



**African Population and  
Health Research Center**



**AFRICAN POPULATION AND  
HEALTH RESEARCH CENTER  
2022-2026**

**AFRICAN POPULATION AND  
HEALTH RESEARCH CENTER**

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## LIST OF ACRONYMS

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| AI      | Artificial Intelligence  |
| APHRC   | African Population and Health Research Center                    |
| AU      | African Union  |
| BoDs    | Board of Directors   |
| CARTA   | Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa              |
| CIFF    | Children's Investment Fund Foundation                            |
| CMS     | Content Management Systems                                       |
| CSOs    | Civil Society Organizations                                      |
| DAC     | Development Assistance Committee                                 |
| DEI     | Diversity Equity and Inclusion                                   |
| DSE     | Data Synergy Evaluation  |
| EIDM    | Evidence-Informed Decision-Making                                |
| ELT     | Executive Leadership Team  |
| ERM     | Enterprise Resource Management                                   |
| ERP     | Enterprise Resource Planning                                     |
| FGDs    | Focus Group Discussions  |
| FRDC    | Finance Risk and Development Committee                           |
| FTYIP   | First Ten-Year Implementation Plan                               |
| GBV     | Gender Based Violence  |
| GESI    | Gender Equality and Social Inclusion                             |
| GF      | Gates Foundation   |
| ICS     | Individual Capacity Strengthening                                |
| ICT     | Information Communication and Technology                         |
| IDRC    | International Development Research Centre                        |
| IP      | Intellectual Property  |
| KII     | Key Informant Interviews   |
| KM      | Knowledge Management   |
| KML     | Knowledge Management and Learning                                |
| KMS     | Knowledge Management Systems                                     |
| KPI     | Key Performance Indicators                                       |
| LF      | Logical Framework  |
| LGBTQIA | Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex and Asexual |
| M&E     | Monitoring and Evaluation  |
| MEL     | Monitoring Evaluation and Learning                               |
| MTE     | Midterm Evaluation   |
| NGO     | Non-Governmental Organizations                                   |









# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction and Approach

African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) engaged Radix Management Consulting Limited to conduct a Mid-Term Evaluation (MTE) of its 2022-2026 Strategic Plan (SP). The MTE aimed to provide a comprehensive assessment of progress, and implementation effectiveness, and to recommend necessary adjustments for continued alignment with strategic objectives. Key objectives of the MTE included assessing progress against the SP's outcomes, evaluating relevance in the current global context, analyzing monitoring mechanisms, and proposing recommendations for future strategy execution.

The evaluation followed the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and Development Assistance Committee (DAC) framework, which focuses on relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability, complemented by McKinsey's 7S framework examining strategy, structure, systems, skills, style, staff, and shared values. A mixed-methods approach was employed, integrating both qualitative and quantitative analyses. Data collection involved a desk review, key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), and an online survey. The evaluation was participatory, involving APHRC staff, Board members, donors, academic and research partners, international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), and Civil Society Organization (CSOs).

## Findings

The MTE revealed that APHRC has made significant progress in implementing the 2022-2026 SP, particularly in securing funding, expanding its programmatic scope, enhancing staff levels, increasing partnerships and regional visibility. Notable advancements include improved risk management processes and the initiation of reflection sessions for the Senior Management Team (SMT).

The SP remains highly relevant, with well aligned strategic objectives and the Theory of Change. The Center's Vision was found to be inspiring, with 86% of survey respondents affirming its clarity and alignment with institutional goals. However, performance varied across strategic objectives: substantial progress was noted in generating scientific knowledge (SO1), average results in strengthening the research ecosystem (SO2), and lower performance in the use of research evidence and engaging policy actors and practitioners (SO3).

Operational and governance efficiency improvements included establishing a Board Audit Committee, revising the Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) framework, and conducting job evaluations. A comprehensive Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) plan was in place to support tracking of progress made with the implementation of the 2022-2026 SP.

The Center's risk management evolved with the introduction of distinct strategic and functional risk registers, supported by a strategic oversight committee. Also, financial management showed

effective budgeting and forecasting practices, though there were opportunities for optimizing operational costs through enhanced expenditure control.

## Emerging Challenges and Opportunities

APHRC faces a shifting global and continental environment influenced by social, political, health, technological, and environmental changes. These trends present both challenges and opportunities, such as migration issues, human rights concerns, and the need for better pandemic preparedness. Addressing the rights of marginalized groups in Africa adds complexity, while intellectual property rights demand robust management frameworks to balance local innovation protection and knowledge transfer.

## Key Recommendations

The MTE's findings and recommendations provide APHRC with a roadmap for refining its strategy, ensuring continued relevance, and maintaining its impact on its work. The following are the key recommendations and implementing them will better position APHRC to achieve its vision and sustain long-term success.

- 1. Develop an Intellectual Property (IP) management plan:** Essential for protecting APHRC's innovations and ensuring compliance in research and data generation.
- 2. Expand scope of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** Enhance project and program-level M&E for effective tracking of progress towards achievement of results and outcomes.
- 3. Scale up training initiatives:** Increase the Virtual Academy's reach by designing new e-learning courses.
- 4. Strengthen the Legal, Risk, and Compliance Unit:** Increase staffing to support growing organizational needs.
- 5. Enhance stakeholder engagement:** Prioritize sustainable research outcomes through strengthened interactions with beneficiaries and partners.



## 1. CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) is a leading Africa-based, African-led institution focused on research that influences policy for health and development. Headquartered in Nairobi, Kenya, with a regional office in Dakar, Senegal, APHRC drives change through research, capacity strengthening, and policy engagement across sub-Saharan Africa. With a portfolio of more than 150 projects in over 35 countries, APHRC partners with regional policymakers to address development challenges and promote evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM).

APHRC's 2022-2026 SP outlines a vision of transformative impact based on 20 years of experience. Its objectives include generating knowledge aligned with development agendas, strengthening Africa's research ecosystem for self-sufficiency, leveraging research for policy engagement, and enhancing operational systems for programmatic impact. The SP emphasizes a systems thinking approach integrating financial, social-cultural, and political factors to achieve greater impact. Key strategic thrusts include deepening existing EIDM strategies, supporting a shift to systems thinking, and implementing cross-cutting strategies to address systemic gaps.

The MEL plan tracks and evaluates progress on SP objectives and promotes continuous improvement. Its objectives are to standardize monitoring processes, ensure accountability, provide data for timely decision-making, support learning, and maintain activity focus. The MEL Framework incorporates a theory of change, logical framework, and key performance indicators (KPIs) linked to strategic objectives.

The SP includes baseline, midterm, and end-term evaluations each guided by KPIs outlined in the results framework. These evaluations assess relevance, achievement levels, efficiency, impact, and sustainability, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities.

The (MTE) aims to review progress made, and recommend necessary adjustments to enhance the delivery of the 2022-2026 SP. The MTE objectives included assessing SP progress, relevance in global contexts, adequacy of monitoring, and providing recommendations for improved delivery and decision-making.

The MTE covered SP progress, governance, resource allocation, and administrative efficiency, in alignment with strategic priorities. It assessed financial management, stakeholder engagement, and the impact of APHRC's research on policy. Additionally, the evaluation examined MEL processes, risk management, and governance structures to support effective SP delivery while providing future recommendations for maintaining the trajectory towards 2026 goals.





## 2. CHAPTER TWO: APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Evaluation Design





The MTE was conducted using the OECD DAC criteria to evaluate relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, coherence, and sustainability, while acknowledging that it was premature to fully assess impact. Complementing this approach was McKinsey's 7s framework, which provided insight into APHRC's internal dynamics: strategy, structure, systems, skills, style, staff, and shared values. This combination ensured a comprehensive assessment of both external outcomes and internal operations, focusing on identifying lessons and challenges to inform actionable recommendations for the remainder of the SP period.

### 2.2 Data Collection Methods

The MTE used mixed data collection methods to ensure depth and reliability:

-  **Desk Review:** Review of key documents from various APHRC divisions, including financial statements, performance reports, risk registers, policies, MEL frameworks, and prior SP reports.
-  **Key Informant Interviews (KIIs):** A blend of random and purposive sampling targeted respondents based on their roles and experiences at APHRC.
-  **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** Physical and virtual sessions with participation from theme and unit leads, as well as the MEL unit.
-  **Online Survey:** A survey using 19 questions aligned to McKinsey's 7s framework was administered to all APHRC staff.

### 2.3 Participant Characteristics

-  **Board of Directors-** The team interviewed APHRC board chair and chairpersons of different board committees
-  **Senior Management Team (SMT) -** The team interviewed members of the SMT that comprises Executive Leadership Team (ELT), theme leads, and unit leads.
-  **Funders-** The team interviewed a sample of Funders who have funded the Center's work during the current SP.
-  **Academic and research institutions-** The team sampled institutions that have worked with APHRC during the implementation of the current SP.





While board-management relationships have improved since the current SP's inception, some challenges remain in debates over certain strategic matters. The MTE recommended fostering greater trust and positive relations to further strengthen the Center's governance.

To enhance effectiveness, the MTE suggested more rigorous evaluations and feedback mechanisms, with a focus on strategic oversight, risk management, and compliance. Regular adherence assessments to governance best practices were also recommended to ensure accountability, transparency, and high ethical standards.

### 3.3.5 Financial Performance

The financial performance of APHRC is integral to achieving its Mission and Vision and was assessed within the context of the 2022-2026 SP. Financial stability, anchored in robust income and resource mobilization, was deemed essential for the execution of SOs. The MTE noted that APHRC's funding, largely from grants and donations, remained stable, indicating strong performance under the current SP.

An analysis highlighted significant revenue growth since the SP's inception, with income rising by 83%, from USD 19.84 million in 2021 to over USD 34 million. The top funders during this period included the Gates Foundation, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and Wellcome, contributing USD 45.6M, USD 31.9M, and USD 26.4M, respectively. By 2023, APHRC's lifetime grant value totalled USD 159.3 million, with the Gates Foundation leading at USD 41.68 million.

APHRC's strategy for resource mobilization involved both competitive proposals and invited submissions. The trend indicated a rise in competitive proposals, showcasing the Center's global competitiveness. The MTE noted a positive transition in proposal success rates, with the dollar success rate improving from 36% at baseline to an average of 76% in 2023. This improvement was attributed to a strategic "go-no-go" mechanism that optimized proposal submissions.

In 2023, despite fewer proposals being submitted, APHRC saw a 20% income increase, with a corresponding 22% rise in expenditures driven by expanded program activities. A surplus of \$1 million affirmed the Center's financial sustainability. However, dependence on external funding was identified as a risk to long-term stability. The MTE recommended developing a comprehensive strategic plan for alternative revenue generation, incorporating private sector partnerships, consultancy services, and leveraging research intellectual property.

Budgeting and forecasting at APHRC were effective, with projections aligning closely with actual performance. Nevertheless, there was room for cost optimization without sacrificing program quality. The financial outlook remained strong, supported by key financial ratios indicative of stability and future capacity. Findings from the survey revealed mixed perceptions on funding adequacy, with 51% affirming sufficient SP funding, 37% acknowledging sufficiency but unclear allocation, and 12% finding it insufficient.

APHRC's grant acquisition performance, particularly in securing high-value grants, showed significant growth throughout the SP period, reflecting the Center's robust strategic positioning and proposal success mechanisms.

### 3.3.6 Program Management

APHRC's program management framework aligns with the SOs of the SP, focusing on research and public health initiatives that promote health and development in Africa. The Center has achieved substantial regional growth, formed new partnerships, and expanded its programs across the continent. This evaluation noted that APHRC has generally adhered to donor timelines, with 89% of projects scheduled for closure in 2023 meeting requirements, while 11% received no-cost extensions for completion.

Resource allocation has been effectively managed, ensuring optimal use of financial, human, and technological resources. However, there is room to improve project management through advanced tools and methodologies to boost efficiency. The outcomes of ongoing programs have been positive, highlighted by various success stories that reflect the Center's impact. Continuous monitoring and adaptive strategies are essential to maintaining program relevance amid changing environments.

The Systems Thinking Approach, outlined in the 2022-2026 SP, was a significant investment for the Center. To implement this approach, APHRC recruited a consultant and initiated activities like mapping required expertise, identifying key organizations, and conducting staff capacity-building sessions. Staff responsible for overseeing these initiatives were recruited, and surveys and sensitization sessions were planned to solidify the approach's integration into all programs

### 3.3.7 Risk Management and Compliance

APHRC's risk management practices are underpinned by a robust framework aimed at identifying, assessing, and mitigating risks in financial, operational, strategic, and compliance areas. A major development in this field was the establishment of a Risk Management and Compliance Unit.

The MTE noted significant advancements in identifying and addressing risks, bolstered by the revision of the risk register and establishment of the risk committee.

Risk management initiatives undertaken include internal evaluations, audits in Kenya, Senegal, and the USA, and capacity-building programs for risk owners. These efforts have strengthened APHRC's risk management framework, although more effective monitoring of strategic and compliance risks is needed to address emerging challenges. The MTE found minor gaps in adherence to internal policies that required corrective action, even as regulatory and donor compliance was largely maintained.



Survey feedback indicated that 48% of respondents believe the Center has a robust risk management system supporting continuous learning and planning, while 47% noted its use was infrequent for ongoing improvements. Only 5% said there was no formal system, highlighting the need for continued staff education on risk management practices and risk registers.

### 3. CHAPTER FOUR: SUSTAINABILITY HIGHLIGHTS


APHRC has demonstrated resilience as a premier public health research center, attracting partners even amidst uncertain donor funding landscapes. The Center's clear fundraising strategy supports financial sustainability, although operationalizing this strategy is crucial to maintain liquidity. Income-generating projects, such as Ulwazi Place, have been initiated and are poised for expansion, reinforcing financial independence.


Embedding a systems thinking culture is essential to breaking down silos within the organization. The systems thinking approach must be popularized to gain wider acceptance among staff.


Maintaining a competitive edge and global relevance is vital for APHRC's long-term sustainability, necessitating increased visibility and regional presence. Enhancing human resources by recruiting technical staff and fostering capacity-building initiatives will be pivotal for supporting the SP and ensuring sustained impact.


### 4. CHAPTER FIVE: EMERGING TRENDS

The mid-term evaluation of APHRC's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan highlights key global trends that will impact the Center's strategic initiatives. These emerging trends will shape APHRC's strategic direction, necessitating adaptive measures to enhance its impact and responsiveness.

 **Global Social Issues:** Global migration and refugee crises, driven by conflict, poverty, and climate change, present significant research and advocacy opportunities. Addressing human rights and social justice remains paramount, with a focus on combating discrimination, gender-based violence, and inequality.

 **Global Political Dynamics:** The shift towards a multipolar world order demands that APHRC engage with global powers to amplify Africa's influence in peace, security, and governance.

 **Global Technological Advancements:** The rapid evolution of digital technologies offers APHRC the opportunity to enhance operational efficiency, public engagement, and transparency.

 **Global Environmental Challenges:** Climate change poses severe risks to Africa, making global advocacy and support for the Paris Agreement essential. APHRC should champion sustainable development practices and environmental laws across member states to combat issues like deforestation and biodiversity loss.

## 6. CHAPTER SIX: LESSONS, BEST PRACTICES, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 6.1 Lessons Learned

- 1. Leadership and management cohesion:** The MTE highlighted the importance of a unified leadership team. The close collaboration between the Executive Director (ED) and Deputy ED has contributed to the effective execution of the Strategic Plan (SP). Alignment within the leadership team ensures focused execution of organizational goals.
- 2. Staff and leadership commitment:** APHRC's leadership and staff demonstrate significant commitment, which directly influences the Center's success. This dedication helps the organization move in the right direction and achieve its strategic objectives.
- 3. Ambitious indicators and targets:** APHRC's ambitious targets for its Strategic Objectives (SOs) have faced challenges in data collection and reporting. Some targets may require adjustment to be more achievable, and efforts must be intensified to track performance accurately.
- 4. APHRC growth:** The organization has shown substantial growth in areas like finance, staffing, and program implementation. APHRC's increasing influence on policy and health research is pivotal, especially in light of Africa's growing emphasis on data-driven decision-making.
- 5. Policy engagement and communication:** While improvements have been made in policy engagement, there is room for further progress. The organization needs to focus on impactful communication that influences policy development through data-driven insights.
- 6. Intellectual property (IP):** APHRC has not fully addressed IP issues, which could pose risks. An intellectual property policy and implementation plan are necessary to safeguard its data and innovations.
- 7. Board debriefs:** The practice of conducting debriefs after board meetings is effective in enhancing communication and strategic alignment. This practice ensures that decisions are better communicated and acted upon.
- 8. Remote working:** The shift to remote work has presented both benefits and challenges. While it offers flexibility, maintaining organizational culture and staff engagement remains a concern. APHRC needs to balance innovation with traditional organizational values.
- 9. Health research and innovation:** APHRC has made notable progress in health research, initiating impactful studies and interventions. However, there is a need to strengthen collaboration with international institutions and policymakers to maximize the impact of these initiatives.
- 10. Capacity building:** APHRC has successfully advanced in training health professionals and researchers. Expanding the frequency and scope of these programs will further strengthen capacity building efforts.

- 11. Health policy advocacy:** The Center has contributed to health policy advocacy but lacks a robust system to track the effectiveness of its efforts. Improving this will help APHRC influence health policies more effectively.
- 12. Confusion on Center-wide initiatives:** Initiatives like the signature issues, systems thinking, and synergy programming need clearer direction. A clearer framework will help align efforts across the organization for greater impact.
- 13. Changing funding landscape:** The shift in donor priorities is evident, with a declining focus on HIV research and an increasing focus on non-communicable diseases, climate change, and minority rights. APHRC must adapt its funding strategies accordingly.
- 14. Cybersecurity and Data Laws:** With the growing use of advanced technologies like AI, APHRC needs to continually update its cybersecurity measures and address ethical concerns, particularly regarding algorithmic bias and healthcare inequalities.

## 6.2 Best Practices

- 1. Risk Management and Compliance:** APHRC has effectively separated risk management from internal audits, creating a dedicated legal, risk, and compliance unit. This structure enhances strategic oversight and governance.
- 2. PhD Staff strengths:** APHRC's high proportion of PhD staff enhances its research capabilities, bolstering the institution's reputation, research output, and policy influence across Africa.
- 3. Gender and Youth Empowerment:** APHRC has promoted gender balance and the inclusion of youth, which supports the organization's growth and maximizes the productivity of diverse groups.
- 4. Board competence:** The board's competence, with a diverse mix of skills, plays a significant role in strengthening the oversight and governance of the Center.
- 5. Paperless Systems:** APHRC has embraced paperless systems, improved operational efficiency and contributed to environmental sustainability.
- 6. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E):** The MTE underscores the importance of the MEL function. Continuous support for M&E systems will ensure better tracking of the SP's progress and outcomes.
- 7. Resource mobilization:** APHRC's approach to aligning resource mobilization strategies with its mission and vision helps ensure financial sustainability and strategic partnerships.
- 8. Organogram:** A newly designed organogram aligned with the SP enhances organizational structure and efficiency, enabling the Center to meet evolving public health research challenges.

## 6.3 Recommendations

This summary captures recommendations for improving the implementation of the Strategic Plan, focusing on strategic, operational, and programmatic aspects essential to APHRC's continued growth and success.

### 6.3.1 Strategic Recommendations

- 1. African Research agenda:** APHRC should develop an African Research agenda that aligns with the African Union's Agenda 2063 to drive research on population and health issues.
- 2. Intellectual property:** Implement an intellectual property policy to safeguard APHRC's innovations and data. Employment contracts should be reviewed to ensure compliance with IP legal frameworks.
- 3. Strengthen resource mobilization:** APHRC should diversify its funding sources by targeting a broader spectrum of donors, including public, private, and corporate sectors. Strategic partnerships with universities and research institutions should also be explored.
- 4. Expand capacity building programs:** APHRC needs to scale up its Virtual Academy, offering more programmatic courses on research to reach a wider audience.
- 5. Focus on sustainability:** Sustainability should be integrated into all strategic initiatives. This includes fostering community ownership and ensuring environmental sustainability.
- 6. AI Health Research Strategy:** APHRC should develop a strategy for incorporating AI in health research. This would position the Center as a leader in AI-driven health innovations, improving healthcare outcomes across Africa.
- 7. Data Bank of African Researchers:** APHRC should create or strengthen a comprehensive database of African health and population researchers to identify capacity gaps and guide future training programs.
- 8. Impact evaluation:** APHRC should implement impact evaluation systems to measure the effectiveness of its interventions and move towards measuring long-term outcomes.
- 9. Data capture and reporting:** APHRC should ensure accurate and timely data collection and reporting, enabling informed decision-making and continuous improvement.

### 6.3.2 Operational Recommendations

- 1. Systems thinking workshops:** Regular workshops should be held to evaluate interdepartmental synergies and address organizational bottlenecks.
- 2. Deep specialization:** APHRC should continue to emphasize specialization among its PhD staff, leveraging their expertise to advance cutting-edge research.
- 3. Addressing social challenges:** PhD staff should focus on addressing societal issues, such as climate change, health disparities, and social inequality, enhancing APHRC's role as a leader in driving societal progress.
- 4. WARO office context:** The West African Regional Office (WARO) should develop policies tailored to the diverse financial, labor, and reporting frameworks of the region.
- 5. Language Interpretation Unit:** A language translation unit should be established to support research and policy work in diverse language jurisdictions.
- 6. Staff culture on survey involvement:** APHRC should foster a culture of active staff involvement in surveys, ensuring a deeper connection with the organization's research activities.

### 6.3.4 Programmatic and Financial Recommendations

1. **Engagement with beneficiaries/communities:** APHRC needs to strengthen its engagement with communities to ensure the sustainability of its interventions.
2. **Financial variance analysis:** Detailed variance analysis should be conducted to optimize operational expenditures while maintaining program quality.
3. **Internal controls:** APHRC should continue to improve its internal control systems to adapt to emerging risks.
4. **Programmatic leadership:** Succession planning should be expedited to ensure continuity in leadership, with a focus on professional development and mentorship.

### 6.3.5 MEL Recommendations

1. **Data collection:** Collaborate across teams to streamline data collection processes and prevent underreporting.
2. **KPI performance updates:** Quarterly updates on KPIs should be shared across teams to address underperformance promptly.
3. **Training and capacity building:** Regular training programs should be conducted to build MEL staff capacity and ensure effective tracking of the SP.
4. **Continuous learning:** Implement adaptive learning processes to foster responsiveness and flexibility in the organization's operations.
5. **Enhance M&E systems:** All APHRC teams should have M&E personnel to ensure accurate tracking of project activities.

























**Knowledge Management and Learning (KML)** The KML strategy (2023-2026) focused on enhancing knowledge identification, creation, storage, sharing and application. Key achievements included:

- ▶ **Knowledge repository:** The “Knowhub” platform facilitates centralized storage of critical knowledge, promoting easier access to Center-wide knowledge products.
- ▶ **Knowledge retention:** Initiatives aimed at retaining the wealth of unique knowledge held by APHRC’s experienced technical officers before they depart through published knowledge reports and videos.

### Future Recommendations for Knowledge Management:

- ▶ **Classification and metadata:** Improve systems for better information retrieval.
- ▶ **Benchmarking:** Compare practices with global research centers.
- ▶ **Data security:** Ensure compliance with data protection regulations.
- ▶ **Technology use:** Leverage AI and advanced tools for improved knowledge management.
- ▶ **Collaboration tools:** Optimize platforms that facilitate teamwork and partner engagement.

APHRC has made significant strides toward enhancing efficiency and operational effectiveness. Continuous improvements in policy adherence, qualitative data tracking, and leveraging technology are recommended to ensure the Center maximizes its strategic potential through 2026.

### 3.3.4 Board and Corporate Governance Practices

APHRC's board is composed of individuals with a wide range of skills and experiences, contributing significantly to the organization's strategic direction. Their robust governance practices, including consistent meetings and effective decision-making, have provided comprehensive oversight and earned recognition, such as the Champion of Governance Award from the Institute of Certified Secretaries of Kenya in 2022.

To enhance the functionalities of the board a work plan for 2023 and 2024 was established, alongside the development of a Board Skills Matrix. This matrix ensures a diverse board composition with the necessary skills and is intended to be implemented continuously. The introduction of an Audit Committee in 2023 further strengthened APHRC's governance, enabling improved oversight and adherence to compliance standards.

Interviews conducted during the MTE confirmed that the board played an active role in the design and approval of the SP, fostering a sense of shared ownership and commitment to its execution. The board's involvement was highly valued by the management, who acknowledged its strategic guidance.



5. **Blueprint for Africa:** The anticipated blueprint for R&D self-sufficiency has not been completed, despite stakeholder engagements.
6. **Research training hubs:** Progress in establishing hubs like the World Health Organization Human Reproduction Programme (WHO-HRP) Alliance Hub was noted, with 106 trainees enrolled since 2022. Ongoing efforts were needed to scale and operationalize these hubs fully.
7. **Funding strategy:** While proposal success rates were strong, the MTE suggested diversifying funding to align with evolving trends.

The MTE found that while APHRC demonstrated substantial progress in achieving its SP objectives, challenges persisted in reporting and tracking mechanisms. Strengthening these areas, refining indicator frameworks, and bolstering internal and external coordination were deemed essential for the successful realization of the SP by 2026.

### 3.3: Efficiency at APHRC SP MTE

The MTE of APHRC's SP for 2022-2026 examined how well resources have been utilized to achieve strategic outputs efficiently. The focus was on the cost-effectiveness and timely delivery of outputs, determining if the Center's results justify expenditures and identifying potential improvements.

#### 3.3.1 Strategic Objective 4: Enhancing Operational Efficiency

The evaluation measured progress in operational efficiency by reviewing policies, financial performance reports, and a Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) indicator tracking matrix. Interviews with staff and stakeholders provided qualitative insights. The results showed:

- ▶ **Indicator achievements:** APHRC met 43, 66% of its SO4 targets, fell short on 20, 31%, and had no data for 2,3% of indicators.
- ▶ **Outcome levels:** Nine outcome-level indicators met targets, while three outcomes and one output indicator did not.
- ▶ **Work distribution and staff commitment:** Survey results indicated that 48% of respondents saw work distribution as proficient and 36% as exemplary. Staff commitment was high, with 47% rating it as exemplary and 47% as proficient.

Key initiatives include systems thinking, development of business strategies, securing new private funding sources, and transitioning to paperless systems. Furthermore, the process of adopting solar power for energy was underway, including the solarization of the borehole and irrigation system.

### 3.3.2 Management Systems and Processes

APHRC's management systems are designed for effective decision-making and accountability, supporting the implementation of strategic objectives. Key findings included:

- ▶ **Paperless transition:** The Center has moved key Finance Unit processes to digital platforms, including finance payment, bid analysis and approval of payment vouchers through the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP). The West African Regional Office (WARO) noted a lack of domestication of the ERP system adaptation to their unique context, indicating a need for tailored adjustments.
- ▶ **Policies and guidelines:** The Center has well defined policies and guidelines that support implementation of the SP. From the survey, 65% of respondents affirmed strong policies, while 33% found adherence proficient, suggesting a need for better policy adherence.
- ▶ **Organizational structure:** From the survey, 59% of respondents rated APHRC's organizational structure as exemplary indicating that it is well-suited and significantly contributes to implementing the SP.
- ▶ **Governance enhancements:** The Center has reinforced its governance systems, through establishment of a Board Audit Committee and the overhaul of the Enterprise Risk Management framework to drive operational efficiency.
- ▶ **Information and Communications Technology (ICT) systems:** ICT systems at the Center are robust and operate efficiently. However, continuous enhancement is required to align with the changing ICT landscape worldwide.

### 3.3.3 Monitoring and Evaluation (MEL)

In 2022, APHRC developed a comprehensive MEL Plan aligned with the SP. The plan aimed to enhance program effectiveness and accountability, resulting in:

- ▶ **MEL implementation:** The MEL Unit successfully tracked program progress and performance at the Center, with 51% of survey respondents recognizing that the MEL plan clearly articulated how the SP will be monitored, evaluated, and how learning will inform future decisions.
- ▶ **Reflection and learning:** Structured pause and reflect sessions have supported the identification of challenges and strengths in the implementation of the SP. However, 41% of survey respondents found these practices lacking systematic consistency.
- ▶ **Gaps in tracking:** The MEL system focused heavily on quantitative data, sometimes missing qualitative insights and outcomes. Recommendations included better documentation of unplanned or qualitative results and participatory approaches for broader data capture.

- ▶ **International Non-Governmental Organizations and Civil Society Organizations** - The team sampled NGO and CSOs that have worked with APHRC during the implementation of the 2022-2026 SP.
- ▶ **Survey respondents**- The team engaged APHRC staff through a survey that was administered remotely.

Respondents varied in tenure and age:

- ▶ **Tenure:** Survey results showed that 28% of respondents had less than one year at APHRC.
- ▶ **Age Distribution:** The largest response group was aged 31-40 (43%), followed by 41-50 (26%), 21-30 (21%), and 51+ (10%).

## 2.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis combined quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative survey data was managed using Google Forms, systematized in Excel, and analyzed using SPSS. Visualizations were created to illustrate findings. Thematic coding was used for qualitative data from KIIs and FGDs. Secondary data supported the primary data findings, enhancing context and depth. Interviews were conducted via Microsoft Teams and Zoom, ensuring confidentiality and, where consented, interviews were recorded for accuracy.

## 2.5 Evaluation Limitations

Challenges faced included:

- ▶ **Limited physical engagement** with APHRC stakeholders
- ▶ **Technical and connectivity issues** affected virtual KIIs with international stakeholders.
- ▶ **Survey response rate** of 52% was lower than targeted.

## 2.6 Ethical Consideration

The evaluation adhered to APHRC's standards and norms, ensuring ethical integrity:

**Consent:** Verbal consent was sought before interviews.

**Confidentiality:** Participant privacy and data anonymity were strictly maintained.

**Ethical principles:** The evaluation respected participants' autonomy, promoted fair recruitment, and followed the principle of "do no harm."

**Impartiality:** The consultant was not involved in the design, implementation or monitoring of the SP nor had any other potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

## 3. CHAPTER THREE – EVALUATION FINDINGS

This chapter provides an assessment of the progress made during the MTE of APHRC's 2022-2026 SP. It highlights what has worked, challenges that emerged, and key lessons learned, evaluated under the OECD/DAC criteria of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency.

### 3.1 2022-2026 SP Relevance

The evaluation explored whether APHRC's work during the first half of the SP implementation remained relevant in the shifting global context and that current initiatives supported the SP's main goals: generating evidence, strengthening research capacity, and policy engagement. Key questions assessed if the SP appropriately responded to APHRC's operating context, goal achievement, and future progress. Findings confirmed the SP's strategic design, informed by lessons from the 2017-2021 SP, and was vital for maintaining APHRC's role in evidence generation and policy influence across Africa.

#### Key Findings:

- ▶ **Strategic positioning:** Interviews and document reviews confirmed that APHRC's SP remains highly relevant to African health and development needs. The SP's strategic objectives (SOs) align well with both community and continental public health contexts.
- ▶ **Data Science advancements:** The MTE praised the establishment of APHRC's Data Science Unit, which has executed over 10 regional projects, enhancing evidence-based policymaking.
- ▶ **Survey insights:** 86% of respondents found APHRC's vision inspiring and aligned with its mission. While most respondents (78%) believed the goals of the SP matched the core strategies, 22% noted potential misalignment
- ▶ **Core values:** The Center's core values were clear to 79% of respondents and effectively guided SP implementation, although 21% believed greater awareness across the organization was needed.
- ▶ **Key initiatives:** The MTE highlighted insufficient focus on key initiatives like the Signature Issues Approach (SIA) and Systems Thinking Approach (STA).
- ▶ **Funding and strategic partnerships:** The SP's implementation has maintained strong funding from global partners vital for sustainability.
- ▶ **Alignment with continental frameworks:** The SP aligns well with global and regional public health agendas, including Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, Agenda 2030, and Agenda 2063.

## Key Observations:

- 1. Emerging global issues:** APHRC has made strides in addressing DEI and climate change, but it has to strengthen its response to issues such as gender-based violence and the decolonization of global health.
- 2. Mission and Vision:** While APHRC's mission and vision remain relevant, a unified understanding among staff is crucial for cohesive implementation.
- 3. Partnerships and ecosystem engagement:** The Center should deepen collaborations with strategic partners to amplify its research and policy influence.
- 4. Continental priorities:** APHRC must stay attuned to changes in the Agenda 2063 framework for continued alignment.
- 5. Systems thinking and SIA:** Greater effort is needed to ensure staff comprehension and adoption of these approaches for synergistic programming.

APHRC's 2022-2026 SP is relevant and well-aligned with current public health and development priorities in Africa. Continued focus on emerging issues, strategic alignment, and capacity building in data and AI will bolster APHRC's position as a leader in evidence-driven policy and research.




## 3.2 Effectiveness in SP Implementation

The MTE analyzed APHRC's progress in achieving the SOs outlined in its 2022-2026 SP. The assessment measured effectiveness through a review of KPIs and qualitative stakeholder interviews, identifying successes, gaps, and actionable recommendations for improvement. APHRC has demonstrated notable achievements, driven by the leadership team's commitment and the Center's strategic engagement across Africa.

**Strategic Reach.** At the start of the SP, the Center operated in 34 African countries (63% regional coverage). By the MTE, this expanded to 36 countries (67%), with Guinea and Algeria added. This regional expansion illustrated the Center's dedication to extending its impact.




## Performance Review of Strategic Objectives

**Strategic Objective 1** focused on producing scientific knowledge relevant to local and international development agendas. Fourteen KPIs were reviewed, revealing the following outcomes:

-  Targets met for 11 indicators (79%).
-  Targets not met for two indicators (14%).
-  One indicator (7%) had unreported data.




The findings showed that progress had been made in generating evidence aligned with regional and international standards, though some work remained uncaptured in reports. MTE recommendations focused on improving reporting mechanisms and reducing or adjusting the number of indicators to enable more realistic and efficient data collection.

**Strategic Objective 2** aimed to enhance research capacity in Africa to promote self-sufficiency. Forty-two KPIs assessed performance, yielding the following:

-  Targets met for 17 indicators (40%).
-  Targets not met for 18 indicators (43%).
-  Seven indicators (17%) had no reported data.

The performance of the SO2 indicators indicates that most indicators showed low performance with data for almost a fifth of the indicators was not collected. The MTE recommended refining indicators to align better with realistic, measurable outputs and enhancing coordination for capacity-building initiatives, such as scaling up operationalizing the Virtual Academy (VA) to offer multi-dimensional courses. The Center's initiatives in institutional strengthening, including Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA) and Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP), were recognized.

**Strategic Objective 3** focused on the utilization of research evidence to influence policy and promote transformative change. Thirty-three KPIs tracked progress, showing:

-  Seven indicators (21%) met targets.
-  Targets not met for four indicators (12%)
-  Data was not reported for 22 indicators (67%).

The low data capture highlighted deficiencies in reporting mechanisms. Enhanced documentation and strategy were recommended to better track how research influenced policy. Despite reporting gaps, APHRC was praised for its visibility and contributions to policy dialogues and advisory roles.

## Key Observations and Recommendations

- 1. Programmatic reach:** The Center's expanded reach was commendable, but further efforts were advised to ensure more comprehensive coverage.
- 2. Leadership commitment:** The MTE noted strong leadership dedication, which was expected to bolster performance in the SP's second half.
- 3. Institutional capacity:** Stakeholders acknowledged APHRC's capacity and called for optimized utilization of its human resources to meet remaining goals.
- 4. Indicator reporting:** The MTE pointed out significant underreporting and suggested revisiting and streamlining the indicator list for better relevance and data management.

























## CHAPTER SEVEN

### APPENDICES

All appendices can be accessed through this link: [Mid Term Evaluation Appendices](#)



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