APHRC Organizational Effectiveness Assessment Report

May 2024

African Population and Health Research Center

Executive summary

The African Population and Health Research Center's (APHRC) Strategic Plan 2022–2026, "A Bold New Vision," promises to make APHRC a transformative force in Africa and to tackle systemic challenges in the African research and development (R&D) ecosystem. Several new shifts articulated in the Strategic Plan led the APHRC leadership team to determine whether the Center was fit for purpose in its ability to achieve impact. This was the genesis of the Organizational Effectiveness Assessment (OEA) exercise conducted in 2022–2023.

The exercise was conducted by Humentum's (hired consultants) in two phases. The first OEA phase had a clear internal focus, assessing several organizational elements and the extent to which they were considered fit for purpose individually and collectively. The second phase had an external focus, assessing stakeholders' perspectives on the Center's work, impact and positioning. External stakeholders included current partners, funders and Board members considering their role as trustees. It also consisted of mapping existing organizations, institutions, and partners familiar with the Center including potential partners that APHRC could collaborate with in the future to optimize its leverage within the existing R&D system on the continent.

This report summarizes the entire OEA exercise, highlighting the process, findings, and recommendations.

Findings

These were the main findings of the OEA:

- APHRC is recognized as a very solid organization, often peerless in its space, and is able to deliver on several levels simultaneously. The leadership under its current Executive Director was praised as a visible part of APHRC's external face. In many ways, APHRC can only be defined as an impressive success story of an African-led research institution working for Africa on African issues.

- APHRC is not afraid of delving into new areas and has demonstrated through consistent performance that it is an actor to be reckoned with. Its consistent and ever-increasing donor support testifies to its capability to deliver and to get the attention of an external audience.

- APHRC systems, processes, and procedures were confirmed as being in very good shape from a client's perspective. There is a demonstrated expertise in the OEA element of resource mobilization and grant management, and APHRC is considered very effective in the OEA element of compliance as it relates to grant-related procedures.

- Some concerns were raised around whether APHRC is prepared to decline offered funding that is not considered strategic, which could threaten to stretch the capacity of its staff too thinly in the longer term.

- There were some concerns about the OEA element of internal program coherence and relevance, including the potential lack of internal coordination between various entities that were contributing to the same grants. There were noted instances of hurried delegation of responsibility by senior staff to less qualified staff. Senior staff should visibly lead strategic issues and manage internal coordination better.

- A potential tension was noted between setting research priorities internally and how these are linked to policy-influencing priorities. Effective policy influencing was a major issue, including how APHRC may move from a successful grant manager into an equally successful policy influencer.

- The new strategic emphasis of APHRC on leveraging the R&D ecosystem to influence policy making and to achieve impact at scale remains largely conceptual.

- APHRC needs to determine which alliances, networks, and relationships with key actors within the research ecosystem would best leverage impact at scale for evidence-making and policy influencing.

- In considering the OEA elements of strategic orientation, alignment, and leadership, it was felt that whereas the leadership by the Executive Director is appreciated, the visibility of leadership at the senior level on the programmatic side is not as clear. More attention could be paid to leadership succession planning, strengthening strategic communications, and crafting powerful external messages that APHRC cares about and is willing to fight for.

Long-term challenges and APHRC's role therein

Climate change consistently came up as the overarching most prominent trend, with several potential knock-on effects on food systems, health, and demographic and migration patterns. The aim is for APHRC to build up capacity to research how climate change will impact sectors already within its reach and knowledge.

Big data and the ability to analyze large data sets for evidence making was a key trend for driving knowledge creation within health, climate, population, livelihoods, and economic development. APHRC needs to find effective ways to create additional access to available big data sets to back up evidence making and policy influencing.

Though the decolonialization agenda being pushed by several donors at the moment may not last as a long-term trend, APHRC could leverage this opportunity to become a prominent leader in taking forward such discussions. APHRC may choose to organize a pan-African conference around decolonialization of the research agenda with other key institutions. This could help further cement APHRC's reputation as a truly African research organization that not only does successful health research but is also a prominent agenda setter in equal partnership with major donors and possibly with other pan-African policy and research institutions.

Moving forward

APHRC's highly respected and well-earned status within the health and population R&D space is beyond question. The real challenge for APHRC is whether it should continue to follow its tested and tried success formula or pursue and co-lead a larger evidence-based policy change agenda, actively seeking to bring together key actors from the wider R&D ecosystem, and jointly producing authoritative evidence-based research and driving continental and global level policy change.

List of abbreviations

ACET   African Center for Economic Transformation

AFIDEP   African Institute for Development Policy

Africa CDC   Africa Centres for Disease Control

APHRC   African Population & Health Research Center

AMREF   African Medical and Research Foundation

BDU   Business Development Unit

CARTA   Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa

FGD   Focus group discussion

ICIPE   International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology

ICRAF   International Council for Research in Agroforestry

IGAD   Intergovernmental Authority on Development

INDEPTH   International Network for the Demographic Evaluation of Populations and Their Health

INGO   International non-governmental organization

IPAR   Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rurale

LGBTQ   Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer

NGO   Non-governmental organization

OEA   Organizational Effectiveness Assessment

PEC   Policy Engagement and Communications

R&D   Research and development

RRCS   Research and Related Capacity Strengthening

SFA   Science For Africa Foundation

WARO   West Africa Regional Office

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Background

Introduction

The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) is a premier research-to-policy institution, generating evidence, strengthening research and related capacity in the African research and development ecosystem, and engaging policy to inform action on health and development. The Center is Africa-based and African-led, with its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, and operating a West Africa Regional Office (WARO), in Dakar, Senegal. APHRC seeks to drive change by developing strong African research leadership and promoting evidence-informed decision-making (EIDM) across sub-Saharan Africa. As a progressive global research center invested in creating legacy impact, its work is in three integrated programmatic areas: Research, Research, and Related Capacity Strengthening (RRCS) and Policy Engagement and Communications (PEC).

APHRC did its first-ever Organizational Effectiveness Assessment (OEA) between June 2022 and October 2023. The OEA was timely, given the launch of a new Strategic Plan for 2022–2026 a few months earlier. The assessment had an internal and external focus, evaluating several organizational elements and the extent to which they were considered fit for purpose individually and collectively, to ensure APHRC delivers on its strategy and becomes a transformative force in the African R&D ecosystem.

Purpose of the Review

APHRC has experienced rapid but steady growth over the years in its finances, staffing, portfolio, and geographic reach. This growth has raised a set of specific organizational and strategic questions that are relevant to its future course. Key among these are the following questions:

- To what extent has APHRC managed to develop its operational systems and internal processes to support this growth sustainably, including according to the goals envisaged in the strategic plan 2022–2026?

- To what extent is the new organizational structure proposed in the strategic plan optimally aligned with and resourced to support its evolving program portfolio in the future?

- To what extent does APHRC have the required staff composition, qualifications, and numbers to execute the required operational and programmatic functions to ensure consistent performance in the future?

- Overall, how well positioned for success is APHRC looking forward, and what are the most important options to consider for it to embrace the future with confidence?

The assessment focused on the following areas:

- The degree of strategic alignment or fit between core organizational elements or functional areas of APHRC to ensure a proper balance and synergy between them.

- The extent to which APHRC is poised to move forward and deliver on its new strategy, considering its existing capacities, systems, and structures.

- Mapping of potential and actual organizations and institutions that make up part of the African R&D ecosystem of importance to APHRC's current and future work, which could be of interest for APHRC to collaborate with during the new strategy period.

- An exploration of how APHRC is viewed externally as an institution in its own right, making up part of the R&D system that it also wishes to influence in the longer term.

Methodology

Inception Phase

Before finalizing its methodology, the consultants, Humentum, developed an Inception Report, where they outlined their proposed approach to the consultancy, including the data collection process. The consultants and APHRC agreed to set up a Project Steering Committee made up of the Center's staff, to create collective leadership and to maximize ownership of the process. The committee shadowed the consultancy process and offered useful reality checks on emerging findings, conclusions, and recommendations at key review moments. Further, the committee and consultants agreed that the key informants would consist of partners and actors already familiar with the work of APHRC.

A desk review of documents was conducted to establish, among other things, evidence and quality of policies and procedures. The documents reviewed included annual operating plans and reports, monitoring and evaluation frameworks, internal and external audits, grant and donor portfolio, strategy documents, organigram, and previous reviews and evaluations.

Key Informants

Phase one of the assessment involved a wider set of staff representatives from across the organization to share their experiences and insights about the Center's strategy, systems and processes and any challenges.

To create opportunities for interaction with cross-sections of staff and departments, and to get a diversity of views and perspectives among staff, it was decided to conduct a total of six focus group discussions (FGDs), which targeted staff who would not be interviewed individually. The FGDs were divided into the following staff categories:

- Research officers

- Associate research scientists

- Research and Related Capacity Strengthening (RRCS) and Policy Engagement and Communications (PEC) program coordinators and managers

- Program accountants, finance, and grant staff

- Program support staff and facilities management

- Selected staff from WARO (joined remotely)

Each FGD was attended by between 10 and 15 staff, who were asked to reflect on a selection of questions relevant to APHRC and in keeping with the analytical framework applied (see below). In addition to offering their own analysis, participants were invited to contribute possible solutions to challenges that APHRC may encounter, resulting in co-creation and a sense of joint responsibility.

A Sense-Making workshop was conducted to help validate the emerging findings from the data collected and to determine how to make sense of the findings and draft conclusions for clear, relevant, and actionable

recommendations to APHRC.

Thereafter, Humentum conducted a final in-depth analysis of specific areas of relevance to the analytical framework and options for APHRC to address identified capability gaps, which have the most potential for improvement and growth.

In the second phase, APHRC identified key informants from 48 organizations and institutions and then asked for their participation in the assessment. Invitations were also extended to all 10 APHRC Board members, resulting in a total of 58 interview requests. Thirty-six interviews were completed.

The key informants (KIs) who contributed to this mapping represented a number of organizations, institutions, and actors within the R&D ecosystem where APHRC operates. They were interviewed in their personal capacity, rather than as representing official positions of their organizations and institutions, to allow for an open sharing of perspectives including critical comments as well as ideas for change, which may not necessarily reflect formal policies or positions.

The funder KIs were a mix of long-term funders going back several years; in some cases, they awarded APHRC multiple grants and organizational development support. Funders included those that specialize in key technical areas and priorities as well as more general ones within the health and population sector.

Lead partner KIs were institutions responsible for a grant or program where APHRC was subcontracted to execute part of the grant as a member of a consortium or as sub-grantee. Three were UK-based, two were US-based, and one was based in South Africa. Implementing partner and beneficiary KIs were organizations subcontracted by APHRC and CARTA partners, which were all Africa-based. Policy actors comprised representatives from county-level governments and civil servants from relevant ministries from various sectors in Kenya and a regional parliamentary forum.

Board members spoke from their positions as trustees and as resource persons and members of relevant international networks from similar and other types of organizations and institutions.

The exercise was conducted entirely remotely, with participants being interviewed on Zoom. All offered their perspectives anonymously, which enabled them to speak more freely. In a few cases, respondents chose to send written answers to the interview questions due to general or sudden unavailability to attend a scheduled interview session.

Following the data collection, the consultant interpreted and analyzed the different types and levels of detail of data provided to offer a broader framework for comparison of responses from the interviews. Data from these KIs was triangulated with the document reviews, and data from the focus group discussions and analyzed based on the same analytical framework.

Analytical Framework

Given APHRC's strong focus on generating evidence for meaningful action, strengthening the capacity of researchers and institutions, engaging with policy makers to disseminate their research findings, influencing policy decisions, and ultimately creating social impact, APHRC decided to adapt the Social Impact Capability Framework (*See Figure 1*). The adaptation was done by the consultant in consultation with senior management team and the committee) to align with the Center's strategy.

The framework adapted to suit this assessment was inspired by the thinking of a group of researchers who published an article in the digital Stanford Social Innovation Review. The fundamental assumption behind the Framework is that before trying to predict social impact externally, an organization ought to take stock of its own collective awareness and readiness, as reflected in its internal operations. Doing so gives an important indication of its ability to perform and achieve external impact.

Figure 1 - Social Impact Capability Framework

The diagram shows a circular arrangement of numbered elements:

- **1** Strategic Orientation
- **2** Program Coherence & Relevance
- **3** Organizational Structure & Function
- **4** Staffing Capacity & Culture
- **5** System Processes & Procedures
- **6** Resource Mobilisation & Funding
- **7** Quality Assurance & Compliance
- **8** Strategic Alignment & Leadership

Findings

External Profile

The findings are organized under various sections covering the Center's external profile - how it is perceived by stakeholders and how that has evolved, as well as its strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas of growth.

Descriptions of APHRC

The most often mentioned profile descriptions of APHRC are summarized in order of significance below:

- APHRC is a confident research think tank on African health and population issues with potential to become a leading global institution. It is seen as top notch on the African continent – one of a few African organizations with scale, track record, and a strong brand for grant management.

- This is an evidence-based research institution mostly within reproductive health and rights and population development. It delivers health-related evidence for policy making and policy influencing of national governments.

- APHRC is a prominent research institution made up of Africans, conducting research by Africans for Africans. This well-networked research institution has connections in many parts of Africa, including Francophone countries.

- This institution with highly skilled researchers and a solid reputation is doing rigorous and innovative research and science. It provides strong community outreach, taking research to the field through action research.

- It inhabits the ecology of academia and research institutions and related career development. It is a capacity builder and training provider for academic staff development with universities.

- This highly capable NGO contractor on behalf of funders from the North has well-developed internal systems to manage multiple grants professionally. It is an ever-growing successful research institution with impressive access to several funders.

Evolution of APHRC

APHRC has evolved over the years in terms of its profile and type of work. These are some of the changes observed:

- It was at first primarily research focused, aiming at getting published in journals as a sign of accomplishment. The current Executive Director, a researcher herself, doesn't typically conduct herself as one, she is well-rounded which is a good thing for creative thinking and bridge building.

- It has successfully moved beyond the founder phase into its teenage years, looking to define its future identity before becoming an adolescent, institutionally speaking. The current leadership of APHRC embodies African woman leadership. The Executive Director is clearly a role model in Africa and abroad.

- The Center used to be very population based. Later, the health component came in. Most recently, data science has been introduced and continues to grow in importance. APHRC has, over time, become more ambitious and visionary, with a more deliberate focus on evidence creation to influence policy within society.

- There is more flexibility now to venture into innovative research areas, moving with the times, including emerging economic and social problems such as social exclusion based on gender identity.

- APHRC has become a more people-centered organization with greater diversity in terms of staff and topics: it is a friendly and transparent organization.

- In recent years, it has experienced exponential growth and a dramatic increase of donors based on professionalism and trusting relationships. It has begun to move from being only grant and demand led to becoming a strategic player, trying to understand and impact the ecosystem.

- APHRC has become more outward looking in its orientation and open to venturing into new areas of research. There is a buzz about the organization, which is seen as a good thing for the sector.

- The governance of APHRC has transitioned from a less-engaged Board into one that takes an active interest and expects more accountability than in the past. The partnership between the executive and the Board is still evolving, with mutual trust gradually increasing, but are yet to be seen as a true partnership.

Strengths, Weaknesses and Potential Areas of Growth

APHRC's Strengths

APHRC's strengths are in the areas of its external reputation; academic credentials of its staff; technical expertise; data analysis; grant management; resource mobilization and funding; systems, processes, and procedures; support systems and coordination; policy influencing; quality assurance and compliance; strategic orientation; and strategic alignment and leadership.

External Reputation

APHRC has become an established go-to think tank. Its growth has been an important part of its success and enabled it to stabilize as an institution over time. It is on top of its game, above other entities in the same space in Africa, and is becoming a think tank with a global perspective.

Its long-standing unique Consortium for Advanced Research Training in Africa (CARTA) program has delivered doctoral and post-doctoral fellowships in several African countries and has helped reverse the brain drain to the West, given its inbuilt regional focus. At the inauguration of the Center's training facility, Ulwazi Place, in late 2019, the then deputy president of Kenya, Dr. William Samoei Ruto (2013–2022), said: "If I need PhD researchers, I now know where to come for them." That says it all.

Academic Credentials

Its published papers remain of high quality and feature in renowned academic journals. This remains an important part of APHRC's credibility externally, and that enables it to engage in new areas as well, due to its track record. Many APHRC researchers are themselves editors of journals.

APHRC has become an institution of African scholars and researchers, who understand well the context they are working within. They have an ear to the ground, and they are open to entering into partnerships with different institutions. This provides them with wider access and trust building with peer institutions.

Technical Expertise

APHRC is particularly strong in sexual and reproductive health, demography, and urbanization. Its work in urban slums is unique, and its work in education in collaboration with CARTA is impressive.

Its practice side remains essential, and it has good access to the communities. APHRC is trusted: it can collect data from the field for evidence generation. That, in turn, generates credibility.

Data Analysis

It is equally well versed in research, teaching, and PhD training. Other African health institutions can learn a lot from APHRC on how to use, analyze, share, and harmonize data.

APHRC has managed to build up an impressive data repository in support of its evidence creation work, which has cemented its reputation as a reliable research institution, and much of this data could be mined much more.

Grant Management

APHRC is very strong on grant management, which has led donors to delegate this function to the Center. This is a demonstration of confidence in APHRC's grant management capacity. APHRC is becoming an intermediary African international NGO, moving quickly in the direction of becoming a consortium leader.

The fact that many of its PhD candidates successfully attract grants has become part of its success formula. Not only is APHRC able to attract senior researchers, but it is also itself generating revenue for the Center.

Resource Mobilization and Funding

APHRC has been extremely successful in securing external funding from a variety of donors over the years. In 2021 alone, APHRC managed a total of 156 active projects in 34 African countries with a combined lifetime value of USD 94.1 million. In the same year, APHRC developed 167 proposals with an estimated success rate of 66%, resulting in additional revenue of close to USD 26 million. The awarded projects were distributed within the four divisions of APHRC roughly as follows: Research: USD 11.8 million; RCS: USD 8.4 million; PEC: USD 2.2 million; and Operations: USD 3.3 million. However, the existing restrictive funding model, which reduces "APHRC's capacity to respond to a rapidly changing world and to meet the needs of stakeholders outside

funded initiatives … hindered it from contributing more significantly to the COVID-19 response in Kenya and elsewhere. It has also led to failure to invest in poorly funded but strategic areas for the Center, resulting in missed opportunities and less impact."

Systems, Processes, and Procedures

APHRC generally has well-developed policies, systems, and procedures in place, which guide its work processes at all levels. Frequent review of processes ensures ongoing improvements, and staff are regularly requested for their input to ensure they remain fit for purpose.

There is a solid digital infrastructure, including security and IT protocols, which enabled staff to transition effectively into a remote working mode during the COVID-19 pandemic, something still appreciated by staff as an alternative option to getting to the office, thus avoiding commuting time. Staff also report having received financial support to upgrade their internet connections at home, ensuring good bandwidth for video calls.

APHRC has introduced an organization-wide enterprise resource planning system, which has helped in moving closer to becoming a paperless organization.

The outward-facing compliance-related financial systems are appreciated for their effective functioning, consistently yielding clean audits. This is a key requirement for maintaining a high donor status rating for APHRC. The consistent growth in external funding streams and the number and diversity of donors confirm their confidence in APHRC's finance and control systems.

The Human Resources recruitment process is considered thorough and solid. To address reported inequalities in career development, Human Resources has worked on developing a career tracker for the past three years with the leadership.

Support Systems and Coordination

APHRC is fully capable of leading major research programs and coordinating this work with other actors. It is an African-led research partner equivalent to the best in the world. In many respects, it is peerless in sub-Saharan Africa and is regarded as a powerful role model for running a modern, successful African-led research and policy institution.

APHRC is, from a funder's perspective, very easy to work with administratively, and its support systems are well functioning. It is seen as a very good and reliable partner to deal with, and it knows the language of overseas research institutions and funders well.

Policy Influencing

The fact that APHRC is an African-led institution has its own clear upsides for African policy makers to make use of their generated data. Being an African research organization is also very well suited for the current localization and decolonialization policy debates around who should drive the future research agenda on the continent.

Its research and reputation have enabled it to get embedded within government systems, especially in Kenya, which gives them a lot of respect. This is a reputation to be guarded very well, as it is closely linked to opportunities for policy influencing in the future.

Quality Assurance and Compliance

Observing the successful external funding of APHRC over the years, the number of donors, and consistent clean audits, the Center clearly has demonstrated functional quality assurance and has complied with external demands for financial due diligence and reporting requirements.

APHRC operates an Enterprise Risk Management Framework that encompasses financial, operational, and management systems and associated risks that threaten the achievement of the Center's strategic and operational priorities. A risk registry exists, which monitors numerous risks divided into 14 risk areas, each

with its own sets of sub-risks. The registry is expansive and thorough.

APHRC's internal audit function is responsible for supporting the Board and the Executive Director in implementing the risk policy. The function also provides guidance and advice to the Board and senior management on meeting the policy objectives and on corporate governance matters. APHRC takes risk management very seriously.

The Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Plan (MELP) unit has developed an elaborate framework to create the backbone for knowledge management during the new strategy period, with mostly quantitative indicators to capture progress in delivering on the strategy. Its thoroughness is impressive.

APHRC Weaknesses and Potential Areas of Growth

APHRC's weaknesses are intertwined with potential areas of growth. These include its organization structure; demonstration of leadership; staffing capacity and structure; risk of fragmentation of funding portfolio; internal coordination and alignment; strategic communication and branding; expanding outreach with universities; CARTA alignment with the rest of APHRC; policy influencing versus objectivity and independence; and positioning through innovation.

Organization Structure

APHRC and its staff seem to find themselves in between two structures: the existing one and the intended one as announced as part of the new strategy. APHRC has yet to formally transition into this new structure, with the leadership wanting to get it right, including ensuring the ability to afford it. It is therefore quite possible that further adjustments may take place in due course to reflect long-term funding prospects (Note: see updates on this in the epilogue)

In the Research Division, a number of units fall under each research theme, and it is not yet clear what the intended total number of staff under each will be, the type of profiles needed, and who will take up those positions. This creates uncertainty and reported instances of staff jockeying for positions or assuming leadership roles that have not yet been formally confirmed. Several research staff are asking questions about the new structure and the new ways of working; they are still unclear on how and when this will be realized and what transition process will guide it. The roles of thematic leads and unit heads in particular will become significant contributors to create synergies and deliver on signature issues, which makes formal appointments crucial (Note: see updates on this in the epilogue) .

The second division, which could be called Capacity Strengthening and Policy Influencing, contains the current RCS and PEC, with an added unit of International Programs. It makes structural sense to strengthen the links between RCS and PEC for a more unified approach, which will be headed by a Director of Programs. However, considering the increased importance of those two former divisions to deliver on a systems approach, together with Research, the organogram could be read to imply a downgrading in terms of seniority, which may not be the intention. This may need further clarification internally, especially among PEC staff, but also more broadly.

The added entity of International Programs is largely non-descript, though it is assumed that it would become a major building block to expand APHRC's impact on the continent through international programming. In fact, a consistent message from the FGDs was the need to clearly set direction for the internationalization of APHRC structurally and staff-wise. The future role of the West Africa Regional Office (WARO), a subsidiary of APHRC, is still being debated, including what would be the most effective international structure in the longer term. This may not automatically imply setting up several physical offices on the continent.

The Operations Division has adjusted its internal structure into two corporate units. One is responsible for finance, procurement, legal, and compliance, while the other has combined HR, administration, facilities, and IT. The role of the existing Business Development Unit (BDU) is structurally less clear visually. The role of the MELP function is also understood to remain with Operations, but like the BDU, this is less clear from the organogram.

Demonstration of Leadership

Due to APHRC's recent success, there are growing expectations for the organization to rise to the next level, emerging as a main influencer and agenda setter.

Funders would like to see APHRC become more proactive during grant coordination calls and during planning stages, where communication is at times considered a bit slow. Whereas it is recognized that there is still some inherent capacity development to be done internally during planning stages, there is also an expectation on APHRC to step up and demonstrate grant leadership.

It was not clear what long-term succession planning looks like and how in-house talent is groomed, beyond senior researchers. Where does leadership emerge under the Executive Director? Who can step up in the absence of the Executive Director?

There is an opportunity for APHRC to start investing in other African institutions. APHRC could show leadership and help position other institutions that it would like to promote and support. Doing so would be a way to take another step up the chain and become a more influential player and intermediary.

Staffing Capacity and Culture

Instances of a culture of silence were encountered, and some staff were hesitant to speak up on issues involving supervisor–supervisee relations. This issue has been addressed by the leadership but remained a challenge. Linked to this, not all staff felt equally appreciated and acknowledged by their supervisors for their work achievements.

Staff consistently reported that the leadership paid dedicated attention to staff welfare, the protection of staff rights, and that it is possible to access personal counselling when needed. However, staff also shared perceptions that benefits are not fully equitable. According to the leadership, regardless of whether a position is nationally or internationally recruited, the benefits, which are differentiated based on recruitment, are similar, including the salary scale.

Staff reported instances of internal competition for new positions and projects, which they saw as unhealthy, with instances of staff taking individual credit for collective efforts. It also seemed that this dynamic was partly associated with the constant pressure of staff to secure new funding through successful proposals and grant applications. That made it more important to put one's name on the proposal, also as a contributor.

All staff stressed the leadership's highly appropriate and proactive response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which clearly minimized the negative implications for staff, who were all offered job security as opposed to forced resignations. The remote working mode as a result of COVID-19 effectively digitalized all APHRC's work, offering more flexibility to the majority of staff, although support staff were still expected to report to the physical workplace. As a result, all staff are highly digitally literate, which may further accelerate APHRC's continental outreach ambitions from a digital point of view. For some staff, the flipside of remote working was highlighted as the notion of having to remain continuously online or accessible, including outside regular office hours, at times. This led to struggles with defining a healthy work-life balance, and staff were not always equally clear on how to set work-life balance boundaries themselves.

Non-research staff reported getting tasks on top of their existing jobs, with few delegation possibilities and increasing demands to support several projects simultaneously. There was very little spare capacity among staff, which affected morale and energy levels. Most non-research position functions appeared under-resourced and understaffed, and Human Resources struggled to keep up with the constant expansion of APHRC. The increasing complexity and ever-increasing number of projects and engagements for APHRC are most likely going to further add pressure to staff at most levels (*Note: see updates on this in the epilogue*).

Risk of Fragmentation of Funding Portfolio

APHRC was still trying to balance being very successful in attracting and managing grants while also wanting to contribute to setting the agenda with the funders. Several funders wanted to be more challenged by APHRC and to hear them say no to a grant that was not considered to fit with its long-term ambitions.

Chasing too many different grants may contain a real risk of spreading itself too thin, which would increase organizational complexity and the risk of a predominant project-based mindset. The sheer number of grants APHRC currently had appeared unwieldy, not least from a management and coordination point of view, distracting it from making more strategic considerations.

APHRC is not always equally homogenous competency wise, and sometimes senior researchers quickly delegated management to post-doctoral fellows, which resulted in quality issues and poor drafts. Staff capacity at APHRC at the senior level appeared overstretched, which may suggest inadequate internal research capacity structures. It seemed hard for APHRC to free up senior people for leadership work; instead, they tended to run projects within their departments.

Internal Coordination and Alignment

One funder expressed how she still received notes from four different teams working under the same grant. It is as if staff were not always clear on how the internal individual pieces came together, raising the question of coordination of research units beyond the individual. Some researchers seemed to be ticking boxes at the expense of the broader engagement and outcome focus.

APHRC needs to decide what type of organization it wants to become. It already has many good researchers, but it seems to need more organizational commitment internally beyond individual grants and units. That may require hands-on performance management and motivation outside grant compliance, investing in and promoting people who share this vision visibly.

The PEC program had not yet taken off. APHRC may need to consider recruiting champion influencers or ambassadors who can convincingly speak to the evidence and promote key messages publicly. APHRC recently applied for a grant with a donor. It was turned down due to doubts as to APHRC's outreach capacity and ability to do policy influencing. (Note: see updates on this in the epilogue).

APHRC's ambition to apply systems thinking, entering the ecosystem to engage other organizations, institutions, and actors across sectors remained conceptual, and the thinking had not been mainstreamed across APHRC. Adding some senior political science to the staffing profile could help in articulating this better. (Note: see updates on this in the epilogue)

Strategic Communication and Branding

APHRC needs to think more about its external branding through intentional strategic communication: setting a long-term strategy for what, how, and whom it wants to influence and how to take its message to market.

Influencing in the public space does not happen simply by attending conferences. Sometimes, real influencing happens at side events, not from the main podium as keynote speaker. APHRC may need to become clearer on exactly which policies to influence from the start and then work out a campaigning strategy for this.

There is a sense of internal competition between researchers and policy-influencing sections. To address this, it was proposed that when policy-influencing staff were busy developing communication strategies, they should include research team leaders for coordination and input. Similarly, research teams must plan for policy influencing together with policy and communication staff from the start.

Expanding Outreach with Universities

APHRC has clearly proven itself in Kenya. However, it was still struggling with setting a clear footprint outside. The answer is not to set up offices everywhere, which is an outdated and costly model. The most promising path may involve intentionally reaching out to relevant universities in relevant countries on the continent: not only for granting but for longer-term relations. This could help APHRC take advantage of an existing research infrastructure to expand its outreach.

APHRC should move beyond publishing research papers as the main external recognition indicator. It

should not try to outcompete universities but rather stick to the application side. This raises the question of which types of partnerships may be most mutually beneficial between APHRC and universities in the future, building on each other's inherent strengths and complementarities.

CARTA Alignment with the Rest of APHRC

The CARTA and APHRC relationship were seen as complex, and CARTA's value to APHRC was not equally appreciated internally. An essential part of what CARTA does is to get institutions to work together to apply for research grants across universities. However, when APHRC comes in as a research partner outside CARTA, it does not consider this important collaborative aspect and seems to operate independently.

More relationship building with researchers at universities, outside of CARTA and outside specific grants, would be helpful. This may also help expand the APHRC footprint more quickly on the continent and create more credibility for APHRC. It could also make staff exchanges or secondments possible for cross-pollination, which may interest certain funders.

APHRC should become more aware of how many CARTA alumni are turning into potential influencers or can create access to such, including alumni taking up important positions within key ministries, for instance. That may become an important marker to track and stimulate policy-influencing potential by APHRC.

Policy Influencing Versus Objectivity and Independence

It was unclear how far APHRC should enter into policy influencing, at the risk of being seen as an advocacy institution, which could threaten its objectivity as a robust evidence-creating institution. This requires finding a proper balance between evidence through objective research, supported by policy-influencing strategies to get the evidence out into the public sphere. APHRC is encouraged to connect with other policy makers to increase the impact of its research.

An obvious potential risk around policy influencing is APHRC itself getting too close to the policy establishment, such as parliamentarians and policy makers. This could compromise its rigor and independence or put APHRC under pressure to support politics rather than policy. However, it was considered possible to mitigate this risk through clear communication materials and messaging to demonstrate APHRC's position in the public space.

Positioning Through Innovation

APHRC does not do much ground-breaking, paradigm-shifting work that fundamentally challenges the health system. APHRC may want to think about how to attract or access affiliate fellows elsewhere who are more innovative and have a track record. This could help associate APHRC more with important innovative work in the future. It could also happen by seeking partnerships with high-end innovative research institutions.

Future Challenges and the Role of APHRC

This section describes the envisaged challenges and opportunities for the African continent in the coming decade. They include climate change; food and nutrition; youth development and a growing urban population; big data and big science; commercialization of health research; decolonialization agenda led by Africans; preparing for future pandemics; and actors within the African research ecosystem.

Climate Change

Climate change is an undeniable force that will clearly reduce the effects of many health gains that have been made and add new challenges to existing ones. At this moment, there is no clear climate agenda formulated by policy makers on the African continent. It is also not clear to what extent and how exactly climate change will impact livelihoods, migration, displacement, economic development, and inequality at large.

There is a need for institutions, such as APHRC, to demonstrate through objective research how climate

changes will impact not only health conditions on the continent but several other sectors as well. Rather than becoming a climate expert in general, APHRC must start preparing to trace how climate change will impact health and population issues. There will be a huge future demand for such research and field-based studies to inform decision making. (Note: see updates on this in the epilogue)

Food and Nutrition

Food systems and nutrition patterns are expected to undergo major transformation due to climate change. This in turn will influence health and population aspects at large, especially related to securing livelihoods, agriculture, and healthy living in general. The combined effect of those changes will impact economic outcomes and growth at large for several decades.

There is also going to be a much higher demand for understanding how food systems and nutrition patterns impact health in the populations of several African countries. For APHRC, linking its health and population research work to those sectors could be a major value addition.

Youth Development and a Growing Urban Population

Youth development, a growing urban population, the demographic dividend, and related inequality will become major drivers for instability if not properly addressed. This is closely related to access to and quality of education for the coming generations. Urban slum studies and applied research will play major roles in driving the political and economic discourse on the continent in the future.

APHRC has already covered these themes well in the past. However, helping decision makers to connect the dots and joining forces with other institutions could put APHRC in a key position to influence policies in the years to come at an even higher level. It is therefore not just about APHRC conducting more research on its own but more about conducting strong analysis of available evidence in partnerships.

Big Data and Data Science

Accessing big data and the ability to analyze large data sets is becoming increasingly important globally, including related to health, climate, population, livelihoods, and economic development. The most important players are likely going to be those who can break down big data and mine it, converting it into clear policy advice for decision makers.

Data science and its evaluation will demand that institutions and think tanks engage in markedly different ways. Rather than trying to generate and manage data primarily created through the efforts of their own in-house researchers, institutions must in future be prepared to demonstrate how they can analyze already available third-party data sets, leading to evidence-based policy advice.

It is not clear how APHRC may engage here most effectively. It will likely require targeted investments in data science capacity as well as state-of-the-art data infrastructure supported by well-powered data management systems that would work across internal departments and sectors.

Commercialization of Health Research

There will be increased demand for commercialized health research through targeted studies and trials. This may inform not only the medical industry but also national health insurers. In the global North, research institutes regularly contribute to such studies, which may also be an option forward in Africa.

APHRC may want to pursue such health studies, not only for the commercialization part but perhaps even more so to expand its sphere of influence through the all-important link to the private sector, which has the attention of most governments on the continent.

Another effective way of influencing policy makers would be to create solid analyses of how health policy making will likely influence the economy in the coming decades as an input to the public debate between think tanks, governments, and the private sector. Rather than considering health as a public good, health

policy making, or the lack thereof, may dramatically influence economic development in several sectors.

Decolonialization Agenda led by Africans

Genetic diversity and the way this impacts health, such as consequences for precision or personalized medicine, remains an undervalued, emerging area, including how genetic diversity may react differently to exposures in similar environments. Thus far, most global health research has focused on northern populations, which may have little relevance to the African continent.

The recent donor shift toward decolonialization will require further articulation and should not be treated as just as another donor fad. There will be a need for African actors to articulate what this will mean from an African perspective. This could also help set a future health research infrastructure in Africa for the longer term, with prospects for more unrestricted funding. APHRC is seen to be in a position to step up and help articulate the decolonialization agenda more forcibly by influencing some of its major funders.

Preparing for Future Pandemics

COVID-19 demonstrated how there is a need for more effective pandemic planning in the future for the entire continent, as well as at the national and regional level. This will require strengthened collaboration between a number of actors within the health sector to ensure an effective response, including setting up adequate pandemic protocols.

COVID-19 was seen as a missed innovative opportunity for APHRC. Though it did very well in managing the impact of COVID-19 organizationally, APHRC could have been more out there conducting related research, influencing policies, and linking up with other policy makers. What did APHRC learn from this missed opportunity, and how could it position itself better to engage for future pandemics?

Validation Against OEA Framework

The findings from the entire OEA corresponded well and significantly inform APHRC's priority areas from an overall organizational effectiveness perspective.

The tailormade analytical framework, reproduced below, assessed a number of relevant organizational elements for effectiveness. In summarizing the findings, a color code was applied to indicate higher or lower degrees of organizational effectiveness. Green implied higher effectiveness, yellow showed a relative degree of effectiveness, and orange illustrated areas that would benefit most from dedicated attention moving forward (*See Figure 2*).

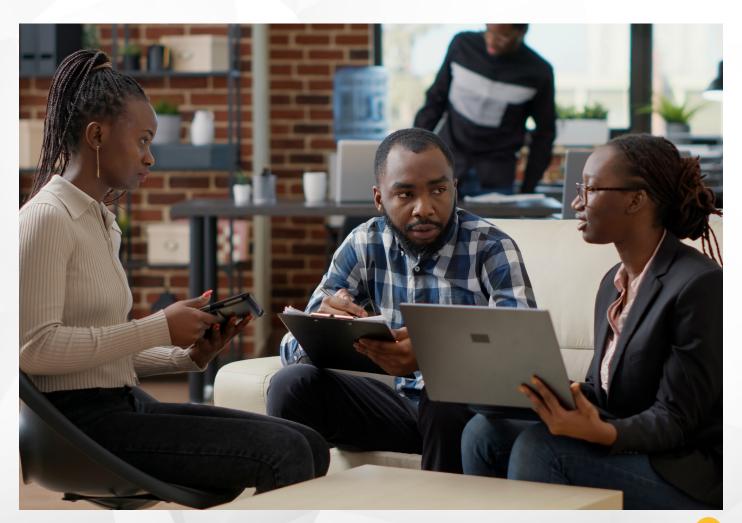*Figure 2 - APHRC Performance against the OEA Analytical Framework*

At the center of the OEA framework, one finds Strategic Alignment & Leadership, keeping all the other elements in balance. That can be described as the wheelhouse of the organization, the command post, or the hub, where the spokes of the organizational wheel meet. Whenever an individual spoke sticks out, bends, or even is missing, this impacts the entire wheel rotation and movement and, by implication, the comfort within the wheelhouse itself, equivalent to the leadership of APHRC.

In applying this framework to phase 2 of the assessment, it should be acknowledged that external actors would in most cases have limited insights into the internal working of APHRC, compared to staff working there. It is also clear that Board members and funders may take a keener interest in certain strategic aspects of APHRC than would an implementing partner working under a specific, already well-defined grant. Another difference is that whereas phase 1 based much of the data on collective interactions in workshop settings, phase 2 consisted of individual interviews.

With those caveats in mind, it can nevertheless be confirmed that most of the findings and perspectives from phase 1 of the consultancy were validated in phase 2. Overall, APHRC is recognized as a very solid organization, often peerless in its space, with the ability to deliver on several levels simultaneously. The leadership under its current director was praised as a clear, visible part of APHRC's external face. In many ways, APHRC can only be defined as an impressive success story of an African-led research institution, working for Africa on African issues. It is an organization that is not afraid of delving into new areas, and it has over time demonstrated through consistent performance that it is an actor to be reckoned with. Its consistent and ever-increasing donor support testifies to its capability to deliver and to get the attention of an external audience.

The OEA element of Internal Program Coherence and Relevance was more regularly debated, including the potential lack of internal coordination between various entities contributing to the same grants. There were noted instances of excessively quick delegation of responsibility by senior staff to less qualified staff. There was a request that more senior staff should visibly lead strategic issues and manage internal coordination better. A potential tension was noted between setting research priorities internally and how these are linked to policy-influencing priorities.
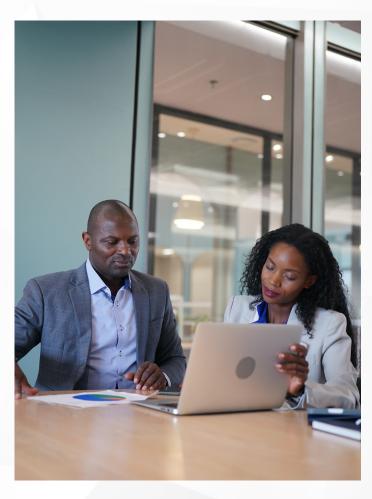
Effective policy influencing was a key question, including how APHRC may move from a successful grant manager into an equally successful policy influencer. The new strategic emphasis of APHRC on leveraging the R&D ecosystem to influence policy making and to achieve impact at scale remained somewhat conceptual. APHRC has difficulty providing direct access to policy champions. However, county-level local governments were appreciative of partnerships they had enjoyed with APHRC. Determining which alliances, networks, and relationships with key actors within the research ecosystem would best leverage impact at scale for evidence-making and policy influencing would appear to be a top priority for APHRC in the coming years.

The areas of Strategic Orientation, Alignment and Leadership were ones where Board members and funders in particular took a keen interest. Whereas leadership by the Executive Director was appreciated, questions were raised about the visibility of leadership at the next senior level on the programmatic side. More attention was proposed to be paid to leadership succession planning, including grooming the next generation of leaders within APHRC. There was a need for strengthening strategic communications and for crafting powerful external messages on issues that APHRC cares about and is willing to fight for.

Long-term Challenges and APHRC's Role

While APHRC's sectoral focus is still relevant for addressing long-term challenges on the continent, climate change consistently came up as the overarching most prominent trend, with several potential knock-on effects on food systems, health, and demographic and migration patterns. However, the APHRC should not seek to become a climate change expert in its own right but rather to build up capacity to research how climate change will impact sectors already within APHRC's reach and knowledge areas.

Big data and the ability to analyze large data sets for evidence making was a key trend that is seen to drive knowledge creation within health, climate, population, livelihoods, and economic development in the future. The message is for APHRC to find effective ways to create additional access to available big data sets to back up evidence making and policy influencing. This may require targeted investments in data science capacity and a more expansive data infrastructure as well as partnerships with other actors with such expertise.

Though the decolonialization agenda being pushed by several donors at the moment may not last as a long-term trend, APHRC could use this focus to become a more prominent leader in taking forward such discussions. Perhaps APHRC will want to organize a pan-African conference around decolonialization of the research agenda with other key institutions. This could help further cement the reputation of APHRC as a truly African research organization, which does not only do successful health research but is also a prominent agenda setter in equal partnerships with major donors and possibly with other pan-African policy and research institutions.

Moving Forward

The OEA identified a number of areas of attention for APHRC to consider. In fact, if APHRC were to act on those recommendations, they would likely address the vast majority of concerns or proposed growth areas offered while playing to APHRC's existing strengths and overall leadership.

APHRC's highly respected and well-earned status within its R&D health and population space is beyond

question. The real challenge or existential dilemma for APHRC appears to be whether it should continue to follow its tested and tried success formula or pursue and co-lead a larger evidence-based policy change agenda, actively seeking to bring together researchers and actors from the wider R&D ecosystem and jointly producing authoritative evidence-based research and key messaging that cannot be ignored by the same policy makers that APHRC seeks to influence.

APHRC's current strategy emphasizes the importance of the Center exploring how best to engage externally with the main actors that form part of the African R&D ecosystem. This strategy promises to make APHRC a transformative force on the African continent that will tackle systemic issues. That implies taking a systems-thinking approach toward impact by considering the R&D ecosystem's political, economic, financial, knowledge, and social-cultural factors at play in policy and decision making.

Actors Within the African Research Ecosystem

An essential part of the overall purpose of this institutional mapping is to gather intelligence on other actors within or at the edges of the R&D ecosystem, which APHRC could add value to APHRC's work. Specific institutions, listed below, were suggested as partners or as part of the wider research ecosystem of Africa that APHRC aims to shape and influence.

- The Africa Centre for Disease Control (Africa CDC) under the African Union was seen as a key actor with which APHRC could develop stronger relations. Although it may be complex and challenging to create a partnership with Africa CDC, it remains the most significant public health institution across Africa.

- Food systems–related and agriculture-related think tanks, policy bodies, and research organizations with potential relevance to health and population issues, such Initiative Prospective Agricole et Rural in Senegal, CGIAR centers working on agricultural research, Intergovernmental Authority on Development, and World Agroforestry Center, are potential partners.

- Many universities teach large cohorts of students but often do not have systems to set up larger integrated programs, which is something APHRC could offer. The CARTA program profile could be exploited much more in this context.

- Science For Africa Foundation (SFA) is a major actor to partner with, having broken away from the African Academy of Science. SFA is shaping its strategy around climate, health, and agriculture, which are common interest areas for APHRC as well.

- African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) is an African-led, regional non-profit research policy institute established to help bridge the gaps between research, policy, and practice in development efforts in Africa. This description comes close to the ambitions of APHRC.

- The African Health Initiative seeks to strengthen health systems in sub-Saharan Africa by supporting partnerships and large-scale models of care that link implementation research and workforce training directly to the delivery of integrated primary health care.

- Kenya Medical Research Institute is a state corporation and considers itself a regional leader in human health research with the mission to improve human health and quality of life through research, capacity building, innovation, and service delivery.

- The International Center of Insect Physiology and Ecology seeks to alleviate poverty, ensure food security, and improve the overall health status of peoples of the tropics and to improve the well-being and resilience of people and the environment through innovative and applied research alongside deep exploratory study, impact assessment, evaluation, and sustainable capacity building.

- Amref Health Africa is an international NGO that has positioned itself very well within the Africa research setting at large. However, it is considered weaker on the evidence-generation part, which is one of APHRC's major assets. APHRC and Amref already do some work together.

- The Aurum Institute's mission is to generate evidence for policy and translate policy into practice to positively impact the health of communities globally. It seeks to partner with governments, the

private sector, and civil society to design and deliver high-quality care and treatment to people in developing communities.

- The Population Council, from which APHRC originates, conducts research to address critical reproductive health and development issues globally. It offers policy research and analysis that provide data needed by national governments and international bodies to develop evidence-based health and development policies for decision makers as they make critical choices about policies, programs, and resource allocation.

- PRICELESS SA is the leading Southern African institution for formal, degreed postgraduate teaching in health economics and decision science. It undertakes research and provides evidence that demonstrates how to improve health and life expectancy in South Africa and across sub-Saharan Africa. It supports health-promoting polices, health systems, and health systems reform.

- The Council for the Development of Social Science Research in Africa is an independent pan-African non-governmental research organization based in Senegal. It supports the building of an autonomous pan-African scientific community capable of interpreting realities in Africa and contributing to scholarly, public, and policy debates on African and global issues.

- ACET considers itself a "go-to how-to" supporter of policy reform, going beyond the traditional role of a think tank. It informs transformation policy through rigorous research and analysis. It has several of the same donors as APHRC, which could offer some common areas for collaboration.

- The Ouagadougou Partnership focuses on improving coordination between donors to optimize their support across countries as well as enhancing collaboration and cooperation at the national and regional levels to ensure family planning needs are met.

Conclusion

This organizational effectiveness assessment set out to explore how APHRC is perceived both internally and from the point of view of a variety of external actors, including funders, lead partners, implementing partners, CARTA beneficiaries, Board members, and policy actors. The result is a diverse set of perspectives exploring APHRC's strengths, weaknesses, and potential areas of growth. It also zoomed in on what are considered the most important challenges for the coming 10 years on the continent, where APHRC may play a future role.

The new strategy of APHRC is in many ways a significant break from how it operated in the past and contains a clear strategic repositioning. The strategy, called "A Bold New Vision," promises to make APHRC a transformative force on the African continent and to tackle the systemic challenges in the African R&D ecosystem. Throughout the focus group discussions, broad ownership of the new strategy among staff was observed; they feel they have been able to contribute to a highly inclusive process, and many staff see the potential of the strategy to become a game changer for APHRC. Most staff are feeling inspired by the strategy.

Inclusiveness is built into the entire OEA process, as the leadership insisted on from the start, ensuring a representative set of perspectives from a variety of staff at all levels of the organization. This speaks volumes to the ambition of the leadership to work and deliver as a collective international organization, giving everybody an opportunity to contribute.

The Center's new strategy is clearly raising the bar for APHRC and is by implication asking big questions of APHRC itself and its own capacity to transform. APHRC's ambition is to become a truly pan-African research institution, capacity builder, and policy influencer, not just in its own right but even more so as an actor contributing to the larger R&D ecosystem to achieve impact at scale.

Most of the spokes or organizational elements of APHRC's wheelhouse within the OEA framework are well functioning and have the potential to take APHRC onto the new strategic road it has chosen for itself.

Finally, a list of organizations and institutions that APHRC might consider working with was created. Those other actors make up part of the R&D ecosystem that APHRC is part of; leverage may be found there to achieve impact at scale in the future. This could open up distinctively different types of relationship building – less transactional and more guided by systems thinking.

Recommendations

Following the comprehensive OEA, several recommendations were identified for APHRC to consider. These are outlined below; It is important to note that some of these recommendations have already been implemented as indicated in the Epilogue section below.

1. APHRC to create a clear high-level transition plan with milestones and timelines to concretize the new strategy, including its operational implications for staff.

2. APHRC to undertake an exercise to develop a systems-thinking approach paper, which will concretize what it implies in theory and practice, how it works, with examples from within APHRC as well as from other sectors and disciplines.

3. APHRC to map future possible actors within the R&D ecosystem on the continent and to initiate contacts for further follow up and partnerships.

4. After conceptualizing and customizing its approach to systems-thinking, APHRC to engage its staff around how to make it become more attractive to operate as Research Leaders, coordinating research efforts to create the required synergies and systems thinking.

5. APHRC leadership to create clear incentives for staff, promoting synergies and systems-thinking, and applying disincentives for researchers unwilling to become part of this transition process or culture change.

6. APHRC to ensure that future research projects and programs, whenever possible, will have inbuilt systems-thinking, policy-influencing, advocacy, and communication priorities from their conception stage, including their financing, to avoid this being treated as an afterthought or driven by personal preference.

7. APHRC to push forward with the announced restructuring and prepare for the actual transition, filling key positions. This would be the most visible way to instigate and communicate the fundamental new ways of working to all staff.

8. APHRC to intentionally empower and capacitate particularly PEC staff to engage with staff from the Research division during conceptualization of research programs, considering policy influencing prospects and integrating them into the full research proposals for funding.

9. APHRC to clearly articulate the future vision for and role of the International Programs unit in the new structure and associated staffing. The unit would have a predominantly external orientation.

10. APHRC to spearhead its strategic transformation by hiring a Chief of Staff, who would become the right hand of the Executive Director (ED). This person would proactively identify bottlenecks and propose effective interventions to the ED, while freeing up the ED to focus more on the public facing aspects of APHRC's work.

11. APHRC to revitalize its previous culture change initiative in a post-COVID environment, which has also brought with it new ways of remote working and challenges like being on line for extended periods of time.

12. APHRC to address the existing division between researchers and non-researchers: how staff are being perceived by the leadership, self-perception by researchers, and how they all contribute to the greater whole.

13. APHRC to recruit with a mindset of plentifulness, as opposed to a minimalistic approach, which may otherwise hold back growth and lead to burnout or sub-par performance.

14. Human Resources to increase its internal recruitment capacity to address staff shortages faster and link this to succession planning.

15. Human Resources, together with the executive leadership team and staff representatives from the relevant divisions, to review the existing performance management system, career development path, and promotion opportunities for staff to reflect the desired systems-thinking of the strategy internally and to start breaking down existing status barriers between research and other staff.

16. APHRC to articulate what would be considered strategic funding in the future in support of its new strategy, as well as types of funding to avoid, with clear criteria to guide this.

17. APHRC to reconsider setting up a dedicated Resource Mobilization Unit headed by a senior staff with a vast active donor network and access, which would transition the existing BDU.

18. APHRC to create a cohesive understanding of how APHRC would want to capture collective program learning and how to separate this from tracking of M&E indicators.

Epilogue

The OEA assessment was concluded in the first quarter of 2023 following a sense-making workshop with senior management and steering committee members. Subsequently, a two-day workshop was held on June 27-28, 2023, during which the findings were synthesized and categorized into four to guide further action. The categories are aligned to the four domains of the Balanced Scorecard framework as follows:

1. People and Culture
2. Systems and Processes
3. Clients and Products

4. Financial Sustainability

The outcome of the sense-making workshop was a comprehensive road map to implementing the recommendations with each set of recommendations under the Balanced Scorecard domains assigned a responsible person. Progress has been made in implementing some of the recommendations. The table below shows a summary of the progress made in implementing recommendations in each of the Balanced Scorecard domains.

Clients and Products	
Objective	**Status of Implementation**
Objective 1: To develop systems thinking paper to guide its mainstreaming within APHRC	• Under the docket of Chief of staff. • Two Systems Thinking consultants were hired to: i) assess capacities for this approach and develop a capacity strengthening plan and ii) develop a framework to operationalize this approach • Both assignments are ongoing
Objective 2: To develop a framework for capturing collective program learning to enhance synergy	• Conducted a gap analysis and framework for implementation.
Objective 3: To conduct a mapping analysis for R&D actors in the ecosystem (Q2 2024)	• To be led by the Chief of staff. • The Gates Catalyze team successfully conducted stakeholder mapping in Nigeria and Ethiopia.
Objective 4: Capacitate teams to explore and enhance new programmatic areas	• Purview of the Director of Programs. • Ongoing activities include the Big Ideas under the Strategic Initiatives mechanism

Financial Sustainability	
Objective	**Status of Implementation**
Objective 1: Create a forward thinking and forward-looking business development unit	• A consultant has been retained to conduct a review of the Business Development function and make recommendations. • Assignment ongoing – expected completion date is end of 2024
Objective 2: Build and nurture synergy and a culture of blue ocean thinking among the staff	• The Strategic initiatives mechanism has been strengthened. It allows staff as different levels to develop innovative ideas in a synergistic manner
Objective 3: Increase our physical presence through the internationalization model to enhance visibility and resource mobilization	• Recruitment of government Liaison Officer in Kenya is in progress. • Head of International Programs concluded – expected to report in mid-April 2024 and lead this work.
Objective 4: Enhance non programmatic funding ventures and develop an implementation strategy	

Systems and Processes	
Objective	**Status of Implementation**
Objective 1: Strengthen the existing HR systems and processes to better articulate talent acquisition and retention in the context of organizational culture.	• HR function restructured in 2023 to create program-support teams. In addition, three firms were retained to increase efficiency in recruitment. • Orientation for new staff includes a session on talent acquisition and retention in the context of APHRC culture. • A new feature introduced to communicate HR updates in a monthly bulletin to staff.
Objective 2: Repurpose the Resource Mobilization Unit to support future strategic investment and funding opportunities, aligned with APHRC strategic priorities.	• Consultancy to review the function is ongoing.
Objective 3: Revitalize the APHRC culture shift towards synergy and a pragmatic working environment.	• This has been taken up by Chief of Staff. We aim to take stock of lessons from the previous process and roll out a new process by Q2 2024.
Objective 4: Develop systems and processes to strengthen internal communication.	• Weekly updates, Monthly highlights, Quarterly Newsletter communication products developed. • ED Monthly bulletin launched in February 2024. • Collaboration with HR initiated to increase staff engagement in relevant commemorative events.
Objective 5: Develop systems and processes to strengthen external communication.	• Enhanced strategic social media engagement, revamped website, targeted blogs, storytelling, and showcasing partnerships that lead to impact. • Standardized templates shared for increased brand awareness and identification.
Objective 6: Operationalize the systems thinking internally, conceptually and practically, by unpacking its implications and co-creating to stimulate gradual change of mindsets.	• Two consultancies in progress expected to be concluded by end of 2024.
Objective 7: Create a common agenda for knowledge management (KM) within APHRC that goes beyond MELP frameworks.	• Knowledge management function strengthened and incorporated into the MEL function. Strategy developed and common KM platform developed and launched.

People and Culture	
Objective	**Status of Implementation**
Objective 1: Talent Acquisition to attract key talent in a timely way – Q4 2023.	• HR function restructured and significantly strengthened. About 90% of recruitment target for 2023 met.
Objective 2: Human resources planning and forecasting.	• In progress.
Objective 3: Capacity strengthening.	• A Leadership Development Program under development and expected to be rolled out in Q2 2024. • Leadership and management development including internal and external coaching and mentoring is ongoing.
Objective 4: Revitalize the culture shift program to: (i) develop culture of collegiality and (ii) systems thinking and synergies to be the new normal	• Chief of Staff to take lead.