

AFIDEP

African Institute for
Development Policy

Bridging Development Research,
Policy and Practice

STRATEGIC PLAN 2015-2019



Politics packaged
Research
Utilisation
related sustainable
appropriate use
Local thematic
development produced public
environment change
knowledge
interests
linkages needed
government
population disseminate
synthesise generation
institutions actors
partnerships internal outputs
processes

Politics packaged
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Utilisation
related sustainable
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Local thematic
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Synthesis
Evidence
Capacity
Fragmentation
Strengthening
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synthesise generation
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health processes

Politics packaged
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Foreword from the Executive Director

To make research evidence matter in African-driven development

This is AFIDEP's unique vision not simply to research, but to make research matter. To give African policymakers and institutions the tools they need to make sound decisions. Ultimately, to contribute to improved quality of life and sustainable socioeconomic development for African people.

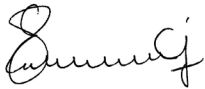
As one high-level policymaker recently said to us, "We understand something should be done, but tell us clearly, what should we do?" AFIDEP works to answer this question by bridging the gaps between research, policy and practice.

Since our founding five years ago, this distinctive approach has made us increasingly sought-after speakers, advisors and partners. We have forged strong relationships with policymakers at national and regional levels, and played a key role in strengthening the African voice in important regional and global development discourses affecting Africa. We have forged strong partnerships with Ministries of Health, Development and Planning, Finance, Environment, and various Parliamentary committees in the countries where we have worked. We have diversified our partnerships with funding agencies and implementing institutions, including Venture Strategies for Health and Development, The Joffe Charitable Trust, the UK Department for International Development, the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the David and Lucille Packard Foundation, UNFPA, UNICEF, Population Action International, Population Reference Bureau, Futures Group, Guttmacher Institute, Margaret Pyke Trust, World Bank, USAID, East African Community and International Planned Parenthood Federation.

The 2015–2019 period marks an important turning point, as AFIDEP matures from an innovative start-up to a robust, professionalised institution. To ensure we continue to meet the needs of our various stakeholders, this Strategic Plan was developed in a participatory and consultative manner. Its development was informed by the evolving global development scene from the Millennium Development Goals to the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals. All AFIDEP staff participated in an initial scoping and SWOT analysis workshop, which was followed by a three-day strategy development retreat. Experts in the field, including AFIDEP Associate Fellows and members of the Board of Directors, reviewed drafts and provided detailed input on the strategy.

The resulting Plan we present here provides an ambitious but achievable roadmap for building on our past gains to expand the scope and impact of our work. Five years from now, AFIDEP will have even deeper internal expertise in a range of disciplines including economics, demography, public health and policy analysis. We will be spearheading and participating in multi-year, multi-partner and multi-national programmes and using lessons from our country-specific studies to engage decision-makers across borders through our partnerships with regional development institutions and related platforms. We will have a formal project management framework, a communications strategy and a business plan.

I would like to express my hearty gratitude to all those who made the development of this Strategic Plan possible, including our funders, our partners, our versatile and committed Board of Directors, and the dedicated and energetic AFIDEP staff. I am confident that together we will deliver on our aspiration to be the go-to policy think tank in matters of population change, health and development in Africa.



Eliya M. Zulu (PhD)
Executive Director, AFIDEP

Executive Summary

The 21st century has the potential to be the 'African Century' but only if the continent is able to address and overcome major challenges, especially in population change, health, and sustainable development. Research evidence is essential to helping decision-makers identify and implement policies and programmes that will allow Africans to realise inclusive and sustainable development. Too often, however, policy-relevant evidence is either unavailable to or unused by African decision-makers.

AFIDEP works to bridge the gaps between research, policy and practice by enabling use of evidence in decision-making aimed at addressing various development challenges, particularly those pertaining to population change and sustainable development and health systems strengthening in Africa. We take pride in being an African-led institution, and believe that strong African leadership and political commitment is critical to address the continent's current development challenges and harness growing opportunities for socioeconomic transformation.

To contribute to strengthening this leadership, we synthesise and translate research and related evidence, package and enable utilisation of the evidence by decision-makers, and strengthen local technical capacity in translation and use of research evidence. In our first five years, AFIDEP has made notable contributions in improving the uptake of research evidence at national and regional levels. Our work has gained strong traction with decision-makers in countries including Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Rwanda and Ethiopia, and with regional development bodies such as the African Union Commission and the East African Community.

We have also made considerable progress in developing our expertise, infrastructure, policies and management systems, and have built a multi-disciplinary technical staff with expertise in various social sciences, public health, policy analysis and communications.

Over the next five-year period, AFIDEP will focus on five strategic aims:

- ***To expand the depth, thematic scope, and geographical scope of our work in generating, synthesising and translating knowledge.*** We will extend our country-specific and regional work into West and Central Africa; expand and deepen our research in population change and sustainable development,

with a particular focus on the linkages between population, environment and development; and increase our work in health systems strengthening, both by generating and translating research evidence on specific health issues and, more generally, by addressing the institutional and individual level bottlenecks that prevent decision-makers from accessing and using research evidence.

- ***To intensify our national and regional policy engagement activities.*** We will develop a strategic communications plan and expand our technical capacity in communications and policy analysis; identify new champions within governments and other decision-making institutions; and organise regular meetings to ensure our research agenda is meeting decision-makers' needs.
- ***To strengthen the capacity of researchers, policymakers and civil society organisations to synthesise, translate and use research evidence.*** We will hold workshops and engage one-on-one with both those who generate research and end-users, and build a publicly accessible knowledge repository to make sure evidence is available to all who need it.
- ***To strengthen our internal structures and processes.*** Because AFIDEP is relatively young, we will also focus over the next five years on institution-building to ensure sustainability. This will include supporting the professional growth, leadership and managerial capabilities of staff and strengthening the internal systems, structures and processes that shape our working culture.
- ***To build and invest in relationships that extend the reach and impact of our work.*** We will maintain and expand our strategic partnerships with governments, academic institutions, implementing agencies and other relevant actors.

Measuring our performance is and will remain a central component of our operations. Over the next five years, we will develop a performance monitoring tool to track the achievement of our strategic objectives. In the short term, we will measure our capacity to influence policies by the extent of demand for, and use of, our outputs and services by governments and international development partners. We will also monitor and document specific references to our work in various policy documents and processes, and use testimonials from policymakers on how our work has made a difference for them.

This Strategic Plan is intended to guide us toward enduring progress in entrenching a culture of evidence-informed African decision-making, and position AFIDEP as the go-to policy think tank in matters of population, health and development in Africa.



The African Union Headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

1

Introduction

1.1 Claiming the African Century

The 21st century has been called the ‘African Century’ because it promises unique opportunities to overcome pervasive poverty, ill health and other development challenges. Despite the global recession that started in 2007, many African countries have achieved remarkable levels of economic growth in recent years, while hunger and disease have become less common across much of the continent.

But to fulfill the promise of the African Century, the continent must maximise the potential of its ultimate development resource - its people. Africa’s population is undergoing phenomenal change. According to United Nations projections, Africa will have 27 percent of the global population by 2050, and a third by 2100. Currently, children under 15 years of age constitute over 45 percent of the African population. As birth rates decline, the proportion of working age population relative to dependents will increase, creating opportunities for accelerated economic growth if the relatively big labour force will be well educated, skilled, healthy, and gainfully employed. Furthermore, the vast majority of Africans will live in urban areas.

Through the leadership of the African Union, African countries have charted their long-term development roadmap called Agenda 2063. This development strategy seeks to



Our paramount role at AFIDEP is to ensure that decision-makers have access to and consider the most relevant and robust research evidence whenever they make policy decisions.

transform Africa into an “integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena” by 2063. The strategy recognises the role of these population dynamics in the envisaged socioeconomic transformation and specifically seeks to unleash the full potential of youth and women to boost socioeconomic development in Africa.

As the global development paradigm shifts from MDGs to Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) beyond 2015, Africa will need to walk the talk by demonstrating leadership in tackling poverty, enabling universal health coverage, and growing its economies in a sustainable manner. Research evidence can play a critical role in helping African policymakers identify and implement policies and programmes that allow African people to realise inclusive, sustainable development. This includes planning ahead to ensure that social support services are prepared to adapt to projected population changes and strengthening health systems to reduce the burden of disease.

1.2 The African Research-Action Gap

Too often, however, the research evidence required to achieve these goals is either unavailable to or unused by African decision-makers. Research is largely fragmented in different scientific publications and not appropriately synthesised or packaged for use by decision-makers. Furthermore, the evidence often does not fully meet the policy and programme needs of decision-makers, since they rarely contribute to the initial identification of the knowledge gaps that the evidence seeks to fill. Use of evidence is particularly weak in closing the big gap between policies and implementation, which remains one of the most critical development challenges in Africa. This is partly because there is limited research evidence to inform effective design and implementation of interventions that have the best potential to improve lives.

1.3 AFIDEP’s Response

The African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), an African-led, regional non-profit policy think tank, was established in 2010 to help bridge the gaps between research, policy and practice pertaining to population change and sustainable development, and health system strengthening in Africa. AFIDEP contributes to sustainable development by enabling the formulation of policies and programme interventions that are informed by sound research evidence. The organisation is governed by a Board of Directors comprising distinguished experts, who provide strategic guidance and institutional oversight.

AFIDEP has three overarching objectives:

- Synthesise and translate research evidence
- Enable the utilisation of research evidence in decision-making
- Strengthen capacity in research evidence synthesis, translation and utilisation

This 2015 - 2019 Strategic Plan provides a framework to guide AFIDEP in building on past gains and expanding and strengthening the scope of our programmes. Specifically, we will:

- Expand the thematic and geographic scope of our research;
- Intensify efforts to increase the utilisation of research and related evidence in decision-making at national, regional and international levels;
- Initiate innovative programmes that strengthen the capacity of decision-makers and scientists to translate and utilise evidence; and
- Strengthen strategic partnerships with governments and other key policy actors in sub-Saharan Africa.

To achieve these aspirations, we will also strengthen our internal systems and processes and grow our staff as needed in line with the changing needs of our programmes.



AFIDEP contributes to sustainable development by enabling the formulation of policies and programme interventions that are informed by sound research evidence.



2

Vision, Mission and Values

Vision

We make research evidence matter in African-driven development.

Mission

To translate and enable utilisation of evidence in policymaking, primarily in the fields of population change and sustainable development, and health systems strengthening in Africa.

Translation of evidence comprises its generation, synthesis and repackaging for use by policymakers. We work on the premise that policymakers should have access to robust and usable evidence. We enhance the capacity of African policymakers to play a lead role in defining the need for, and utilisation of, such evidence.

We take pride in being an African-led institution that is working toward galvanising sustainable development in Africa.

Values

AFIDEP staff adhere to a set of important shared core values that guide our work and relationships with colleagues, clients and partners.

Among ourselves, we are:

- Focused, committed and rigorous with our work.
- Fair, friendly, energetic and support each other.

In relation to the environment in which we operate:

- We are client-oriented and impact-led.
- We are results-oriented and expect to exceed our clients' expectations.
- We value integrity and complete accountability in use of financial and other resources that enable us do our work.
- We believe strongly in partnering with others at national, regional, and international levels and with a range of actors in government, academia, implementation agencies and development partners, so that together we can have a bigger impact.
- We absolutely expect our work will make a significant contribution to Africa's equitable development.

We expect that living these values will see us realise our vision and mission.



The ultimate goal of AFIDEP's work is to contribute to the realisation of sustainable socioeconomic development in sub-Saharan Africa.

CHANGE

3

Our Theory of Change

3.1 The Challenge

Achieving sustainable development requires evidence-based decision-making in setting priorities, allocating resources and implementing effective intervention programmes. Yet, past experience shows that many obstacles impede the application of research evidence in such decision-making processes in sub-Saharan Africa:

- **Research knowledge is fragmented or missing:** Decision-makers usually lack synthesised and timely research outputs that they can easily access and use.
- **Research outputs not appropriately packaged:** When it exists, most research is published in scientific journals and other technical formats that are not amenable for use by decision-makers.
- **Input of end-users rarely taken into account:** Decision-makers hardly contribute to defining the knowledge gaps that researchers tackle, thereby creating a disconnect between the needs of decision-makers and the evidence that is produced.
- **Local capacity to translate and use research evidence is weak:** Many African countries lack expertise in synthesis, translation and use of research evidence in decision-making processes.
- **Policies driven by politics:** Policymaking processes are often driven by strong partisan political and ideological interests, which diminish the application of research evidence even when good evidence is available.

3.2 How we bring about Change

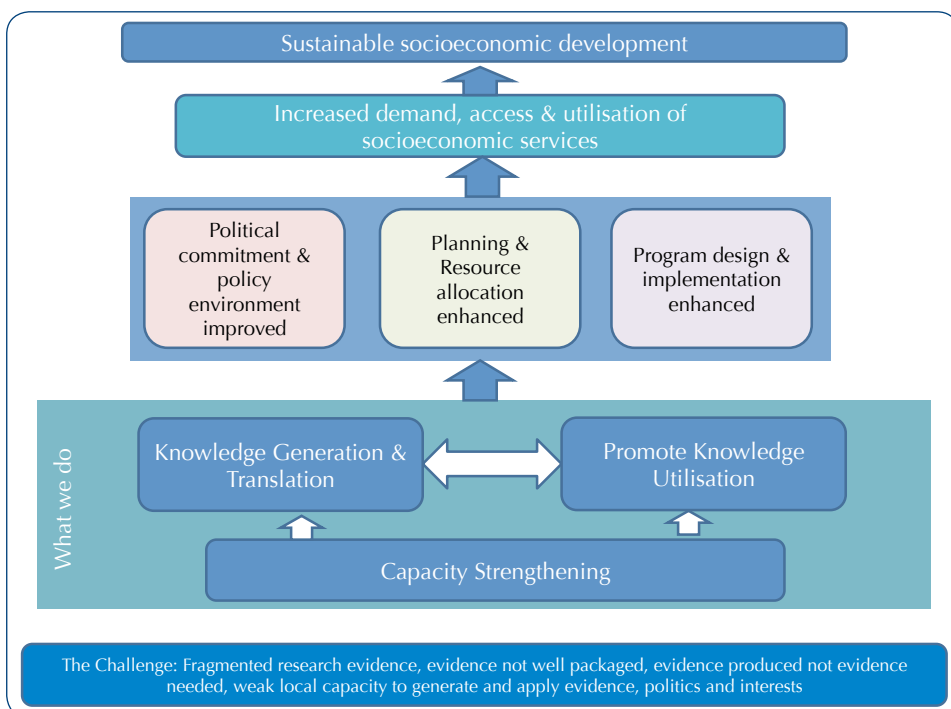
The ultimate goal of AFIDEP's work is to contribute to the realisation of **sustainable socioeconomic development** in sub-Saharan Africa. To do this, we **synthesise and translate research and related evidence, package and enable utilisation of the evidence by decision-makers**, and **strengthen local technical capacity in translation and use of research evidence**. These activities serve to increase the role of research evidence in decision-making processes in order to strengthen the capacity and commitment of political leaders, policymakers and programme managers in addressing Africa's development challenges. Our specific tactics include:

- **Conduct and synthesise research in order to inform national policies and programmes with evidence.** We analyse existing data and policy and programme environments, undertake in-depth work focused on specific countries, and conduct comparative transnational and regional data analyses to ensure that decision-makers have the evidence they need to formulate and evaluate effective population and health policies. In particular, we seek to identify opportunities to improve the quality and reach of social services, especially to under-served populations.
- **Bring evidence directly to decision-makers in clear, usable formats.** AFIDEP goes beyond the typical research dissemination model to provide direct technical assistance to government teams that design policies and strategies. In Kenya, Malawi, Lesotho, Tanzania and Uganda, for example, we have helped governments and development partners develop integrated population and development policies. We also train researchers in effective writing and communications skills so they are better able to deliver their findings to the decision-makers who need them.
- **Connect researchers and end-users at national and regional levels.** Because we work hand-in-hand with decision-makers providing technical assistance, we know the kinds of evidence they want and need. This understanding extends beyond our focal countries to the regional level through our involvement in, and partnership with, key regional networks and organisations including the African Union Commission (AUC), Partners in Population and Development (PPD); regional economic blocks for Eastern, Southern, and Central Africa; and the East, Central and Southern African-Health Community (ECSA-HC).
- **Build research translation and use capacity across the continent.** To multiply our impact, we help policymakers, civil society organisations and other end-users of evidence understand the value of research evidence, and how to access, evaluate, interpret, and use it effectively. We achieve this through technical assistance and training workshops. We also strengthen the capacity and skills of researchers and knowledge intermediaries in conducting systematic reviews and synthesis of evidence, policy analyses, scenario building and forecasting through training workshops, seminars and internships.

- Strengthen the African voice in global development discourse.** We draw on the analyses we carry out and experiences working with decision-makers on the ground in Africa to inform the international development community's policies and investments in Africa. AFIDEP experts participate in international conferences, high-level development panels, and one-on-one meetings with key development partners to ensure that their priorities for the continent take account of the perspectives of African professionals. This includes participating in WHO expert panels and organising our own national and regional conferences on our focus topics to galvanise evidence-based discourses on policy and programme options for addressing Africa's development challenges.

AFIDEP's goal is to ensure that decision-makers have access to and consider the most relevant and robust research evidence whenever they make policy decisions. We believe that increased consideration and utilisation of research evidence will result in **increased political commitment to prioritisation of population change and health challenges, increased allocation of financial and technical resources to address the challenges and design of more efficient intervention programmes.** Consequently, more people, particularly the poorest and marginalised communities, will **demand, access and utilise social services, which will** ultimately contribute to improved quality of life and sustainable socioeconomic development in Africa.

Theory of Change Chart





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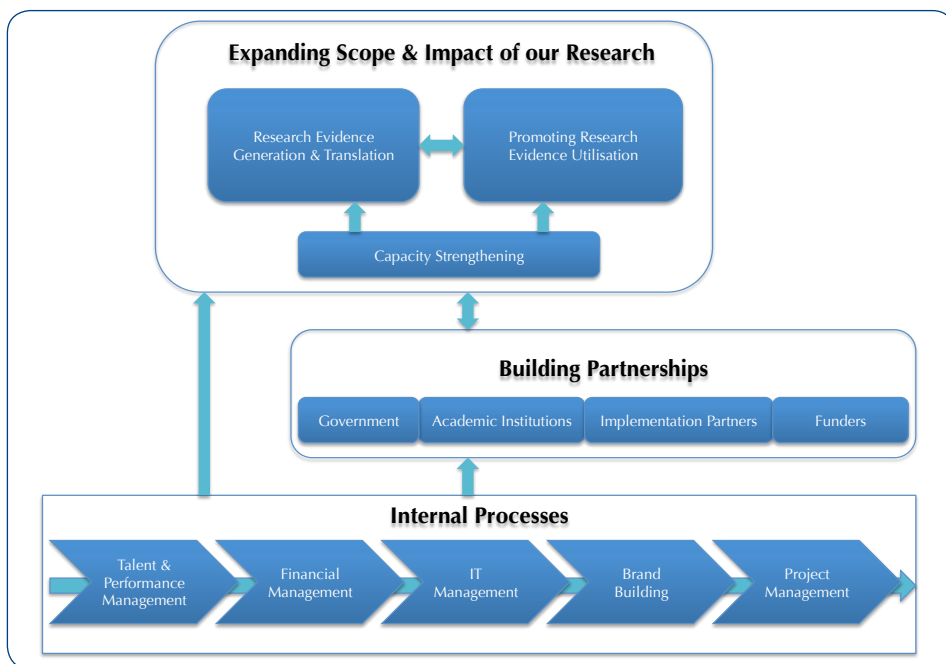
Our Strategic Map and Aims for 2015 - 2019

Building on our experience in knowledge translation, policy engagement and capacity building in the past five years, between 2015 and 2019, we will endeavour to position ourselves as the go-to policy think tank in matters of population, health and development in Africa. Our capability to produce relevant, timely and methodologically sound knowledge that is appropriately packaged and proactively disseminated will determine how much we can inform policy change. To that end, we will channel our work toward the following five strategic aims:

- We will **expand the depth, thematic scope and geographical scope of our work** to generate, synthesise and translate knowledge.
- We will **intensify our national and regional policy engagement activities** to reach decision-makers at multiple levels and in a wider variety of sectors.
- We will continue to **strengthen individual and institutional capacity** in knowledge synthesis, translation, and use so that our work has multiplier effects across the continent.
- We will **strengthen internal structures and processes** that enable us to perform our key functions competently and efficiently.
- We will **build and invest in relationships** that extend the reach and impact of our work.

Our strategic map indicates the forward and backward linkages among the key strategic areas where our work will focus.

Our Strategic Map



Aim 1:

Expand the Depth, Thematic Scope and Geographic Scope of our Work

Over the next five years, we will enrich the scope of our work within our thematic areas of focus (as outlined below) and expand the geographical scope of our work to cover West and Central Africa, including Francophone Africa. As we do so, we will continue to work closely with end-users of evidence - policymakers, development partners, and funders - to ensure that our research is sharpened by their current evidence needs and their interests are fully incorporated in our work.

These activities will be concentrated within two thematic areas of focus:

Theme 1: Population Change and Sustainable Development

Recent United Nations projections show that **Africa's population will grow from 1.4 billion in 2010 to 2.1 billion by 2050**. This growth will be driven principally by the least developed countries in the sub-Saharan region, where the population will increase from 1.2 billion to 1.8 billion over this period (United Nations, 2009). It is estimated that 30 of the 49 sub-Saharan Africa countries are projected to at least double their population by 2050. During the same period, more Africans will live in urban than in rural areas. Sub-Saharan Africa's population is heavily youthful; currently, about 43 percent of the total population is under the age of 15.

However, if fertility in the region can decline rapidly, as witnessed in the middle-income countries of East Asia, Africa's population will be dominated by working age population and child dependency ratios will decline. If the expanded labour force is well educated, skilled, healthy and gainfully employed, it will provide African countries with an impetus for accelerated economic growth known as the demographic dividend.

AFIDEP works to clarify the implications of these phenomenal population changes, including population growth, age structure changes, migration and urbanisation, on Africa's development prospects and ensure that decision-makers incorporate population dynamics in development planning. For example, we generate and disseminate evidence to demonstrate the potential impact of the demographic dividend in accelerating socioeconomic development in Africa and linkages between population, environment and development. We use the evidence on these issues to generate and strengthen political will and policy responses to prioritise incorporation of population dynamics in development planning.

Over the next five years, we will reinforce this work by conducting national and regional analyses to inform specific policy and programme decisions; continuing to conduct comparative regional analyses to highlight these issues at various regional forums; strengthening the capacity of decision-makers in integrated planning, programme design, and implementation; and expanding our technical team working on these issues so we can respond rapidly to emerging knowledge needs. We will pay particular attention to expanding our work on the linkages between population, environment and development.



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Dr Rose Oranje (Communications and Policy Engagement Manager, AFIDEP) leads a plenary session at the Research to Policy Dialogue in June 2014. Looking on is Prof Richard Muga (Vice Chancellor, Great Lakes University of Kisumu), who was moderating the session.

Theme 2: Health Systems Strengthening

Overall, sub-Saharan Africa has the world's highest burden of disease and death, and has made the least progress towards achievement of health related MDGs focused on child health, maternal health and HIV/AIDS. Resilient health systems are essential to deliver the preventive services and other care a country's population needs to stay healthy and productive. The World Health Organisation defines health systems strengthening as "the process of identifying and implementing the changes in policy and practice in a country's health system such that the country can respond better to its health and health system challenges, and any array of initiatives and strategies that improves one or more of the functions of the health system and that leads to better health through improvements in access, coverage, quality, or efficiency."

Our work in this theme focuses on translating evidence and promoting its use in order to support health systems strengthening. It addresses two broad areas: a) Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS, and other emerging health challenges, and b) strengthening health information systems and use of evidence in decision-making.

- **Reproductive Health, HIV/AIDS, and other Emerging Health Challenges**

Despite notable progress in reducing childhood mortality over the last two decades, sub-Saharan Africa continues to exhibit relatively high levels of child deaths. The region also accounts for the largest share of global maternal deaths and is disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS. Over 53 million married women in sub-Saharan Africa who would like to postpone the next birth or stop childbearing altogether are not using an effective method of contraception. Consequently, a sizeable proportion of births are unplanned, which is one of the key drivers of the region's high fertility levels. Lack of access to reproductive health services is most acute among young people and the poor.

In this sub-theme, we translate research and related evidence to strengthen political will and commitment, increase resource allocation, and inform design of effective intervention programmes to ensure universal access to services in the following areas:

- i. Reproductive health (including family planning, child health, maternal health and adolescent sexual and reproductive health).
- ii. HIV/AIDS, with particular focus on improving prevention and care among uniquely vulnerable populations such as cross-border populations, the poor, and young people.
- iii. Emerging diseases and health challenges, including non-communicable diseases.

We also generate evidence to inform decision-making on how to reinforce linkages and integration of services related to these health issues.

- **Strengthening Health Information Systems and Use of Evidence in Decision-making**

One of the central components of a health system is the health information system, an integrated effort to collect, analyse and use health data to inform policies and programmes. Robust data and research evidence are vital for improving policy and programme actions; however, local capacity to generate and use evidence to strengthen the individual components of health systems and their effective interaction is weak.

Over the next five years, AFIDEP will directly generate evidence to inform decision-making processes, while also enhancing the capacity and role of health information systems more generally and working to promote the role of evidence in improving the performance of health systems. We will place particular emphasis on strengthening



Violet Murunga (far left) (Senior Knowledge Translation Officer, AFIDEP) leads the members of the advisory committee of AFIDEP's programme that is seeking to strengthen the use of research in adolescent and youth sexual and reproductive health in Kenya, at a meeting in October 2014.



Participants engage in discussions at a Science-Policy Café hosted by AFIDEP and the Ministry of Health on the implementation of Kenya's free maternity services presidential directive in February 2015.

monitoring and evaluation systems in the health sector, including data collection, processing, and analysis systems and capacities. We will also address institutional and individual level bottlenecks that prevent decision-makers from accessing and using research evidence. For example, we will provide technical assistance to improve the ability of policymakers to access and use research evidence and help institutionalise regular opportunities for these stakeholders to learn about and discuss new findings.

Aim 2:

Intensify our National and Regional Policy Engagement Activities

Proactive work to ensure that end-users are interpreting and using research evidence at all levels of the development process, including priority setting, resource allocation, and programme design and implementation, is a key distinguishing factor of AFIDEP's work. In countries where we carry out in-depth work, we forge strong partnerships with policymakers, researchers, political leaders, civil society advocates and development partners to build solid local capacity in knowledge generation, synthesis, translation and utilisation. At the regional level, we work closely with our partners to ensure that key regional policy discourses are informed by robust research evidence.

In the next five years, we will:

- Strengthen our internal capacity in policy engagement by developing and implementing a research communications strategy in order to increase the impact of our work.
- Continuously identify new champions to help us advocate for using evidence to address population, family planning and health systems challenges within governments and other decision-making organisations.

- Hire more technical staff in research and communications, including policy analysts.
- Organise strategy meetings with decision-makers and funders to clarify their evidence needs and ensure our research agenda is oriented toward meeting these needs.

Aim 3:**Strengthen the Capacity of Researchers, Policymakers and Civil Society Organisations in Knowledge Synthesis, Translation and Use**

To multiply the effect of our work across the continent, we seek to increase the critical mass of experts focused on generating and sharing policy-relevant knowledge, while strengthening the capacity of decision-makers to use research evidence. By acting as knowledge intermediaries between policymakers and researchers, we ensure that scientists are generating research evidence that is responsive to the needs of, and actually used by, decision-makers.

Over the next five years, we will reinforce this capacity building programme through the following initiatives:

- We will increase the pool of African knowledge translation experts and enhance their skills in synthesis and translation of research evidence. This will be done through training workshops, internships, and hands-on skills exchange while collaborating on research and policy engagement activities. We will expand our partnerships with other institutions and programmes within Africa and in the North to leverage capacity-building resources, tools and methodologies.
- We will strengthen the capacity of policymakers and other end-users of research evidence in accessing and utilisation of evidence in their work. This will be done at both institutional and individual levels and include interventions such



Dr Eliya Zulu (AFIDEP Executive Director) makes a presentation at a forum in Tanzania where key leaders deliberated the opportunities for harnessing the demographic dividend in July 2014.



AFIDEP staff make a presentation during the 4th Population Association of Kenya conference in June 2012

as training workshops to strengthen skills in accessing, interpreting, and using research evidence, and through direct participation in policymaking processes.

- We will build a knowledge repository that consists of all the research products that we develop as well as relevant ones developed by our partners, and make these products publicly available through our website.

Aim 4:

Strengthen Internal Structures and Processes

We recognise that efficient internal structures, tools and processes are essential to our ability to deliver quality work, exceed the expectations of our clients, and maximise the impact of our work. Improvement in the following five internal processes will enable us to continuously ensure high performance standards.

Talent and Performance Management

AFIDEP has assembled a multi-disciplinary core staff comprising of experts trained in various social sciences, public health, policy analysis and communications. Five of our staff have PhDs and seven have Masters Degrees. This team will be expanded during the next five years in line with the changing needs of our programmes.

To attract, develop and retain high calibre staff who subscribe to the institution's vision, mission and values, we will provide attractive performance-based remuneration packages and create an enabling environment for staff to freely and constructively contribute to the conceptualisation of work and various institutional

building processes. We will also support opportunities for career growth, strengthen the technical capacities of our staff in conducting knowledge translation and improve our performance management systems based on SMART objectives and targets.

The Institute's core staff is complemented by a network of Associate Fellows who contribute to our work and seek to strengthen the impact of their own work through our programmes and connections. Over the next five years, we will expand our pool of Associate Fellows and deepen engagement with them through regular networking and collaborative activities.

Financial Mobilisation and Management

Robust systems for attracting and managing funding are essential to organisational sustainability. To expand the breadth of our knowledge synthesis and translation work, as described in **Aim 1**, we will also require additional sizeable, long-term grants, which we will achieve by leading some applications and entering into partnership with other organisations as co-applicants on others. Success in implementing each of our five strategic aims will, in turn, enhance our visibility and appeal to a growing range of funders.

To effectively manage existing and new grants, over the next five years we will hire more senior financial management personnel, ensure that our financial management systems meet all donor and government requirements, and continuously demonstrate our transparency and financial accountability.

Brand Building

Our ultimate impact depends not only upon producing high quality, relevant and timely research evidence, but also on the on-going demand for, and use of, our work. To raise the profile of AFIDEP and ensure a systematic approach to marketing our work, over the next five years we will develop a communications strategy and a business plan. Based on these documents, we will proactively undertake rigorous marketing of our work and engagement with our clients, partners, and key stakeholders in order to brand AFIDEP as the go-to policy think tank in matters of population, health and development.

Project Management

We will create a concise framework for planning, implementing, monitoring, evaluating and reporting our work. Such a framework, used to manage and structure all our work, will enable us to implement project activities to a high standard and in a timely fashion, as well as meet reporting obligations to funders and end beneficiaries. It will include robust technical tools for managing individual, project and institutional performance.

Information Technology Management

Information Technology structures and systems are central to our internal processes at the Institute, and we will review and upgrade the existing equipment and systems to increase our efficiency.

Aim 5:

Build and Invest in Relationships that Extend the Reach and Impact of our Work

Strategic partnerships with governments, academic institutions, implementing agencies, civil society organisations, the private sector and other relevant actors provide AFIDEP with a good understanding of the research and policy landscape and enhance our ability to influence policy decisions. Over the past five years, the strong and mutual relationships that we have established with national governments and regional decision-making institutions such as the East African Community and African Union Commission have afforded us opportunities to be involved in important dialogues and development of key policies and programmes. In the next five years, we will strengthen these existing relationships and partnerships and build new ones.

With governments, we will focus on identifying and empowering champions who can provide strong leadership and effective advocacy on the issues we work on. This will include solidifying our relationships with policymakers and political leaders and collaborative partnerships with government agencies in Eastern and Southern Africa, while exploring opportunities to initiate meaningful engagement with government officials and agencies in Central and West Africa.

With regional and international decision-making agencies (e.g. African Union, EAC, SADC, ECOWAS and UN agencies), we will work toward not only bringing rigorously analysed and synthesised research evidence in accessible formats to decision-making platforms, but also taking part in important processes that produce key regional and international policy agreements.

With research organisations and networks, to help meet an increasing demand for implementation research, we will focus particularly on developing partnerships that generate lessons on programme effectiveness. We will specifically take advantage of our existing linkages with regional professional networks to develop and implement regional capacity strengthening programmes in knowledge translation. In addition, we will continue to build our pool of Associate Fellows and engage them proactively in our programmes.

With implementing organisations, CSOs and advocacy organisations and networks, and the private sector, we will focus on strengthening the role of evidence in their dialogues, programmes and activities. We particularly recognise the important role that CSOs play in holding governments accountable to their responsibilities of providing quality and equitable social services to their citizens. We will seek to

augment this role by equipping the CSOs with the robust research evidence they need to play this accountability role effectively. We will also seek to provide evidence to help the private sector understand the implications of emerging population dynamics on the business environment and strengthen the mutual operations of public-private partnerships in improving the wellbeing of Africans.

With funding agencies, we will share our programmes and evidence with diverse funders to enhance their interest in funding evidence synthesis, meaningful engagement with policymakers and capacity building for evidence translation and utilisation.



A young girl reads out a poem during the launch of a report on harnessing the demographic dividend in Uganda in June 2014. AFIDEP was part of the technical team that produced the report.



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Measuring our Performance

Performance measurement is and will remain a central component of AFIDEP's operations. As part of our project management framework, we will develop a performance monitoring dashboard tool to track the achievement of our strategic objectives. This means that for each strategic aim and associated objectives, we will develop a detailed action plan including specific activities, concrete measures/indicators of achievement, clear timelines and a catalogue of the institutional functions responsible for their achievement.

The process of measuring our performance will be informed by the understanding that decision-making is not a linear, technocratic process. Rather, it is an iterative, heterogeneous and political process. Thus, although research evidence stands to play a key role in this process, other factors such as political considerations, cultural beliefs, religious values, personal experiences and interests of leaders and resource constraints often play a more dominant role. Changes in policies are often a result of long-term and multiple efforts and government officials may not explicitly acknowledge roles that



Research evidence can play a critical role in helping African policymakers identify and implement policies and programmes that allow African people to realise inclusive, sustainable development.

specific institutions play in informing or influencing the policy change. Furthermore, an institution's capacity to influence important policies develops over time through sustained interaction and trust building with the decision-makers, who need to have confidence in the institution's technical capacity.

Our paramount role at AFIDEP is to ensure that decision-makers have access to and consider the most relevant and robust research evidence whenever they make policy decisions. In the short-term, therefore, we will measure our capacity to influence policies by the extent of demand for, and use of, our outputs and services by governments and international development partners. Bringing important evidence to the attention of key decision-makers and development partners is an important first step towards building long-term engagement that would result in policy changes. The extent to which end-users of research evidence call upon an institution to help analyse issues and demonstrate what can be done to improve policies and programmes shows the extent of confidence they have in the institution.

We will also monitor and document specific references to our work in various policy documents and processes, and use testimonials from policymakers on how our work has made a difference in their work. Below we outline the indicators that we will use to measure and document the impact of our work under each of the five strategic aims:

Aim 1:**Expanding the Depth, Thematic Scope and Geographical Scope of our Knowledge Generation and Synthesis**

- Geographical scope – Expand our work to at least two focus countries in West and Central Africa.
- Thematic scope – At least three long-term projects (at least 3 years each) in each of the two thematic areas of Population Change and Sustainable Development and Health Systems Strengthening.
- Expand our technical team of experts by 10 by the end of 2018, to include development economists, health economists, demographers, policy analysts and public health specialists.
- Increase the number of peer-reviewed journal articles published by our staff in our areas of focus (at least 10 per year).

Aim 2:**Increasing Use of Research Evidence in Decision-making Processes**

- References made to our research in policies, programme documents and policymaking processes.
- Number of requests for AFIDEP's technical assistance or evidence to support policymaking processes within national and regional bodies.
- Number of invitations to make presentations and keynote speeches in policy platforms.
- Number of specific policies or policymaking processes that are informed by direct input of AFIDEP and its work.

Aim 3:**Building Capacity of Researchers, Knowledge Uptake Experts, Policymakers and Civil Society Organisations**

- Number of researchers and knowledge uptake experts trained through AFIDEP capacity building activities, including follow-up assessments of the impact of training on their work.
- Number of policymakers, civil society representatives and other end-users of evidence trained through AFIDEP's programmes.
- Documented success in addressing institutional bottlenecks in improving use of evidence.
- Number of institutions that benefit from AFIDEP's capacity building activities.

Aim 4:**Strengthening Internal Systems**

- Complete development and operationalisation of Human Resource Management Policy, Financial Rules and Regulations, Procurement Policies and Code of Conduct and their relevant application guidelines, and Performance Management Systems.
- Robust financial management systems set up and operationalised.
- Robust IT services set up.

- Communications Strategy and Business Plan developed and implemented.
- Improved staff retention rate.
- Establishment of endowment fund to ensure financial sustainability.

Aim 5:

Strengthening Strategic Partnerships

- Number of meetings/partnerships with government officials and agencies, with particular focus on Central and West Africa.
- Participation in decision-making processes at the regional and international levels.
- Number of formal partnerships with research and other knowledge translation institutions.
- Diversified funding base (number of new funders supporting AFIDEP's work).



Bringing important evidence to the attention of key decision-makers and development partners is an important first step towards building long-term engagement that would result in policy changes.

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Our Future

Our Institute is relatively young, and in just a few years has already achieved a great deal. We have made notable contributions in translating and enabling the uptake of research evidence in various decision-making processes in our areas of focus at national and regional levels in sub-Saharan Africa. For example, our work has attracted strong traction with decision-makers in countries including Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Zambia, Mozambique, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ethiopia and with regional development bodies such as the African Union Commission and the East African Community.

Our activities in the next five years will focus on institutional building to ensure sustainability. We will place emphasis on enriching the scope, quality, and impact of our knowledge synthesis and translation, and strengthening the internal systems, structures and processes that shape our working culture. We will also actively support the professional growth in technical, leadership and managerial capabilities of our staff to optimise their contributions to core work and safeguard AFIDEP's leadership role in policy research output.

AFIDEP aspires to be the go-to policy think tank in Africa in promoting synthesis, translation and utilisation of research evidence in policymaking and resource allocation around population, health and development. The key milestones that we seek to attain by 2019 include:

- Work on a larger geographical scale of impact across sub-Saharan Africa;
- Play a key role in strengthening the capacity of African policymakers to synthesise, translate and utilise research evidence for development;

- Build an efficient, experienced and interdisciplinary team of knowledge translation experts who continue to generate methodologically sound research knowledge;
- Establish robust administrative, financial and project management systems, and be financially stable and self-sustaining;
- Be a sought-after partner among national, regional and international actors;
- Be consistently seen as an institution that is relied upon to produce quality outputs and surpass the expectations of our stakeholders.

In summary, the collective strands of our strategic aims and our approach will build our brand as a credible policy think tank in the areas of population change and sustainable development, and health systems strengthening. This strong brand will, in turn, enhance our sustainability and influence as we help guide decision-makers to make the most of the African Century.



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AFIDEP staff at a team-building event in Nairobi in 2014. AFIDEP has its headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya and a branch office in Lilongwe, Malawi.



AFIDEP has assembled a multi-disciplinary core staff comprising experts trained in various social sciences, public health, policy analysis and communications. This team will be expanded during the next five years in line with the changing needs of our programmes.

Reactions of African Leaders to AFIDEP's Work

// In order for [our] big population to be advantageous like in India, China and Brazil, we [also] need to invest in education, health, infrastructure development and job creation. That is why I am happy that the issue [of family planning] is now being looked at from the demographic dividend perspective. //

Uganda President H.E. Yoweri Museveni, July 28, 2014 at Uganda's National Family Planning Conference in Kampala. AFIDEP conducted analyses and projections on Uganda's potential for harnessing a sizeable demographic dividend, and provided the evidence discussed at this conference, which greatly shifted President's Museveni's stance on family planning.

// We believe that it will be difficult for us to make sustained progress on MDGs without making methods of family planning universally accessible to all women who want to use them. To ensure sustainable family planning programmes, we call upon other African leaders to increase funding for family planning commodities and related services from national budgets. //

Rwanda and Ethiopia Prime Ministers, Pierre Damien Habumuremyi & Meles Zenawi, The Lancet Series on Family Planning, July 2012. AFIDEP led the engagement of these top leaders in Rwanda and Ethiopia to understand the lessons that other African countries could draw from the success of the two countries in improving access and use of modern family planning methods.

// The SECURE Health programme is in tandem with our efforts for the realisation of the Ministry's goals because we need programmes that support our use of data and research in enabling us to make better decisions and plans. //

Prof Fred Segor, Principal Secretary for Health, Ministry of Health, Kenya, speaking at the launch of the SECURE Health programme's steering committee on May 8, 2014, Nairobi.

// I will do a number of things to start enabling increased research use within the Ministry. I will form advisory teams that will, every year, review emerging research evidence on the different health policy issues and advise me on the policy options that the Ministry needs to take in order to tackle health challenges. I will also see to the revival of the library within the Ministry. //

Dr. Nicholas Muraguri, Director of Medical Services, Ministry of Health, Kenya, speaking at the launch of the SECURE Health Programme on August 5, 2014, Nairobi.

// The SECURE Health programme has come at an opportune time and will enhance the other activities that are on the ground in the Ministry. //

Dr. Christopher Kang'ombe, the Principal Secretary for Health, Ministry of Health, Malawi, speaking in February 2014 when the SECURE Health delegation held consultations with the Ministry officials.

// The SECURE Health programme came at our time of need because we have been talking about the issue of knowledge translation for some time now since we initiated the Malawi Knowledge Translation Platform a few years ago. Through the training, the programme will help us create a critical mass of thinkers who have the right attitude to evidence use and the requisite skills to prepare policy briefs for top officials. //

Dr. Damson Kathyola, Head of the Research Unit, Ministry of Health, Malawi, speaking at the opening of the SECURE Health training workshop in Malawi on April 20, 2015.

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