

# INFORMATION SHEET

## African Research Culture - Opinion Research

**AUGUST 2022**

### Background

The African Union's Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa 2024 (STISA-2024) places science, technology and innovation at the epicenter of Africa's socio-economic development and growth. Four 'pillars' are considered conditions for success: building and/or upgrading research infrastructures; enhancing professional and technical competencies; promoting entrepreneurship and innovation; and providing an enabling environment for science, technology and innovation development in the African continent.

As such, scholars, governments and funders are increasingly interested in promoting positive and inclusive research cultures. 'Research culture' encompasses the combination of the attitudes, values and beliefs of research communities; the structure of the research system and its incentives; and the behaviors and practices of individuals and institutions that are involved in shaping it. The environment in which research is carried out also contributes to the research culture, in addition to deliberate interventions aimed at institutionalization of gender-responsive, equity and diversity measures; and good governance of science institutions.

Research culture influences researchers' career paths and determines the way that research is conducted and communicated. In high-income countries (HICs), the existing research culture of 'excellence' is being overtly challenged for its competitive nature and inability to be 'humane'. This is contributing to a negative research culture. However, research culture as defined in HICs may not necessarily apply in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). It is therefore necessary for the research community to understand what constitutes a 'positive and inclusive' research culture in the African context.

The research culture in African countries is defined by many factors. Firstly, African countries have complex research collaboration patterns explained by regional geography, history, culture and language. There are mainly four languages of higher education, recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO) on the continent – English, French, Portuguese and Arabic. Yet, many more additional common languages like Kiswahili and other indigenous languages are used in local and national settings in conducting research.



The language differences are likely to influence how researchers collaborate across and within the continent's sub-regions (Northern Africa; Western Africa; Central Africa; Eastern Africa; and, Southern Africa).

Secondly, support services that facilitate sustainable research are also often inadequate, such that academics and researchers on the continent work without the administrative, financial, communication, and public engagement assistance that their counterparts enjoy in more resource-rich environments. As a result, over 10% of sub-Saharan Africans with a graduate degree emigrate to HICs each year.

Lastly, researchers' experiences and participation in research careers is also determined by the quality of their formal and informal interactions with the scientific community. These interactions are greatly influenced by;

- A dearth of well-trained and skilled researchers resulting in poor supervision of higher degree scholars;
- A lack of a critical mass of researchers even where pockets of excellence exist;
- Weak or very limited progression pathways for those in scientific careers; and
- Poor research infrastructure, including a lack of access to scholarly tools such as scientific literature.

## Objectives of the study

The main aim of this research is to gain a deeper understanding of research culture in the African context, its impacts and how it could be improved.

### Specific objectives

- To provide an overview of the research culture in Africa;
- To provide an outline of the research culture in each country within Africa;
- To determine the drivers of the identified research culture issues; and
- To develop actionable recommendations for funders.

### Expected outcomes

- A better understanding and awareness of the current issues within the research culture in Africa;
- Highlight issues in the way researchers are commonly rewarded and recognized; and
- Quality evidence that can inform policies and programs aimed at improving the research environment for researchers within Africa.

## Project summary

### Lead

- » The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) - Nairobi, Kenya

### Funder

- » Wellcome

### Project duration

- » July - December 2022

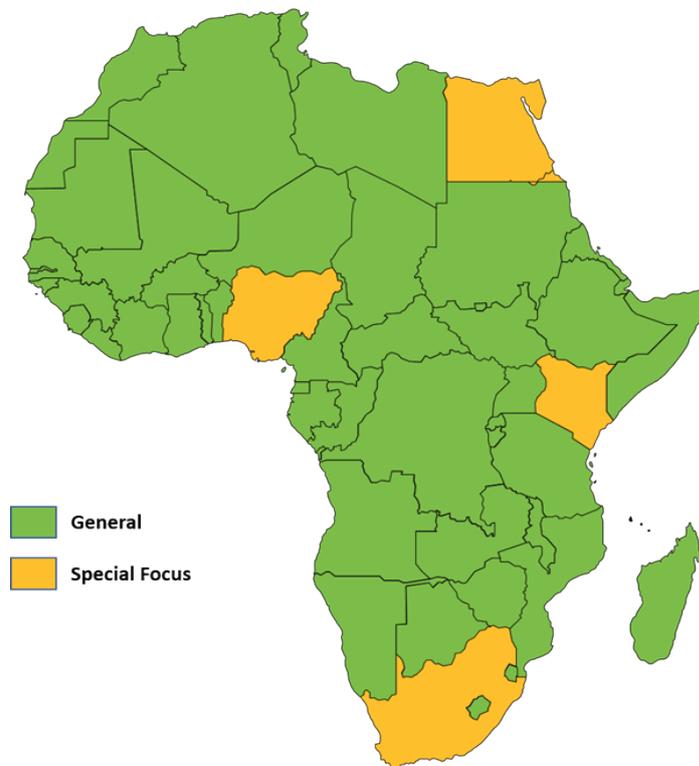
### Target beneficiaries

- » Direct beneficiaries: Researchers in Africa
- » Indirect beneficiaries: Governments, funders, researchers outside Africa

### Geographical focus

- » General: All countries in Africa
- » Special focus: Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria and Egypt

## Geographical Focus



## Contributors

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