

# APHRC

***NEWS***

Issue 3, 2024



**Stories of Change**  
**The Wins and Strides**

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## Executive Director Remarks

Napoleon Hill once said, *'If you cannot do great things, do small things in a great way.'*

At APHRC, we are doing both. In this newsletter, we share the impact of our work. After publishing two amazing APHRC newsletters this year, what else would we say in this last issue of 2024? Our end-of-year newsletter is themed 'Stories of Change: The Wins and Strides.' I again borrow a quote that says - storytelling is our obligation to the next generation - how apt not only for the African continent but, globally. This year, we have let APHRC staff tell their stories, and this issue is no different.

Led by our operations team, we hear from our Business Development team about how we have mastered the art of fundraising. We also learn how the Center has supported various African institutions in achieving the Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) certification. This is no small feat for any institution, as it signifies demonstrated commitment to sound financial management practices - a precursor for building trust with funders and partners across the globe.

Our program teams report on their partnerships with communities through community radio in Kenya and on the momentum to strengthen the R&D ecosystem through various capacity strengthening initiatives. From the Policy Engagement and Communications team, we hear about our work with communities and successes in translating research and policy wins. The West Africa Regional Office (WARO) has outdone itself this time around with stories on the different projects and streams of work, including a fast-growing program on climate change, environment, and health.

Kudos to all our authors- the debutants and the veterans! Kudos to all the APHRC teams doing small and great things every day!

To our partners, funders, and stakeholders, enjoy our APHRC News Issue 3.

Happy Holidays!

*Catherine Kyobutungi*



# The Art of Fundraising

*By Joy Maruti, Business Development Officer*

Fundraising is vital for organizations that rely on external support to sustain their operations and drive their mission and vision forward. To approach funders effectively, organizations must prepare thoroughly and consider several critical factors before reaching out. The first step is gaining a clear understanding of your organization's mission, goals, and specific funding needs. This clarity allows you to target funders whose interests align with your objectives. Once your internal goals are well-defined, the next step is to research and identify funding opportunities that match your strategic priorities.

When evaluating potential funders, it is essential to determine whether their mission, focus areas, and strategic priorities align with your organization's objectives. Reviewing the funder's past giving patterns can provide insight into their history of supporting similar projects or organizations. Additionally, ensuring that the funding opportunity adequately covers both direct and indirect costs is important. Evaluating your in-house expertise and the lead time required for preparing a high-quality application is also crucial, as this ensures your team can submit a competitive proposal.

There are several ways to identify potential funders. Online platforms like Devex, DevelopmentAid, and FundsforNGOs offer various opportunities aggregated from donors. Alternatively, you can research funder websites directly, focusing on those whose missions align with your organization's goals. Leveraging partnerships and networks is another effective strategy. Collaborating with organizations that complement your strengths can open doors to joint applications or funding invitations. These partnerships can also demonstrate the value of multidisciplinary teams, which is often appealing to major donors.

In fundraising, efficiency is key. Applying the Pareto Principle can help you focus your efforts on the 20% of funders most likely to contribute 80% of your revenue. This approach maximizes your resources and increases the likelihood of success. Once you have identified a potential funder, it is essential to understand and comply with their conditions, including general donor requirements, such as financial management and reporting, and the

specific requirements of the funding call. Ensuring your organization's internal processes, such as financial systems and project management tools, align with these conditions is critical. Setting up systems for continuous monitoring will help maintain compliance throughout the project lifecycle.

Risk management is another crucial aspect to consider. Assessing a potential partner's reputation and ensuring alignment with your organization's values can help mitigate risks.

Identifying potential challenges and developing strategies to address them is essential when deciding whether to pursue a funding opportunity. Fundraising doesn't end once a grant is secured. Maintaining post-award engagement is crucial for building long-term relationships with funders. Regular communication, including progress updates, success stories, and impact reports, helps demonstrate the value of their support. Converting one-time funders into long-term partners requires continuous engagement and showcasing positive outcomes their funding has enabled. Consortium team members can also be valuable future funders, so maintaining strong relationships with them is equally important. Encouraging feedback from funders can help refine your approach and improve future applications. By adopting a strategic, proactive approach to fundraising, organizations can secure the resources they need and build lasting partnerships that support their mission and ensure sustainable growth.



# African Universities Embrace the Good Financial Grant Practice

*By Kevin Kiiru; Program Accountant, Patrick Amboka; Research Officer, Sindi Kirimi; Program Manager and Eugenia Sirengo; Senior Communications Officer*

Imagine a world where African universities are not just regional knowledge hubs but global innovation powerhouses. A world where African researchers have the tools, support, and freedom to explore groundbreaking ideas. This dream is becoming a reality, thanks to the transformative power of the Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) certification process.

## What is GFGP?

The Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP) certification is the world's first international standard for grant management. Developed by the African Academy of Sciences and supported by leading global funders such as UKAID, the IKEA Foundation, and the African Union, GFGP was designed to elevate grant-funded institutions' governance, accountability, and financial management. The certification covers over 300

grant management practices across four critical areas: financial management, human resources, procurement, and governance. These pillars ensure that institutions not only meet donor expectations but also strengthen their internal systems to become globally competitive and financially sustainable.

## A Ripple Effect of Change

Universities across Africa are embracing GFGP, and the results are inspiring. At Chuka University in Kenya, the transformation has been profound. Through GFGP self-assessment, the university has streamlined procurement and fund disbursement processes, cutting down lead times and energizing researchers. This momentum has translated into tangible increases in research outputs. Professor Moses Muraya, a key figure in this transformation, reflects, "We are turning into a research-focused university."

Similarly, Masinde Muliro University of Science and Technology (MMUST) has witnessed a remarkable turnaround. The certification process quadrupled their research funding and established a much-needed grants office. Professor Francis Orata, an advocate for GFGP, highlights, "This transformation is opening new avenues for collaboration and securing international funding, ensuring MMUST is competitive in the global research arena."

Murang'a University tells another compelling story of transformation. Once burdened with slow, cumbersome systems, the university now operates efficiently and transparently, with key departments such as finance and procurement benefiting immensely. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor expressed heartfelt gratitude: "We are incredibly thankful to the management for putting the institution on the right footing."

The ripple effects of GFGP certification extend beyond these individual success stories. Institutions like Zetech, Tharaka, St. Paul's, Uzima, and African International University are part of a larger movement toward building research-intensive universities. Their vision is ambitious yet achievable: to generate at least 50% of their revenue from research activities. For these institutions, GFGP certification is not merely an administrative milestone. It's a declaration of readiness to compete on a global stage. Faculty, administrators, and leadership are united in the mission to create resilient, credible, and sustainable institutions that drive knowledge creation and innovation.

## Why GFGP Matters

The GFGP standard has far-reaching benefits:

- **Global Recognition:** GFGP certificates assure funders that institutions manage grants with the highest integrity, raising their credibility on an international stage.
- **Streamlined Processes:** By consolidating compliance requirements, GFGP eliminates the need for multiple audits

and assessments, saving time for both grantors and grantees.

- **Capacity Building:** The certification highlights gaps and provides clear guidelines for improvement, enabling targeted institutional growth.
- **Increased Funding Opportunities:** GFGP-certified institutions are listed in the Global Grant Community directory, a trusted resource for funders seeking reliable partners.

## A Shared Vision for Africa's Future

The success of GFGP represents a greater effort to elevate Africa's research and development landscape. Over 100 institutions across Nigeria, Ethiopia, and Kenya have embraced GFGP, with 91 completing the self-assessment phase and 11 advancing to full certification. These institutions are signaling to donors their capacity to manage large grants with integrity, opening doors to more funding opportunities. What sets the GFGP initiative apart is its focus on people. At Chuka University, researchers feel re-energized and no longer constrained by administrative hurdles. At MMUST, establishing a grants office is more than just a structural change—it symbolizes possibility and growth. At Murang'a University, staff take pride in being part of an institution that now operates with efficiency and integrity.

## Looking Ahead...

The future looks promising as the Catalyze Impact Initiative continues to lead this transformation, coupled with the dedication of a dynamic GFGP team, ensuring that more institutions are empowered to step into the global spotlight. With every university that completes the certification process, Africa moves closer to a future where its researchers are at the forefront of global innovation, addressing pressing challenges and contributing to sustainable development.

For universities interested in [joining the GFGP movement](#), please contact the team via [info.catalyzeinitiative@aphrc.org](mailto:info.catalyzeinitiative@aphrc.org)



## Expanding Reach in Research and Related Capacity

**By Topistar Karani, Communications Officer  
and Ann Waithaka, Senior Communications Officer**

For over 20 years, APHRC has been instrumental in shaping Africa's research ecosystem. At the heart of this work is the Center's capacity strengthening efforts, driven by the Research and Related Capacity Strengthening (RRCS) program. Established as the Research Capacity Strengthening (RCS) division, it has since evolved to meet the continent's pressing needs for self-sufficiency in research and development (R&D).

Initially, RCS aimed to support the development of young African researchers by equipping them with the skills needed to produce research that would address Africa's pressing challenges. This was achieved through training workshops and fellowships at masters, doctoral, and postdoctoral levels. Its flagship programs, the African Doctoral Dissertation Research Fellowship (ADDRF) and the Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA), provided fellowships that comprised crucial financial support, mentorship, and research training.

These programs have played a major role in developing a generation of African research leaders who produce high-quality, highly relevant research. ADDRf has supported 193 doctoral students to graduate, while CARTA has enrolled 245 fellows to pursue doctoral studies, with over 170 completing their studies as of October 2024. The graduates have achieved significant

academic milestones, led research projects, and taken up leadership positions across the continent.

The scope of research and related capacity strengthening at the Center has expanded. There has been a growing focus on institutional capacity strengthening and strengthening the R&D ecosystem beyond individual capacity strengthening while embracing the interconnectivity within the three spheres. In this context, capacity strengthening extends beyond research to include non-research skills essential to researchers, stakeholders, and policymakers. These skills are critical to ensuring that the evidence produced translates into meaningful impact on people's lives.

The RRCS program oversees more than 20 projects, each focusing on different aspects of research capacity-strengthening across Africa. Aligned with APHRC's 2022-2026 Strategic Plan, RRCS has adopted a systems-thinking approach to its capacity-strengthening efforts, examining interactions across the entire African ecosystem. The goal is to ensure that African researchers are not only producing high-quality research but are also positioned as key drivers of impact through strong African institutions and a strengthened R&D ecosystem.

In September 2024, RRCS held an ideation workshop to assess and enhance the program's strategies and reflect on its ongoing efforts to refine its focus to align with the Center's overarching goals. New ideas were generated, existing programs were assessed, and work plans for the future were developed. A key highlight was the conceptualization of the 'RRCS Centre-wide support Strategies and Charter' and the 'Internship Absorption Strategy.'

RRCS continues to steadily expand and refine its individual capacity-strengthening portfolio to better equip the capacities of external players and internal APHRC staff. With offerings such as fellowships at different levels, public and bespoke training, and internship and visiting programs, RRCS has positioned itself as a trusted provider of tailored research training in Africa. Internally, RRCS nurtures organizational talent through training programs and mentorship. All these are geared towards strengthening technical, intrapersonal, and interpersonal aspects of individuals' capacities to increase their productivity and capacity to implement complex, multi-level projects across the continent.

Strengthening the capacity of institutions addresses systemic challenges, recognizing that sustainable research excellence requires robust institutional frameworks. Specifically, RRCS has focused on strengthening systems, policies, governance structures, and processes within African institutions so that they can become research-conducive environments. This is achieved through initiatives such as curriculum development, fund management programs, adopting and mainstreaming interventions and best practices, and partnerships. Programs like the Joint Programming Initiative on Antimicrobial Resistance (JPIAMR) Fund Management and CARTA's institutional support have been

instrumental in this aspect. These programs empower institutions to strengthen research governance, improve grant management, oversee research projects effectively, and build international collaborations.

The R&D Ecosystem Strengthening stream of work focuses on strengthening support structures, regulatory frameworks, and linkages for African research institutions and researchers to become critical voices and drivers of the development agenda in Africa. RRCS has also pioneered frameworks for intellectual property protection and knowledge management systems, creating an environment where African researchers can confidently innovate. One of the flagship initiatives, the Catalyze Impact Initiative, responds to the critical need for increased African leadership in the continent's R&D. The initiative is making strides to strengthen Africa's research landscape, one of them being

**CARTA's unique approach combines rigorous training with a strong focus on mentorship, postdoctoral support, and institutional capacity building to create a sustainable research ecosystem in Africa.**

the establishment of the Africa ResearchConnect (ARC) platform. The web-based platform aims to transform how institutions, researchers, and funders connect and collaborate. The Catalyze Impact Initiative joins other programs, such as CARTA and JPIAMR, to intensify APHRC's work on the Good Financial Grant Practice (GFGP). The Center achieved the highest GFGP certification -Platinum Tier- in 2022 and is now supporting partner institutions to achieve GFGP certification, which improves grant management systems, making institutions more attractive to funders.

RRCS is committed to developing capacities to strengthen the research ecosystem in Africa and contribute to the development and implementation of a blueprint for Africa's self-sufficiency in R&D. As the RRCS program continues to grow, it will undoubtedly play an even more significant role in shaping the future of research on the continent.



# Frameworks for Building Research Leadership

**By Ann Waithaka, Senior Communications Officer**

The Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa ([CARTA](#)) continues to be a leading force in strengthening the capacity of African researchers and institutions. A flagship program of APHRC jointly led with the University of Witwatersrand, CARTA was established in 2008 to enhance the doctoral and research training infrastructure in African universities. Through three distinct strategic phases, CARTA has evolved into a comprehensive program, producing high-quality scholars and enhancing research capacity in partner institutions.

The program has enrolled [245 fellows](#) since 2011 (with over 170 graduates as of October 2024) and contributed to the development of research training infrastructure across its partner institutions. Today, the program celebrates an impressive cadre of scholars and partner institutions continually seeking institutional research excellence. With supportive environments, the scholars produce

high-quality and relevant research that positively impacts society. CARTA's unique approach combines rigorous training with a strong focus on mentorship, postdoctoral support, and institutional capacity building to create a sustainable research ecosystem in Africa.

During and after the doctoral program, CARTA supports its fellows through a variety of tailored initiatives to equip them with the skills and resources needed for research leadership. At PhD level, the program offers structured training through the Joint Advanced Seminars (JASes), which provide rigorous research training, interdisciplinary learning, and professional development.

Beyond the PhD level, CARTA supports graduates through postdoctoral awards, which include fellowships and re-entry grants. The awards allow Early-Career Researchers to continue their scholarly work while building networks



and leading independent projects. The program has competitively awarded 84 postdoctoral awards to its graduates since 2016. Additionally, CARTA enhances its graduates' grant writing capabilities through annual Graduate Grant Writing Workshops (GGWW), empowering them to secure funding for future research. Structured mentorship is a recently added component, pairing fellows with experienced researchers to guide them in their academic journeys and ensure long-term career success.

To track impact and ensure the continued relevance of its training, CARTA maintains the [CARTA Evidence](#) website, a platform that tracks and showcases the program's impact, research outputs, and achievements of its fellows and other African researchers. The website is a valuable resource for promoting the visibility of African-led research while monitoring progress and ensuring accountability.

One of CARTA's key accomplishments is its commitment to long-term sustainability, which is reflected in its efforts to integrate innovative research training interventions into the practices and procedures of African universities. These mainstreaming efforts ensure that the skills and methodologies imparted through CARTA's initiatives continue to benefit future generations of researchers. To achieve this, the program employs a multi-level approach. One level is directly strengthening the capacity of academic, professional, and administrative staff in partner institutions. The

other is training trainers who can pass on the knowledge and techniques they have learned to a wider group of researchers, academics, and institutional leaders in their institutions and beyond, thus creating a multiplier effect.

In response to the evolving teaching landscape, CARTA has a fully [digitized curriculum](#) that enhances the accessibility and reach of its training modules. Launched in 2023, the digitized curricula include collaboratively developed materials for PhD training, postgraduate supervision, institutional support, and grant writing. These resources have expanded access to research training and provided tools for universities to strengthen their internal research capacity.

The program's latest initiative is the establishment of research hubs within its partner institutions. These hubs provide a platform for African Early-Career Researchers to engage in collaborative research, co-design agendas, and interact with seasoned researchers and policymakers. These hubs create a supportive environment where Early-Career Researchers can grow into research leadership while contributing to solving Africa's developmental challenges.

With its forward-thinking frameworks and commitment to empowering African researchers, CARTA has uniquely positioned itself as a key player in nurturing impactful research production, use, and leadership on the continent. As the program evolves, its impact grows, leaving a lasting mark on both individuals and institutions. In the words of one postdoctoral awardee, "CARTA is more than a fellowship; it is a career builder!"



# Translating Research from the Lab to the Clinic

*By Chao Shete, Communications Officer, Dorcas Keya, Research Officer, and Patrice Mawa, Research Scientist*

A transformative milestone in Africa's health research landscape has been reached with the launch of APHRC's state-of-the-art Biodata Laboratory. This newly licensed facility is not merely an addition to the Center's resources—it embodies Africa's growing scientific self-reliance and a precursor of discoveries that could redefine healthcare on the continent. Equipped with cutting-edge molecular and genomic research tools, this lab brings unprecedented capabilities to African scientists, bridging the gap between high-caliber scientific inquiry and actionable health solutions. For a long time, the Center relied on external labs to study Africa's most pressing health challenges. Today, with this advanced laboratory, we are reshaping the narrative. The Biodata Lab is more than a physical space; it represents a paradigm shift in health research that aligns innovation with impact, science with society, and discovery with solutions.

The lab will advance research on chronic diseases and other broader initiatives at the Center. Diseases like diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and cancers require detailed molecular studies, and our researchers are now equipped with advanced tools and expertise to explore these complex biological questions at the highest standards. With capabilities for DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid) extraction, Polymerase

Chain Reaction (PCR), and precise quantification of biomolecules like DNA and RNA (Ribonucleic acid), we are set to uncover biomarkers, genetic factors, and other critical data that can improve preventive and therapeutic approaches, disease management, and even environmental sustainability.

Even in its infancy, the lab is already making significant strides. Its biorepository supports over ten projects, curating a diverse range of samples—from blood and tissue to environmental specimens. These resources are pivotal for longitudinal studies illuminating disease risk factors, progression, and long-term health trends. APHRC has set its sight on initiatives, including a groundbreaking biobanking project in Kenya and Uganda, archiving patient samples to advance translational research, and a comprehensive study on sexually transmitted infections (STIs), focusing on high-risk human papillomavirus (HPV) types associated with cervical cancer. Additionally, the lab is set to contribute to school-based nutrition research, addressing malnutrition and its ripple effects on public health.

Crucially, the lab's capabilities have been validated through its licensing by the Kenya Medical Laboratory Technicians and

Technologists Board (KMLTTB). This achievement underscores our readiness to meet the highest standards of scientific rigor. Furthermore, our partnership with Yemaachi, a cancer research leader, expands our genomic research frontiers, allowing for more sophisticated cancer analyses through access to formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded (FFPE) samples.

Collaboration is the cornerstone of the Biodata Lab's mission. It is designed to be a hub for multidisciplinary research, bringing together APHRC experts, global partners, and emerging scholars. Through joint studies, workshops, and seminars on emerging technologies, the lab will foster intellectual exchange, amplify innovative grant proposals, and drive sustainable scientific advancements.

What is most exciting about the Biodata Lab is that we are only scratching the surface of its potential. Each project and collaboration brings us closer to unlocking groundbreaking findings that could reshape health outcomes across Africa. The lab is opening new pathways for innovation, from identifying unique biomarkers to advancing our understanding of disease mechanisms and prevention strategies. With so much ahead, we are optimistic about tackling some of Africa's most pressing health challenges. And the best part? We are just getting started.





## Empowering a Community Through Community Radio

**By Ivy Chumo; Postdoctoral Research Scientist, Isabel Radoli; Communications Officer, Blessing Mberu; Senior Research Scientist and Caroline Kabaria; Associate Research Scientist.**

In the vibrant heart of Nairobi, Kenya, a community grapples with inadequate water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services and poor solid waste management (SWM). This is the inspiring story of Ruben FM, a community radio station, and Accountability for Informal Urban Equity Hub (ARISE), a research consortium, joining forces to empower residents and advocate for transformative change.

The journey began with open forums organized by Ruben FM and the ARISE project team, where community members shared their WASH and SWM struggles openly. These discussions revealed a grim reality: scarce access to safe water, ineffective communication from water authorities, inadequate sanitation facilities, and poor waste management. These issues aligned closely with ARISE's mission to enhance health and well-being in informal settlements.

Equipped with the community's insights, Ruben FM launched impactful radio talk shows that became a vital platform for amplifying residents' voices and fostering open dialogue. Listeners engaged actively through phone calls, social media, and community listening sessions. These programs raised awareness and encouraged accountability among service providers and government officials. Beyond the talk shows, the ARISE team and Ruben FM co-hosted sports tournaments, street talks, community visits, and forums, creating a dynamic environment for dialogue and engagement.

The impact of these initiatives has been remarkable. For example, a community plagued by persistent water shortages could voice their plight on the radio. The resulting pressure prompted the water utility company to investigate and enhance the water supply.

In another instance, listeners highlighted the problem of improper waste disposal, leading the local government to organize a swift community clean-up campaign and launch educational programs on waste management. This response tackled the immediate concern and empowered residents to take ownership of their environment. Beyond immediate solutions, the collaboration fostered stronger relationships between community organizations, residents, and local authorities. Youth groups emerged as passionate advocates, championing sanitation rights and collaborating with local leaders on water distribution initiatives.

This initiative showcases the transformative potential of community radio. It serves as a platform for demanding accountability, allowing community members to hold service providers accountable for their commitments. Furthermore, it promotes responsiveness, collaboration and stakeholder partnerships to amplify advocacy efforts. Educational talk shows empower marginalized groups, while radio programs facilitate two-way dialogue between service providers and residents. As the radio producer at Ruben FM aptly noted, "There is a need to continue this education through more partnerships... making a lasting difference." Through steadfast collaboration and commitment, Ruben FM and ARISE are forging a path toward a healthier and more equitable future for their community.

A multifaceted approach is essential to expand the Ruben FM and ARISE initiative's success.

Replication is key, as is establishing similar community radio stations and partnerships in other informal settlements across Kenya and beyond to share best practices and amplify marginalized voices on a larger scale. Capacity-building is also crucial; training community members, radio journalists, and local leaders in advocacy, media production, and community mobilization skills will empower them to address local issues and effectively drive sustainable change. Strengthening partnerships among government agencies, NGOs, and the private sector can provide additional resources, expertise, and support, helping expand community-led initiatives' reach and impact. Finally, advocacy and policy change are essential to creating an enabling environment for sustainable development, which includes advocating for increased funding for community organizations, strengthening local governance, and encouraging participatory decision-making processes.

The partnership between Ruben FM and ARISE exemplifies the role of community radio as a catalyst for change. By amplifying the voices of marginalized communities, holding authorities accountable, and fostering collaboration, this initiative has demonstrated its potential to address urgent issues like inadequate WASH services and poor waste management. As this model scales up and replicates, it can empower communities worldwide to drive sustainable development and enhance the quality of life for all.



# Pictorial



# Busing as a Lifeline for Nairobi's Marginalized Children

By Alvin J. Kimani, Policy Officer  
and Davis Muli Musyoki, Communications Officer

In Nairobi's informal settlements, the quest to provide quality education faces formidable barriers—distance and limited resources. [APHRC data](#) reveal a sobering reality: over 63% of primary school-age children in these areas attend low-cost private schools (LCPS) due to the scarcity of government schools. In Korogocho, for instance, only two government primary schools serve a school-age population of approximately 10,000 children. This gap underscores an urgent need for innovative solutions, and busing emerges as a critical intervention to bridge these divides.

Drawing lessons from global contexts, such as the United States, busing programs have demonstrated their potential to equalize opportunities for marginalized communities. A poignant example is U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, who benefited from a busing program at the age of six that transported her from a predominantly Black neighborhood to a wealthier, predominantly white school in Berkeley. This initiative profoundly shaped her perspectives on education and equality, serving as a powerful testament to the transformative potential of such programs. Harris described how the busing program gave her opportunities that she otherwise might not have had in a segregated system.

That may be the story of a Kenyan child growing up in Nairobi's informal settlements following the Nairobi City County's recent move to launch a similar project in the city. The pilot initiative aims to transport children from the informal settlements to government schools using public service vehicles to respond to a similar distance barrier to equitable education that

Vice President Harris faced in the 1970s. Despite the positive reception, legal and operational challenges halted the project. Similarly, Nakuru County attempted a busing initiative between 2017 and 2022, only to be cut short by a change in leadership. These challenges underscore the necessity for consistent policies to secure the sustainability of initiatives designed to enhance educational access.

APHRC, through its Human Development Theme (HD), has long championed equitable access to quality education, focusing on capitation grants and busing in LCPS and Early Childhood Education (ECE) to ensure all learners, especially the marginalized, benefit from inclusive funding. This work is anchored in APHRC's Signature Issues Approach, led by the Synergy unit. This in-house model consolidates APHRC's programmatic and policy-driven interventions, creating sustainable, high-impact solutions across health and development in Africa. Through this approach, APHRC channels efforts like the Busing Initiative to address the transportation barriers marginalized students with a viable pathway to educational equality.

Aligned with APHRC's broader goals to dismantle barriers to education, the Busing Initiative is part of a more significant effort to promote equity in learning opportunities across Kenya. Guided by an in-depth scoping review conducted by the HD team, the initiative addresses priority education needs in Sub-Saharan Africa. This comprehensive review evaluated national and continental strategies to position education as a critical driver for development and youth empowerment.



According to the study's findings, the Busing Initiative addresses the transportation challenges that marginalized students in low-income or informal settlements face, which limit their access to quality education. By introducing a busing system, the project aims to ensure that vulnerable students can attend school regularly, regardless of their location.

## Gaining Ground for the Busing Bill

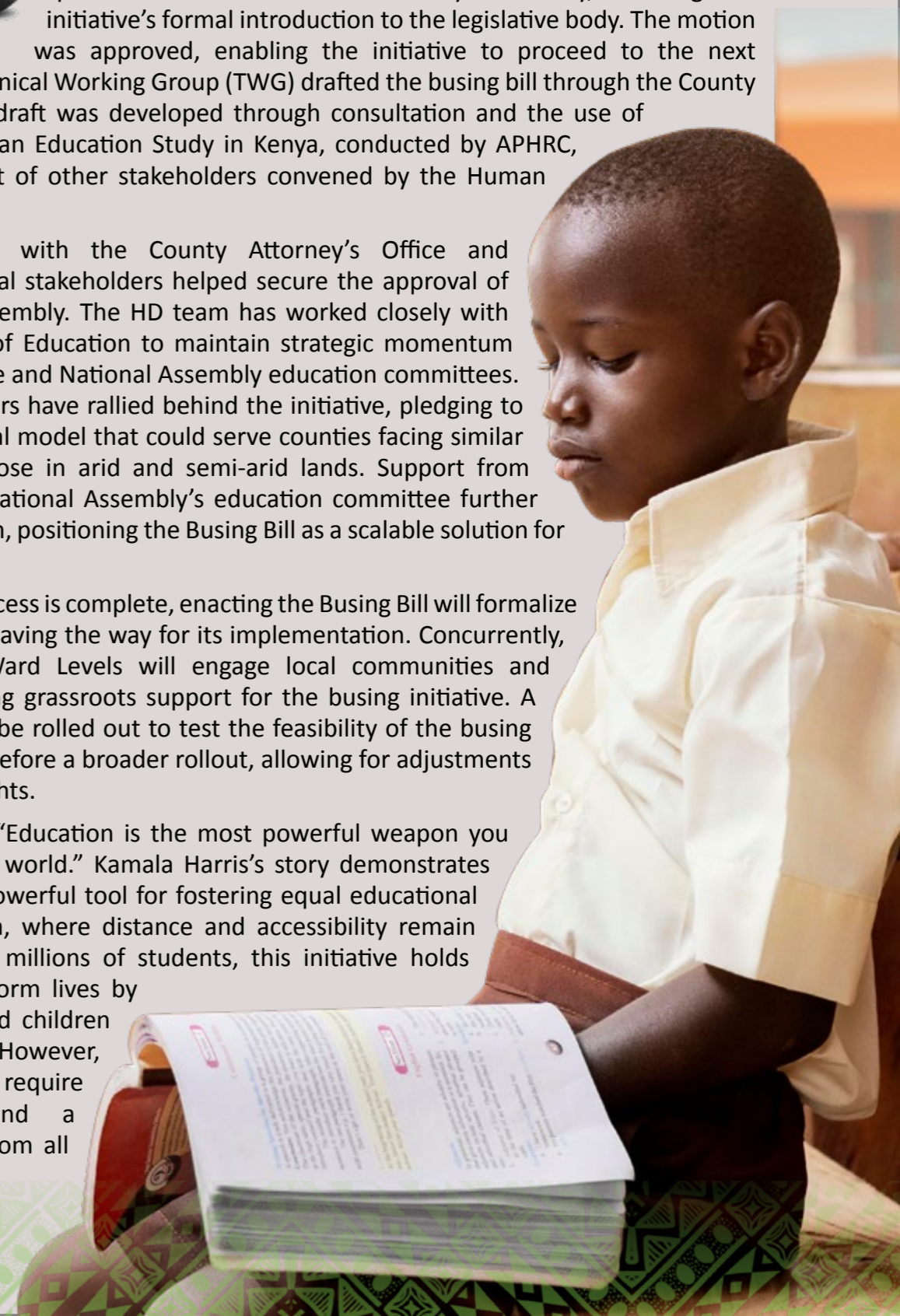
After rigorous discussions and planning, a motion on busing was presented to the Nairobi County Assembly, marking the initiative's formal introduction to the legislative body. The motion was approved, enabling the initiative to proceed to the next

drafting stage. The Technical Working Group (TWG) drafted the busing bill through the County Attorney's Office. The draft was developed through consultation and the use of evidence from the Urban Education Study in Kenya, conducted by APHRC, and involving the input of other stakeholders convened by the Human Development Theme.

APHRC's collaboration with the County Attorney's Office and engagement with critical stakeholders helped secure the approval of the Nairobi County assembly. The HD team has worked closely with Nairobi's Department of Education to maintain strategic momentum and engaged the Senate and National Assembly education committees. Some notable supporters have rallied behind the initiative, pledging to expand it into a national model that could serve counties facing similar challenges, such as those in arid and semi-arid lands. Support from the vice chair of the National Assembly's education committee further strengthens momentum, positioning the Busing Bill as a scalable solution for nationwide adoption.

Once the legislative process is complete, enacting the Busing Bill will formalize the initiative into law, paving the way for its implementation. Concurrently, advocacy efforts at Ward Levels will engage local communities and representatives, building grassroots support for the busing initiative. A Pilot Program will also be rolled out to test the feasibility of the busing system in select areas before a broader rollout, allowing for adjustments based on practical insights.

Nelson Mandela said, "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world." Kamala Harris's story demonstrates that busing can be a powerful tool for fostering equal educational opportunities. In Africa, where distance and accessibility remain significant barriers for millions of students, this initiative holds the potential to transform lives by connecting marginalized children with quality education. However, this transformation will require dedicated efforts and a unified commitment from all stakeholders.



# Education Empowered by Data and Equity

*By Cheikhouna Diagne, Research Officer*

Reliable data is vital for informed decision-making in education in Sub-Saharan Africa. However, many countries need help with fragmented data systems at the local level. The Knowledge Innovation Exchange-Strengthening and Enhancing Education Data Systems (KIX-SEEDS) project was launched to address these gaps by strengthening and enhancing education data systems across Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Uganda. With a focus on community needs, gender equity, and inclusion, this three-year initiative aims to build responsive data systems that support equitable and adequate education policies.

This study aims to set up a digital platform that offers local authorities in-depth and continuous visibility on educational issues to inform and optimize decision-making in educational policy. Indeed, easy access to relevant and granular data constitutes a strategic lever for identifying priorities and guiding actions to improve learning conditions and academic outcomes.

Education data systems offer essential insights into metrics like student performance, teacher qualifications, and school infrastructure. When these systems are robust, policymakers and educators can monitor progress, identify gaps, and allocate resources effectively. The KIX-SEEDS project enhances local data systems to ensure they serve immediate education needs and empower communities with actionable data that promotes equitable educational



opportunities for all.

The aim is to provide each community with a platform to serve as a reading grid for strategic decision-making. The platform aims to group and analyze diverse structural data, including school physical and geographical characteristics and contextual and socio-economic data of the various stakeholders involved. It will, therefore, list information such as the location of schools, the

type of building, the quality and availability of infrastructure (libraries, laboratories, sports facilities), and access to educational resources. This structural component makes it possible to identify the material learning conditions, which are often decisive for the quality of the education provided.

In addition, the platform integrates socio-economic data relating to students and teachers. For students, this includes indicators such as the economic situation of families, parents' education level, and other vulnerability factors that can influence schooling. Information on qualifications, seniority, and continuing education will be available for teachers, providing an overview of human resources. This data helps to understand the educational environment as a whole better and identify specific challenges that each school may face.

A fundamental aspect of the platform is integrating data from local communities, including parents, community leaders, and other stakeholders. These actors play a crucial role in supporting students and schools, and their involvement can strengthen the adequacy between educational actions and the real needs of communities.

Each country in this project plays a unique role in advancing education data. In Uganda, HISP Uganda collaborates with KIX-SEEDS to implement data solutions that empower local stakeholders in four regions. In Senegal, the partnership with the École Supérieure d'Économie Appliquée (ESEA) introduces sustainable data practices in urban and rural areas, fostering community involvement. In Burkina Faso, L'Institut Supérieur des Sciences de la Population (ISSP) strengthens data capacity in two regions, enabling stakeholders to manage and use educational data independently. Together, these partnerships foster learning, innovation, and local expertise that elevate

education systems in their respective regions.

In each of the three countries, a local partner recognized for its expertise in collecting reliable data has been selected to ensure an inclusive approach. The structures chosen for this project integrate young people from the community into their research teams, thus offering them initial professional experience and immersion in the challenges and issues of the local education sector. In parallel, training and capacity-building sessions will be organized for all stakeholders to create collective dynamics and ensure sustainable ownership of the project objectives. Finally, an exit strategy has been defined to ensure the sustainability of the achievements and promote the continuity of actions beyond the project's duration.

KIX-SEEDS is a movement towards equitable and inclusive education driven by data insights and local empowerment. By centralizing this information, these platforms aim to become an essential tool for local decision-makers, allowing them to formulate more targeted policies adapted to the specificities of each region. Local authorities will thus be able to prioritize investments in school infrastructure, adapt teacher training to local needs, and better support students from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds. In short, this initiative aims to contribute to more effective, inclusive, and evidence-based educational governance, thus strengthening the capacity of local authorities to promote a more equitable and resilient education system.

By supporting these transformative efforts, stakeholders help create an environment where data-informed policies that respond to real community needs unlock every child's potential. The project aims to build an educational landscape where quality learning is accessible and rooted in sustainable data systems that drive positive change across Africa.

# Research in the Face of Environmental Climate and Health Challenges

*By Sokhna Thiam, Environment Climate and Health Unit Lead*

The nexus between climate, environment, and health presents some of the world's most pressing challenges of our time. Across West and Central Africa, climate change amplifies vulnerabilities, impacting ecosystems and the health and well-being of people. These regions face extreme weather, rising pollution, biodiversity loss, and health risks in what is commonly referred to as the triple planetary crisis (biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change), which undermines hard-earned previous gains in public health. Recognizing these growing threats, APHRC's Environment, Climate, and Health (ECH) research unit based in the West African Regional Office (WARO) is pioneering transdisciplinary research to confront these intertwined global health challenges head-on.

The team brings a visionary approach to understanding the complex relationship between climate change, environmental health, and well-being. This workstream goes beyond simply documenting environmental changes to seek and uncover their profound impacts on health and well-being, particularly within vulnerable communities. The ECH fills critical knowledge gaps and prioritizes translating research into action, building capacity, and inspiring climate resilience in African health systems. By integrating demographic, socio-economic, climate, and environmental data, the unit strives to create evidence-based, actionable solutions that can drive sustainable climate action and mitigate risks to public health.

The Center's ECH work addresses priority areas that capture climate and environmental changes' immediate and long-term effects on health and well-being. These areas include climate-related health impacts, air pollution, water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), disaster risk, and resilience—each chosen for their significant public health implications in Africa. As extreme heat, air pollutants, vector and water-borne diseases, and non-communicable diseases rise with the shift in climate, these priorities form the foundation of the ECH's targeted research. Beyond these, the ECH team also pioneers work on occupational health, energy, food sovereignty, and risk communication—critical to advancing climate-resilient health policies and public awareness to ensure African perspectives are central to global environmental health discourse.

Recognizing that climate threats affect ecosystems and animal and human health in complex, multi-faceted ways, the ECH team champions approaches such as ecological and systems-thinking, which encourage comprehensive solutions. By leveraging

interdisciplinary collaborations and nature-based solutions, the ECH team works on resilient, locally relevant interventions that address the root causes of health disparities linked to environmental degradation.

The anticipated outcomes of the ECH workstream are transformative for West and Central Africa, extending beyond academic insights to tangible impacts on public health and resilience. This work will strengthen the region's capacity to address environmental health challenges with innovative, sustainable solutions by fostering data-driven research, inclusive policy dialogues, and multi-stakeholder collaborations. These efforts contribute not only to Africa's climate resilience but also to its leadership in global health discussions. As the ECH team continues to build momentum, its work will help ensure that African climate and health policies are informed, inclusive, and practical, protecting communities most at risk from climate change's adverse impacts.

This pioneering work sets the stage for a future where every African community can thrive in harmony with its environment, armed with science, strengthened policies, and a collective commitment to safeguarding health against the unpredictable forces of climate change.



## Transforming Parkinson's Care in Sub-Saharan Africa

*By Diama Diop Dia, Senior Communications Officer,  
and Dieynaba Aidara, Research Officer*

In sub-Saharan Africa, the silent rise of chronic diseases like Parkinson's disease (PD) is reshaping the health landscape. As life expectancy rises—reaching 69.2 years in Senegal in 2023—the prevalence of neurodegenerative conditions like Parkinson's is following a similar trend. Yet, limited data on PD hampers the understanding and effective management of this complex disease. To bridge this gap, APHRC is spearheading a groundbreaking study that redefines how Parkinson's is understood, diagnosed, and managed across Senegal and potentially throughout Africa.

Parkinson's disease remains relatively unknown and appears, mistakenly so, less prevalent in sub-Saharan Africa, in part due to epidemiological gaps, inadequate research, and a lack of validated screening tools. This project addresses these limitations by validating culturally relevant screening tools, estimating PD prevalence, and assessing health services for PD management. By concentrating on these areas, the study will lay the foundation for robust data, offering unprecedented insights to transform public health approaches for neurodegenerative diseases across the region. As the population of older adults in Senegal and sub-Saharan

Africa grows, the demand for new healthcare services will continue to soar. Chronic diseases like Parkinson's require specialized care, yet few health systems in the region are equipped to meet these complex needs. This study will estimate patient caseloads in neurology clinics and identify diagnosis and referral challenges. By understanding these issues, the project seeks to optimize the care cascade by identifying barriers, helping reduce undiagnosed cases, and enhancing early interventions.

Beyond healthcare, understanding PD prevalence and management challenges will significantly impact socio-economic conditions. As Parkinson's advances, it often imposes physical limitations, affecting quality of life and placing financial and emotional strains on families. Comprehensive data on the disease can guide policymakers in developing strategies to support patients and caregivers, improve resource allocation for rehabilitation, and bolster social support, thus enhancing community well-being.

This study places a unique emphasis on assessing the knowledge and practices of community leaders regarding Parkinson's disease, recognizing their critical influence in health decision-making. By evaluating their current

understanding, the study aims to identify gaps and, over time, implement targeted capacity-building strategies. Additionally, the study will assess healthcare facilities' readiness to manage PD and collaborate with local clinics to enhance the overall care for neurodegenerative diseases. Empowering these influential leaders with practical approaches and up-to-date information can shift community perceptions about PD, encouraging earlier healthcare engagement and improved access to support for those affected.

This approach underscores the importance of context-specific research in shaping healthcare policies that align with local needs. By addressing cultural norms, economic conditions, and Senegal's social structure, APHRC and the Michael J. Fox Foundation aim to empower communities to take proactive steps in managing chronic diseases. This strategy is a model for tackling other health conditions across the continent, fostering an inclusive and responsive health ecosystem. The study's outcomes extend beyond data collection, representing a step toward long-term improvements in public health. As findings emerge, the study is poised to inform health policies and practices tailored to the aging population in sub-Saharan Africa. Data-driven insights into PD prevalence and care needs will enable policymakers to craft targeted health interventions, improve diagnostic capabilities,

and develop community education programs that foster an understanding of neurodegenerative diseases.

Ultimately, this study has the potential to transform how Parkinson's disease and similar conditions are perceived and managed in Africa. By building a solid data foundation and engaging healthcare and community stakeholders, APHRC and its partners can create an environment where early detection, comprehensive care, and informed policies support vulnerable populations. As sub-Saharan Africa faces the dual challenges of an aging population and limited health resources, this research signals a pivotal step toward resilience and equity in health.

This visionary research is a rallying call for Africa's healthcare evolution. By unveiling the true scope of Parkinson's disease and providing the resources needed to address it, this study propels a future where data and community empowerment form the foundation of public health. Through strategic collaboration and culturally sensitive solutions, APHRC and its partners are driving a new paradigm in which each diagnosis is an opportunity for action, and every data point is a step toward health equity across West Africa. This project is more than research; it is a blueprint for lasting change that prioritizes human dignity and wellness.

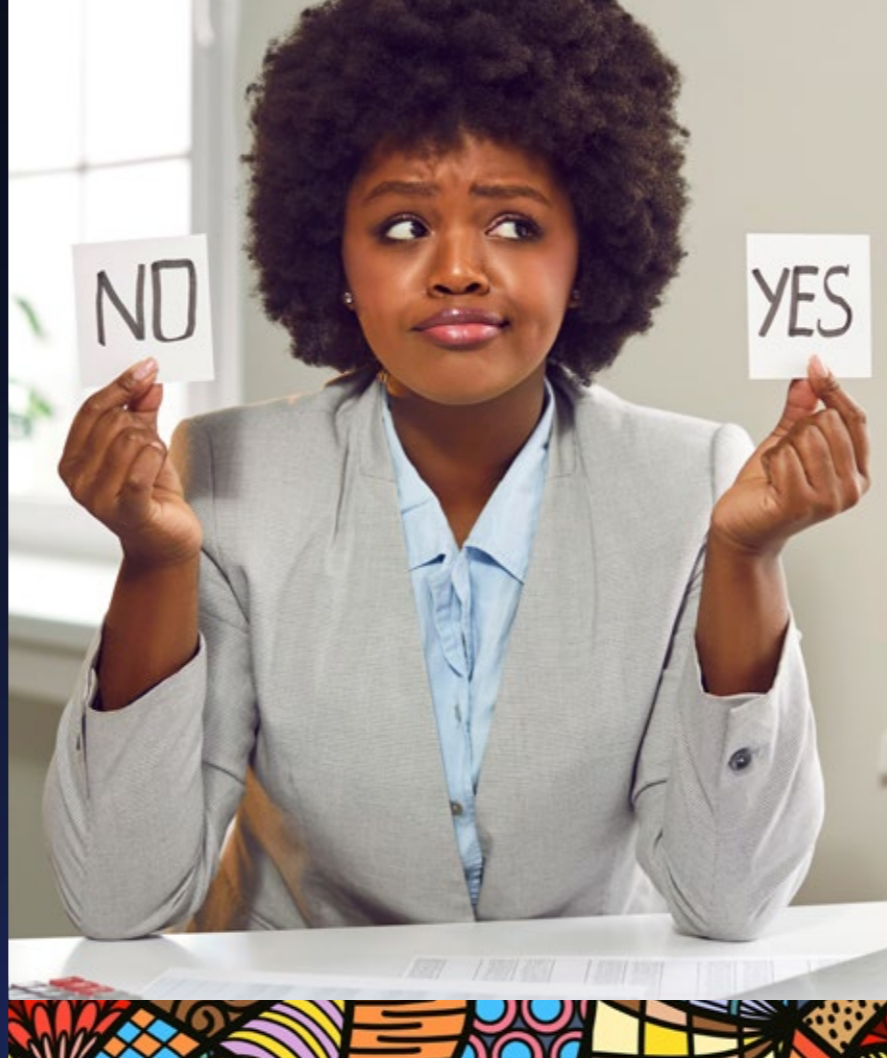


# Accelerating Data Uptake for Decision-Making in Africa

By Diana Munjuri, Senior Communications Officer

If research findings are to have an impact, they need to be adopted by people who can change policies and programs. Research uptake includes all the activities that facilitate and contribute to the use of research evidence by policymakers and other development actors. Although challenges remain, Africa is making strides in improving the availability of reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health + nutrition (RMNCAH+N) data.

APHRC is Africa's 'big brother,' hand-holding 26 countries through its Countdown to 2030 for Women's, Children's, and Adolescents' Health initiative. Popularly referred to as Countdown, it is currently in its ninth year of implementation, improving coverage measurement and monitoring and strengthening regional and country capacity for evidence generation and use. Recognizing the importance of data for health interventions, the Countdown initiative has accelerated efforts to promote information use at all health system levels. This is done by conducting deeper analyses within the collaborating countries, including studies on the continuum of care—using antenatal care (ANC) 4+ visits, skilled deliveries, and postnatal care as proxies for maternal and newborn care quality. The initiative has also synthesized historical data on maternal mortality, drawing on multiple sources to comprehensively understand trends and contributing factors.



In Ghana, the use of RMNCAH+N data has led to key improvements in evidence-based decision-making, such as:

- **Service Coverage Gaps:** Analyzing District Health Information Systems (DHIMS2) and Demographic and Health Survey data has helped identify regions with low coverage of ANC 4+ visits, skilled deliveries, and postnatal care, leading to focused interventions, resource allocation, and outreach programs.
- **Comprehensive Analysis:** Countdown's in-depth analyses and data triangulation efforts have informed the need for targeted investments in emergency obstetric care and strengthened maternal and child health programs.
- **Continuous Improvement:** Periodic quality checks of DHIMS2 data have fostered a culture of constant improvement in the health system, with transparent reporting and more strategic resource allocation.

Dr. Anthony Ofosu, Deputy Director General of Ghana Health Service, stated: "Evidence is the backbone of policymaking. Countdown to 2030 analysis ensures our health strategies are data-driven and responsive to community needs. This allows us to ensure that every mother and child receives the care they deserve."

His counterpart, Dr. Alberta Biritwum Nyarko, Director of the Policy Planning Monitoring and Evaluation Division, adds, "Countdown analysis has provided a platform to delve deeper into understanding gaps and opportunities in healthcare. Robust data drives impactful decisions that improve maternal and child health outcomes."

For a country like the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), data generation through surveys, although crucial for generating the evidence needed for government policy formulation and programming, is often faced with several challenges, including the civil war that has ravaged the country for over a decade. The Countdown to 2030 initiative has allowed the government to conduct a series of analyses of RMNCAH+N data, including data from the routine information system (DHIS2) and available surveys. These analyses were conducted from 2019 to 2023 under the technical supervision of Countdown to 2030. While complementing Countdown's support to the country, DRC's Secretary General of Health stated, "DHIS2 data is often overlooked, but innovative approaches like those brought by the Countdown initiative encourage its use. This is very promising because the best way to improve the quality of DHIS2 data is to use it. We are grateful that the Countdown to 2030 initiative greatly improves the quality of DHIS2 data in the DRC."

The Countdown initiative has devised innovative formats and targeted ways of disseminating evidence generated in the collaborating countries to ensure engagement and data uptake by policymakers for use in decision-making.

# Winning Partnership for Maternal and Newborn Health in the Republic of Guinea

*By Dieneba Aidara, Research Officer*

The Republic of Guinea, bordering the Atlantic Ocean to the west, Guinea-Bissau to the northwest, Senegal to the north, Mali to the northeast, Côte d'Ivoire to the southeast, and Sierra Leone and Liberia to the south, is one of 26 member countries of the Countdown 2030 movement, integrating this vital initiative in 2023. Recently, the country participated, for the second time, in the annual Countdown 2030 meeting in Kigali to strengthen its national capacities in analyzing, interpreting, and using empirical data from surveys, health facilities, and health systems. These data-driven efforts underscore Guinea's commitment to improve maternal, newborn, and adolescent health outcomes through actionable insights.

In line with its annual work plan, the National Countdown 2030 Team launched a strategic project to reduce maternal and perinatal mortality. While Guinea has made considerable progress in reducing these mortality rates, challenges remain. Between 2012 and 2018, maternal mortality dropped from 724 to 550 deaths per 100,000 live births, while perinatal mortality decreased slightly from 33 to 32 per 1,000 live births. These achievements reflect Guinean authorities' coordinated and sustained health sector reforms and efforts since 2011

to improve reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health services.

Despite these improvements, maternal and neonatal mortality rates remain alarmingly high. Although the country recorded a relatively solid prenatal consultation rate of around 85%, a 2012 national assessment of emergency obstetric and neonatal care needs revealed that obstetric complications account for nearly 80% of maternal deaths in the country. This assessment highlighted the need for more systematic reviews of maternal mortality so as to understand the underlying causes and develop effective prevention strategies.

In response, the Ministry of Health established national guidelines to institutionalize maternal death reviews, enhance surveillance, and improve response mechanisms in collaboration with technical and financial partners. Maternal death review committees have since been established and trained across the country to improve the quality of healthcare and reduce maternal and perinatal mortality. Despite these promising initiatives, inconsistent reviews of maternal and perinatal deaths continue to hamper the ability to understand the causes behind these deaths fully, restricting the development of targeted strategies to prevent



future incidents. Due to methodological inconsistencies or incomplete data collection, existing evaluations are often considered insufficient.

Recognizing these challenges, the Guinea Country Countdown 2030 team, in collaboration with APHRC, initiated a study to assess the functionality and effectiveness of maternal and perinatal death review committees (CRDMP) in the country's capital, Conakry. This project represents a crucial step in identifying the key factors contributing to the committees' limited performance, strengthening health systems, and improving health outcomes in Guinea.

Through this study, the Countdown team seeks to provide an in-depth analysis of how these committees function, focusing on operational challenges, training gaps, and resource limitations. The aim is to highlight areas needing improvement and identify best practices that could be scaled up or adapted across Guinea's health system. By addressing these gaps, the study strives to enhance the effectiveness of maternal death reviews, ensuring they serve as valuable tools for understanding and preventing maternal and perinatal deaths.

The findings from this research will provide evidence-based insights into maternal health indicators, which are essential for targeted health policy interventions. By using this data optimally, Guinea can more effectively guide its reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health policies and interventions, ensuring they meet the population's needs.

Furthermore, these insights will be critical for developing capacity-building strategies to reinforce the performance of death review committees nationwide, thus ensuring the country's more robust health infrastructure systems. Through this partnership, the Guinea team and APHRC demonstrate a solid commitment to elevating the country's maternal and newborn health standards. This partnership aims to create a robust foundation for sustainable health improvements by

leveraging data-driven analysis and enhancing institutional capacity. This study aligns with Countdown 2030's mission and reinforces APHRC's commitment to research-driven and evidence-informed policy change in Africa.

In the broader context of Countdown 2030's work, the initiative serves as a model for integrating evidence into public health policies, allowing countries like Guinea to track progress and address the most critical areas for improvement. Such partnerships between national health teams and international research organizations are crucial for accelerating progress toward sustainable health solutions that directly benefit communities.

The emphasis on evidence-based decision-making and capacity-building creates a pathway for more effective health interventions, significantly reducing maternal and newborn mortality. The Guinea Country Countdown 2030 team focuses on translating research findings into actionable policies. This approach ensures that every insight gained through data analysis and field assessments contributes to tangible improvements in healthcare delivery. By empowering local health actors and fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, this partnership aims to set new maternal and newborn health standards, proving that data and policy engagement can drive real, life-saving change.

Through sustained partnerships and rigorous research, Guinea's Countdown 2030 team is paving the way for a healthier future for mothers and newborns. The team's efforts symbolize a steadfast commitment to transforming healthcare in Guinea and as part of a broader movement across Africa. As maternal and newborn health remains a critical issue worldwide, the work in Guinea underscores the power of partnerships and the transformative impact of using data to inform policy. Together with APHRC, the Guinea Country Countdown 2030 team is championing a future where every mother and newborn has access to the quality healthcare they deserve.

# Immunization for All: Our Commitment to Reducing Inequality Across Borders

*By Assane Diouf and Diana Munjuri,  
Senior Communications Officers*

Immunization remains one of the most potent interventions to enhance child survival and development. Regular, high-quality immunization coverage estimates are critical to monitoring the performance of the immunization program at national and subnational levels. In addition, monitoring inequalities is essential for identifying non-immunized populations and associated program targeting.

The Immunization Coverage and Inequalities Multi-Country Analysis Project is an impactful initiative under the Countdown 2030 program. It is specifically designed to bolster countries' analytical capacities to accurately assess immunization coverage and understand inequalities across national and subnational levels. This work is essential in identifying gaps and supporting efforts to reach unvaccinated or under-vaccinated groups, particularly children who have not received any doses (known as zero-dose children).

Through intensive training and technical support, the project aims to equip local health experts and policymakers with the tools and skills needed to analyze immunization data effectively. This will help countries generate reliable, data-driven insights into their immunization coverage, helping them make informed decisions for better healthcare delivery.

The project focuses on national and subnational level data to develop the best possible estimates for immunization rates. This approach is vital for identifying where immunization efforts are succeeding and where there is room for improvement, especially in areas that may otherwise be overlooked due to limited data.

Beyond estimates, the project produces comprehensive analyses that reveal the intricacies of immunization inequalities. By understanding which groups remain un- or under-immunized, countries can target interventions more precisely to ensure equitable vaccine access.

To achieve these goals, the project leverages multiple data sources, including Routine Health Facility Data Reporting Systems (DHIS2), which offer real-time vaccination data delivered through health facilities, providing insight into routine immunization patterns and Household Surveys (DHS and MICS) which are conducted in partnership with households across sub-Saharan Africa. These surveys capture essential demographic data that reveal coverage and equity issues by age, region, socioeconomic status, and other key factors.



The project synthesizes this information using advanced data analysis techniques, creating a holistic view of immunization coverage. This multi-layered approach enables stakeholders to identify geographic and demographic disparities that may hinder equitable vaccine access.

Immunization remains one of the most cost-effective health interventions globally. Yet, challenges persist in Sub-Saharan Africa, where disparities in vaccine access often result in preventable disease outbreaks and long-term health consequences for under-immunized populations. By providing countries with robust data and in-depth analyses, the Countdown 2030 initiative empowers local and national stakeholders to prioritize resources, address gaps, and ultimately improve immunization equity. The Immunization Coverage and Inequalities Multi-Country Analysis Project is thus a critical component in the fight against vaccine-preventable diseases. It supports a future where every child can be fully immunized regardless of background or geography.



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