.

### **Then how to use STI to create jobs?**

Today, the notion of creating jobs differs totally from what it used to be. Entrepreneurship has to be developed and people have to become their own employers. But becoming your own employer means that you have been educated trained in that way. The government has launched a vast program of jobs creation. For the STI Ministry this program is an opportunity to offer the possibility to young people to use existing STI results to create enterprises, produce better and more productively in different productive sectors such as agriculture.

Here are some thoughts that I would have liked to develop during this forum unfortunately, due to an over booked calendar I cannot attend the meeting.