S&T IN ERITREA: AN OVERVIEW

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Country Profile:

- Eritrea is Africa's newest nation, gained its independence in 1991.

- Has an estimated population of about 4.0 million; total area of 124,000 square kilometers; an average population density of 28/sq.km and 1000 km coastline on the Red Sea.

- Has six administrative regions (local governments)

Eritrea's Policy on S & T

As stated in the Macro-Policy (1994):

National Development Objective/Vision:

To create a modern, technologically advanced and internationally competitive economy.

Policy Statements on S&T:

The policy promotes:

- Transforming the existing obsolete stock of capital;

- An extended and continuous exposure of the population to new methods and processes;

- Promote research & development in S&T;

- Establishment of a national institution of S & T that regulates the process of technology transfer, evaluates their appropriateness, gathers and disseminates information on existing and emergent technologies, and coordinates inter-sectoral R & D.

STI Related Sector Policies

- National Environmental Management Policy;

- National Biodiversity Policy and Framework;

- National Biosafety and Biotechnology Policy and Framework;

- National Agricultural Research Policy;

- National Forestry and Wild life Protection Policy;

- National ICT in Education Policy.

S & T Agency:

On the basis of the above policy statements, "Eritrea Agency for Science and Technology (EAST)" was established in 2002.

However, the process has been hindered due to:

- the prolonged effects of the 1998 border conflict;

- priorities given to institutional and human capacity development as essential elements for robust S & T policy and implementation;

- the educational reform process (EESDP) being undertaken both in the national education system and the higher education system.

Current Situation:

- The existing higher education institutions have been upgraded and expanded to the required level for undertaking S & T research and development;

- Satisfactory achievements have been recorded in the existing and newly established research centers;

- Similar achievements have also been recorded in other sectors pertaining to S & T so that it is now time to promote inter sectoral coordination to develop realistically effective and functional STI institutions and policy.

The Way Forward:

- Revitalize EAST;

- Develop a national STI policy;

- Conduct STI and R&D mapping/survey;

- Prioritize and implement R&D on STI;

Concluding Remark:

Technical assistance and funding are essential requirements for successful implementation of the above planned activities.