



**African Population and
Health Research Center**

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY

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1. Introduction

Climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution impede achievement of the 2030 SGD's. These environmental crises have a profound impact on SDG 13 (Climate Action) by intensifying global warming and increasing the frequency of extreme weather events, SDG 15 (Life on Land) by accelerating habitat destruction and biodiversity loss, and SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) by contaminating water sources and compromising access to safe drinking water. There is an undeniable relationship between environment and development. Human wellbeing and survival are anchored in the environment. Human beings obtain goods and services necessary for human development from the environment. Unsustainable extraction, production, and consumption of resources lead to environmental problems.

Environmental degradation, pollution, and impacts of climate change affect people's health, wellbeing, health systems and access to health services. Africa faces many health issues associated with water pollution, air pollution, and unsustainable agricultural systems such as respiratory diseases and waterborne diseases among others. APHRC evidence-based work has contributed to understanding the drivers and magnitude of priority issues on the SDG agenda and has helped track progress towards specific SDG targets.

The African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) has identified opportunities for integrating different aspects of environment and climate in their work, as well as taking responsibility for their contribution to the environmental footprint.

This policy outlines the measures that APHRC will take to embed environmental sustainability into all its activities and functions; identifies delivery methods; and outlines how to communicate the policy to staff, partners, visitors, and service providers to make them aware of and support best practice procedures.

APHRC recognizes the need for strong partnerships and capacity building to effectively address environmental challenges and their impact on health. By collaborating with governments, research institutions, civil society organizations, and international stakeholders, APHRC aims to generate and disseminate evidence-based solutions that drive policy change.

2. Policy Statement

The Center is committed to a healthy and sustainable world. In line with its mission, the Center is committed to embedding a culture of sustainability in its operations and programmatic work.

3. Application

This policy applies to all APHRC staff, partners, visitors, and service providers.

For this policy, the following definitions apply:

- **"Staff"** refers to all persons who have signed a contract with APHRC to work in any capacity at any given time (on regular or temporary terms, interns, volunteers, and consultants), including outsourced staff.
- **"Partners"** refers to individuals or institutions with whom APHRC has a contractual agreement to deliver all or part of a project. It does not refer to lead institutions on a grant where APHRC is a sub-awardee.
- **"Visitor"** refers to an individual(s) who comes to APHRC and spends time with or stays with others within the premises including the offices, meeting and conference rooms, grounds, and the 'Ulwazi Place'. This is done for official purposes, capacity strengthening activities, or personal social activities.
- **"Service provider"** refers to a third-party organization or individual that provides services to APHRC, such as, legal, real estate, information communication technology, transport, storage, and processing services.
- **"Green Procurement"** refers to an approach to acquiring goods and services that align with sustainability principles, ensuring minimal environmental impact throughout their lifecycle. This includes prioritizing energy-efficient, recyclable, and ethically sourced products to promote environmental responsibility across all procurement processes.
- **"Carbon Offsetting"** refers to a strategy for balancing carbon emissions by supporting projects that reduce or remove greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. This may include investments in reforestation, renewable energy, and energy efficiency initiatives.
- **"Environmental Footprint"** refers to the overall impact of an institution's operations, research, and activities on the environment, including carbon emissions, energy and water consumption, waste generation, and resource use.

4. Guiding Principles

APHRC is committed to the achievement of global environmental and sustainability goals by:

- a) Integrating innovation and science into operations and research to enhance sustainability.
- b) Regular assessment and monitoring of environmental practices to identify areas for improvement.
- c) Implementing best practices to reduce the environmental footprint of the Center's activities.
- d) Promoting a culture of sustainability and accountability within the organization.
- e) Continuously adapting to emerging environmental challenges and opportunities.
- f) Adopting a lifecycle approach to sustainability by considering the full lifecycle of products and services (from acquisition and production, to use and disposal) to minimize environmental impacts.

5. Policy Implementation

5.1 Reducing negative environmental impacts of our operations

APHRC is committed to reducing direct negative environmental impacts from the operations of the offices and indirect negative impacts from capacity strengthening, research, policy engagement and communication activities by implementing the following strategies.

5.1.1: Direct Negative Impacts

a) Travel

The Center will implement smart travel initiatives that reduce our environmental footprint and ensure that travel makes a compelling contribution towards achieving APHRC's mission. In this regard:

- i. Travel will only be considered where:
 - a critical business need exists;
 - benefit to the organization can be proven; and
 - travel satisfies more than one agenda.
- ii. Where travel is necessary, the most relevant people will attend the meeting.
- iii. APHRC will pursue options to offset the carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions of our trips, including choosing direct flights instead of connecting flights.
- iv. The Center will encourage the use of teleconferencing facilities and promote remote working and remote participation in events to minimize travel.
- v. The Center will encourage local and sub-regional events that reduce the number of participants who need to travel long distances.

b) Procurement

- i. Take environmental considerations into account when purchasing office vehicles and ensure that vehicles are well maintained to reduce emissions.
- ii. Integration of Green Procurement in the APHRC Procurement Policy.
- iii. Regular training of procurement staff on green procurement.
- iv. Procure goods and services from institutions that demonstrate commitment to environmental sustainability.
- v. Procure energy efficient computers and printers that shut off when not in use.

c) Energy

- i. Conserve energy within our offices through use of energy-saving devices such as sensor lighting and energy-saving bulbs.

- ii. Increase use of solar energy in the offices.
- iii. Maintain an integrated energy consumption record.

d) Biodiversity

- i. Protect biodiversity and green spaces in our premises.
- ii. Enhance biodiversity through measures such as tree planting activities and donating fruit tree seedlings to staff and local communities.

e) Waste

Encourage waste reduction, reuse, and recycling among other practices by:

- i. Avoiding the use of single use plastics in our premises, in workshops and meetings (e.g., removing plastic single use cups from our drinking water dispensers, using paper straws in eateries within our premises, etc.);
- ii. Putting in place adequate arrangements for waste recycling, including having paper recycling bins,
- iii. Composting organic waste and reducing e-waste through proper disposal and/or recycling; and
- iv. Promoting paperless office and electronic data collection for our research work.

f) Water

- i. Reduce wasteful water consumption by fitting water saving taps and toilets.
 - ii. Regular maintenance of plumbing systems to prevent water leaks.
 - iii. Maintain an integrated water consumption record.
 - iv. Implement rainwater harvesting and greywater recycling systems to enhance water conservation and sustainability.
- g) Select meeting venues that prioritize eco-friendly practices to minimize their impact on the environment.
- h) Comply with all relevant environmental regulations in the countries in which we operate.
- i) Minimize the environmental impact of new and existing buildings through sustainable designs.
- j) Conduct regular environmental audit of our operations;
- k) Pursue organizational certification for environmentally friendly practices
- l) Promote an environmentally conscious workplace by:

- Providing information and training on environmental sustainability to all staff, volunteers, consultants, collaborators, and other service providers;
- Placing signage in relevant areas to remind staff and others to observe environmentally friendly practices; and
- Encouraging staff to participate in activities that sequester carbon, such as tree planting, as part of our corporate social responsibility.

5.1.2: Indirect negative impacts

APHRC will offer guidelines to research fellows, graduates, and researchers;

- To minimize negative cultural impacts (researcher dressing and behavior), impacts on sensitive sacred sites, research ethics, gender balance, cultural pollution, free prior and informed consent (FPIC) policy, local indigenous knowledge access policy).
- On transfer and research product benefit sharing policy under relevant obligations.
- On minimizing physical impacts of visual intrusion, noise, dust emission associated with research activities in sensitive environments (e.g., protected or sacred areas).
- On avoiding spread of invasive species from infested areas to sensitive ecosystems by motor vehicles used during research.

5.2: Integrating environment and climate to APHRC Work

APHRC work will contribute to global environmental sustainability goals by:

- Advancing interdisciplinary research that integrates environmental, social and health perspectives.
- Venturing into new research areas on population, health and environment linkages for example: -
 - Green energy and population health.
 - Climate change and its impact on health.
 - Health risks associated with biodiversity loss and climate change in Africa.
 - Environmental pollution and health research impacts the circular economy model on human health.
- Engaging in advocacy on public health and environment in Africa.
- Engaging in policy engagement and communication on population health and environment (PHE).
- Contributing to publication of articles, policy briefs, blogs, books on environment and climate change in Africa.
- Incorporating environmental sustainability topics in the training currently offered in research leadership, institutional leadership and management and research communication by APHRC.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

The following individuals have specific roles about the Policy as below:

6.1 The Board of Directors

- a) Approval of this policy and any revisions.
- b) Ensure that relevant operational guidelines are maintained.

6.1 Executive Leadership Team

- a) Regularly review and further develop the policy.
- b) Take all reasonable steps to ensure that APHRC exercises a duty of care for the sustainability of the environment, in line with the policy.

6.3 Director of Operations

Disseminate the policy to all APHRC staff, volunteers, consultants, collaborators, and other service providers. The policy will also be included in the APHRC new starter induction kit, and links to the same will be available through the website and APHRC Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system.

6.4 Environmental Sustainability Committee and Internal auditor

Regularly monitor the implementation of the policy, conduct environmental audits and submit regular status reports on compliance to the APHRC Executive Leadership Team.

6.5 All APHRC staff

- a) Keep abreast and comply with the provisions of this policy.
- b) Report any breaches to the Director of Operations within 24 hours of awareness. Staff can also use the anonymous whistle blowing channel.

7. Non-compliance

Any individual that identifies a lack of compliance with this policy should report the same to the Director of Operations through the channels outlined in the Whistleblowing Policy. The Director of Operations will assess the situation and apply the necessary action, including resolving the problem at hand and taking disciplinary actions where warranted.

8. Related Policies

This policy will be incorporated in the Human Resource Policies and Procedures Manual and will be enforced alongside the following related policy documents:

- a) APHRC's Policy on Safety and Health

- b) APHRC's Travel Policy guidelines.
- c) APHRC's Whistleblowing Policy
- d) APHRC HR Manual of Policies and Procedures

9. Monitoring and review

The ELT will monitor the implementation of this policy, regularly considering its suitability, adequacy, and effectiveness.

10. Policy revision

This policy is subject to revision whenever legal, pragmatic, global or technological developments make revision necessary. In any case, the policy will be reviewed at least every three years.