



African Population and
Health Research Center

IDRC Women in STEM Co-Creation and Validation Workshop Report

Co-Creation and Validation Workshop for Examining
Participation and Quality of Experiences of Women in Science
Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM): Postgraduate
Training Programs and Careers in East Africa

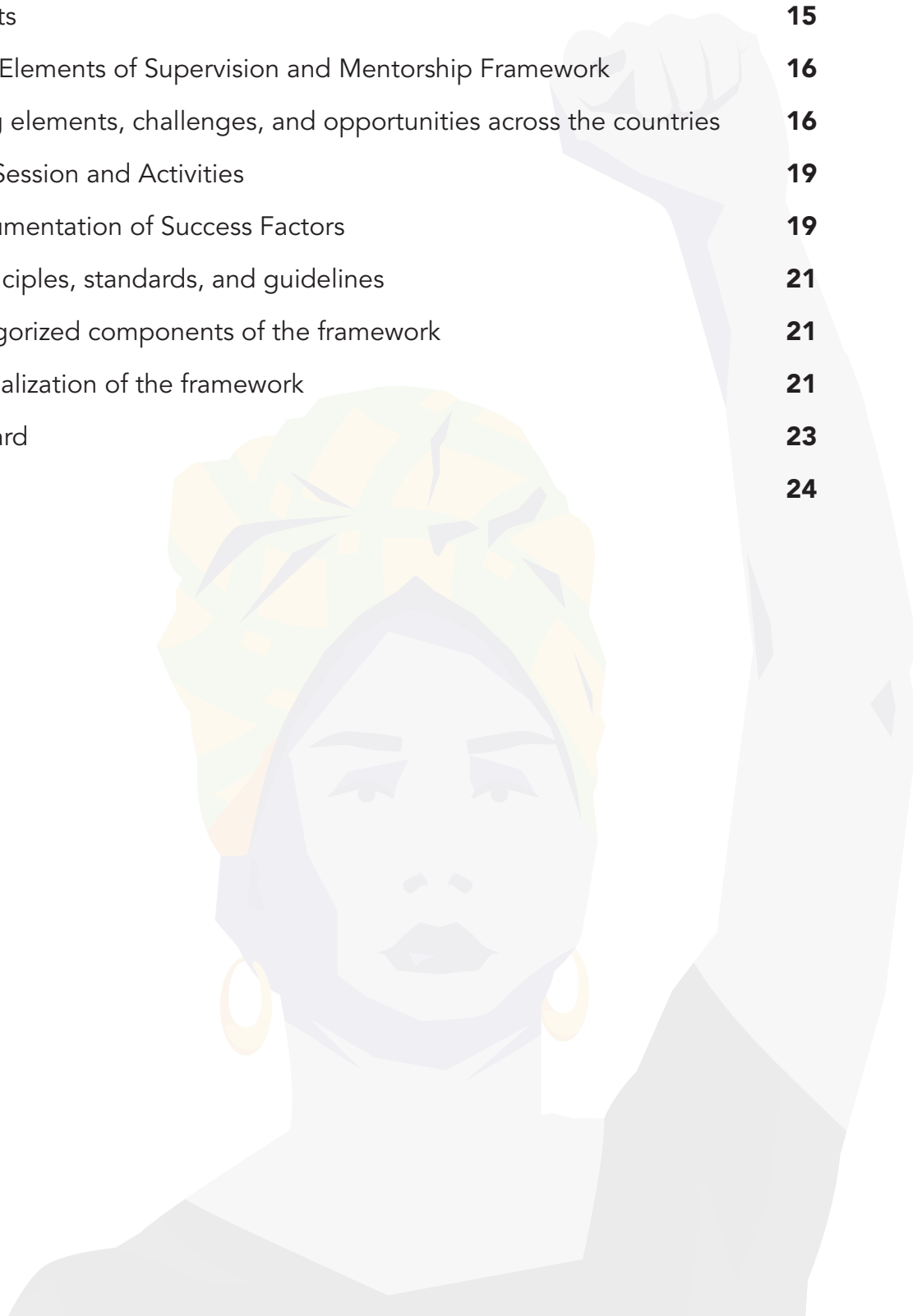




*Radisson Blu Hotel in Nairobi from August 31 to
September 1, 2023*

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	4
Official Opening Session	8
Keynote Address	9
Opening Remarks	10
Overview of the Project	14
Synthesis of Country Results	15
Country Level Proposed Elements of Supervision and Mentorship Framework	16
Identification of recurring elements, challenges, and opportunities across the countries	16
Framework Development Session and Activities	19
Determination and Documentation of Success Factors	19
Development of the principles, standards, and guidelines	21
Presentation of the categorized components of the framework	21
Country teams' contextualization of the framework	21
Next Steps and Way Forward	23
Conclusion	24



1 Introduction

This report compiles the activities and outcomes of a two-day Collaborative and Validation Workshop focusing on the Examination of Participation and Quality of Experiences among Women in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM): Postgraduate Training Programs and Careers in East Africa research study. The workshop occurred on August 31st and September 1st, 2023, at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Upper Hill, Nairobi, Kenya. It convened a diverse group of over 60 stakeholders from East Africa. The primary objective was to engage in discussions, introspection, and provide valuable insights to refine ideas derived from field data. These insights were intended to contribute to the ongoing development of a supervision and mentorship framework of postgraduate STEM-related programs.

This significant workshop constituted an integral component of the initiatives conducted within the framework of the research project titled “Exploring Women’s Participation and Quality of Experiences in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM): Postgraduate Educational Programs and Professional Pathways in East Africa.” This research project was jointly undertaken by the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC) in collaboration with the Inter-University Council for East Africa (IUCEA) and various partners, with support from the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). The study encompassed five East African nations: Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Motivated by the underrepresentation of women in STEM-related fields both in Sub-Saharan Africa and globally, this research aimed to produce empirical data to guide collective endeavors aimed at increasing female participation in postgraduate studies and careers in East Africa. It also aimed to dismantle the barriers that have perpetuated gender disparities, heightened gender inequalities, and impeded the progress and success of women in STEM education and professions.

In connection with this thrust, the study team¹ sought to achieve four interrelated objectives. First, it sought to determine levels of gender equality in STEM-related post-graduate training and careers in East Africa. Second, it sought to explore the factors that contribute to participation of women in STEM related postgraduate training and careers in East Africa, and third, to determine the effect of the covid19 pandemic on women's progression in STEM postgraduate training and careers. The fourth and most relevant to this workshop was to develop a comprehensive framework for optimal engagement of women in STEM related post-graduate training and careers in East Africa.

Having completed data collection and initial analysis, a two-day workshop was organized to convene stakeholders from the study countries. The purpose was to facilitate the sharing of findings, engaging in discussions, and advancing the supervision and mentorship framework. This framework had its origins during the data analysis process and its validation in in-country workshops previously conducted by the study team. As a result, the primary focus of the workshop's sessions and activities revolved mainly around the fourth objective: the development of a comprehensive supervision and mentorship framework, as detailed in subsequent subsections of this report, which describe the specific sessions conducted over the two days.

¹ The study team was led by Evelyn Gitau from the African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC). The other Co-investigators are Anne M. Khisa, Flora Karimi, Hesborn Wao, Marta Vicente-Crespo, and Leah Mwangi. There were also other collaborators from Higher Learning Institutions in East Africa such as Dieudonne Uwizeye from University of Rwanda.



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2 Official Opening Session



Dr. Evelyn Gitau

Principal Investigator, APHRC

The commencement of the workshop featured an inaugural session with various speakers delivering opening speeches and remarks. Dr. Evelyn Gitau, serving as the Principal Investigator of the study and the session moderator, extended a warm welcome to the workshop's attendees. In her address, she expressed gratitude for the commitment displayed by the diverse participants who had chosen to prioritize this event over their other commitments.

In her introductory address, she acknowledged the diverse assembly, which encompassed various stakeholders such as Vice Chancellors, and representatives from governmental and regulatory bodies representing the five countries. She succinctly encapsulated the core mission of the study project, emphasizing the imperative of gender equality in the advancement of science and research for the betterment of Africa.

Concluding her welcome speech, she extended an invitation to Dr. Catherine Kyobutungi, the Executive Director of The African Population and Health Research Center, to deliver her opening remarks.



3 | Keynote Address



Dr. Catherine Kyobutungi
Executive Director, APHRC

In her keynote address, Dr. Kyobutungi's primary objective was to clarify the workshop's purpose by explaining why the participants had gathered and outlining the anticipated outcomes to be achieved during the two-day event. During her presentation, she provided statistical data that underscored the necessity for Africa to invest in the development of well-trained and high-quality research scientists, particularly focusing on women scientists.

Projections indicate a significant demographic change in Africa, with its population projected to grow from 1.4 billion to 2.4 billion by the year 2050. This demographic transformation is expected to bring about heightened social and economic challenges, necessitating a comprehensive approach to research and evidence-based solutions. It's important to note that despite these impending challenges, Africa currently only accounts for a mere 0.01% of the world's population holding PhDs.

This calls for a critical shift in focus. Africa must now set ambitious targets, with the aim of producing one million scientists, including an annual production rate of 10,000 PhD holders. However, the current rate of PhD production

in the continent is significantly lower, standing at just 2,000 per year. This glaring disparity between the current output and the targeted numbers highlights the urgent need for intensified efforts and the implementation of innovative initiatives. These efforts are crucial to bring Africa in line with global averages and to effectively address the persistent and pressing challenges that continue to shape the continent's unresolved agenda.

Moreover, Dr. Kyobutungi emphasized the importance of addressing emerging threats such as climate change and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs). She cautioned, though, that obtaining a PhD should not be seen as the ultimate goal; instead, she stressed the necessity of establishing a support system to empower PhD holders, particularly women, to excel and make meaningful contributions to tackling the pressing developmental challenges in Africa, particularly those that disproportionately affect women. In her closing remarks, she reiterated that achieving these objectives would be feasible through the establishment of robust partnerships among science stakeholders, both individuals and institutions, fostering collaboration rather than competition.



4 Opening Remarks



Professor Gaspard Banyankimbona

Executive Secretary, IUCEA

In his opening remarks, Professor Gaspard Banyankimbona, the Executive Secretary of the IUCEA, highlighted a concerning statistic: that women currently make up only 30% of the scientific community, as reported by the World Bank. He emphasized the pivotal role that solidarity plays in enhancing the prospects of success, especially for women in science. Professor Banyankimbona stressed the significance of mentorship in nurturing and shaping world-class scientists capable of addressing the unique challenges faced by Africa.

Furthermore, he underscored that the study being discussed during the workshop held paramount importance. It wasn't solely about increasing the representation of women in STEM-related fields; rather, it was a strategic imperative for the advancement of science and development in the region. Professor Banyankimbona also emphasized the necessity for clear guidelines governing supervision and mentorship, viewing them as a critical strategy to combat gender inequality in STEM careers. He encouraged stakeholders to build upon the IUCEA guidelines of 2018 and contemplate ways to formulate relevant supervision and mentorship guidelines that would promote gender equality effectively.

In his closing remarks, Professor Banyankimbona emphasized the crucial role of active participation

from various stakeholders, encompassing regulators, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and governments, in the formulation and implementation of a supervision and mentorship framework spanning across East Africa. This collaborative effort was recognized as pivotal in making substantial strides towards addressing gender disparities in STEM fields within the region.

Furthermore, he reiterated the imperative for establishing comprehensive guidelines for supervision and mentorship as a strategic approach to tackle gender inequality in STEM-related careers. In this context, stakeholders were encouraged to build upon the foundation laid by the IUCEA guidelines from 2018, with a focus on developing relevant supervision and mentorship guidelines aimed at promoting gender equality effectively.

Lastly, Professor Banyankimbona underscored the significance of the active involvement of all stakeholders, including regulators, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), and governments, in the development and adoption of the supervision and mentorship framework across East Africa. This collective commitment was emphasized as a critical step towards advancing gender equality in STEM fields across the region.





Professor Masharabu Tatien

Principal Secretary, National Commission for Science, Burundi

During his opening address, Professor Masharabu Tatien, the Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Science, Technology and Innovation in Burundi, candidly shared a personal anecdote. He acknowledged that his own scientific journey had been profoundly influenced by mentorship from a woman scientist. In doing so, he affirmed the commitment of both the commission and the Burundian government to actively promote innovation, reduce gender disparities, and foster inclusive education within the country.

Professor Tatien stressed the importance of utilizing the insights derived from the study to inform decision-making processes for governments and education stakeholders. He further emphasized the critical need for collaborative efforts between institutions such as APHRC, IUCEA, and their partners in the mission to empower women pursuing STEM studies and careers.

In summary, Professor Tatien's remarks not only highlighted the personal impact of mentorship but also underscored the dedication of his

commission and the Burundian government to promote positive change in the fields of science, technology, and education, with a particular focus on gender inclusivity. Additionally, he emphasized the significance of collaborative initiatives in advancing the cause of women in STEM.

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Science Technology





Dr. Jemimah Onsare

Director of Research Management at the State Department for University Education and Research

Speaking on behalf of Dr. Beatrice Muganda, the Principal Secretary for Higher Education and Research, Dr. Jemimah Onsare, the Director of Research Management at the State Department for University Education and Research, from the Ministry of Education, expanded upon the themes introduced in Dr. Kyobutungi's keynote address.

Dr. Onsare asserted that the study and the subsequent framework development were well-timed initiatives. He argued that they had the potential to make a profound impact by addressing longstanding issues related to gender inequality in higher education and by empowering women. The implication was that these efforts would open doors and opportunities for women, ultimately contributing to a more equitable and inclusive educational landscape.

She insisted that African problems needed solutions from Africans. Thus, the study and related interventions resonated well with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union that values universities as agents of innovation and economic transformation. Therefore, having proper strategies to undo

the leaky education systems is important for equitable participation of all in the development of societies.

The strategies include:

- Proper mentorship and supervision
- Addressing drops in enrollment to increase the potential of having more girls enrolling in STEM subjects.
- Developing employable skills that will address unemployment, which remains a problem in East African Countries standing at 5.5% (Kenya), 4.8% (Uganda), 2.5% (Tanzania), 1% (Burundi), and 2.1% (Rwanda).



She further observed that these had connection with low participation of women in research and limited evidence generation and uptake in policy development. Finally, she commended the efforts and collaboration of APHRC and IUCEA and the support by IDRC and expressed the readiness of the Ministry of Education to work with all the stakeholders in the course of furthering inclusive education and women empowerment.

The session was concluded with the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between APHRC and IUCEA. The East African Anthem preceded this special event. Accompanied by YouTube lyrics video, all workshop participants stood up and sang the three-stanza song in Kiswahili language.



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Science Techno ogy

5 Overview of the Project

Dr. Evelyn Gitau, the PI provided an overview of the project. She started by highlighting the contribution of the 191 projects conducted by APHRC in Africa around research, policy engagement, advocacy, and capacity building and strengthening.

Dr. Gitau also insisted that APHRC implement these projects in collaboration with other partners and cannot do it alone. She pointed out that the study was responding to the problem caused by the leaky pipeline of education that results into very few women reaching higher levels of education such as Masters and PhD. This problem appears to be much affecting the STEM related fields due to factors at personal, family, community, institutional levels, and policy levels.

Before handing to the next presenter to present the highlights from the preliminary study findings, she expressed concerns regarding data accessibility, completeness, and difficulties in getting ethical clearance that made the completion take too long in some of the countries such as Tanzania, Burundi, and Rwanda. She insisted at the end that the study is expected to help stakeholders to address issues related to supporting women to complete their studies timely and with high quality outputs and thus be able to make their PhDs have substantive developmental impact.



6 Synthesis of Country Results

Ms. Leah Mwangi, the Project Manager synthesized country results on behalf of Dr. Marta Vicente-Crespo, one of the Co-Investigators from APHRC. The results' highlights showed that in all the countries the gender distribution was unequal for both students and staff in STEM relate field with some exceptions for fields such as Agricultural Science (60%+) and Nutrition, Health, and Welfare (60%+).

The presentation by Ms. Mwangi also highlighted the factors that were found to promote women participation in STEM as well as the ones that hindered them. The promoting factors included proper mentorship and collegial communication in the course of supervision, availability of role models, and secure funding opportunities.

While the reversal of the same factors was reported to hinder women participation, additional factors such society expectations that STEM subjects were not for women, the lack of exposure to and inspiration by successful women scientists as role models, and gender insensitive policies and practices or policies and practices that do not promote gender aware supervision affected women participation in STEM related studies and careers.

In addition, Ms. Mwangi highlighted the limitations that were encountered in the process of obtaining and aligning the data including the lack of studies from Africa (in case of review of policy documents and literature), manual storage

of the data, and non-disaggregated data in some of the institutions. She also pointed out that in some of the institutions access to data, especially staff data was highly bureaucratized and thus demanding institutions themselves to filter the data and provide the data containing all variables of interest. Due to the bureaucracy, the existing quantitative dataset had some data gaps that made the analysis challenging.

Following the presentation, there were some questions and comments from participants. One of the most important comments was that the study team and APHRC need to engage with institutions to make them build the culture of producing useful data for helping them to provide evidence for decisions. Other participants questioned whether it was possible to get the demographic data of staff and students by countries, which had not been possible.

Another important question that was raised by participants was why the study involved 20 institutions and the criteria used to establish the number of institutions per country. The reasons provided included the availability of postgraduate STEM fields, membership to IUCEA, and the age/history/extent of establishment of postgraduate STEM fields in the institutions.





6.1 Country Level Proposed Elements of Supervision and Mentorship Framework

Dr. Dieudonne Uwizeye, the Collaborator from the University of Rwanda presented a summary of the components of the supervision and mentorship. Dr. Uwizeye highlighted in his presentation that the components that were cross-cutting as features of an ideal supervision were as summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Key features identified by country-level validation workshop participants to constitute an ideal supervision and mentorship framework

Ideal supervision needs to entail or to be:	Ideal mentorship needs to entail or to be:
Positive supervisor-supervisee relationship, knowledgeable supervisor, trained, expertise, available and accessible supervisor, facilitative, contractual, gender responsive, gender sensitive, existence of a big pool for choice, considering social and cultural norms, two-way and timely communication, empowering and valuing supervisees' ideas, empathetic, mutual commitment, shared end and consensual goals	Empathy, resourcefulness, advisory and strategic, positive pressure, concerned for ones' success, involving consent, available for consultation, mentee selected, formalized/contractual, mentor recognition and appreciation, positive mentee-mentor relationship, self-initiated and driven (mentee), supportive, sharing and caring, understanding, friendly, approachable, collegiality, parental, dynamic, developmental, positive attitude, encouraging

6.2 Identification of recurring elements, challenges, and opportunities across the countries

Professor Michael Mawa, the Senior Principal, Quality Assurance and Qualifications Framework from IUCEA delivered a summary presentation analyzing the recurring elements, challenges, and opportunities. His presentation started with the highlights on the gender equality status showing that there is relatively more parity at Bachelor Degree levels while disparities increase as students ascend into higher degrees.

Discipline-based disparities are also notable among the staff with more men than women in all the





institutions. These disparities are attributed to ideological and attitudinal constructions of the gender status and roles in families, societies, and institutions.

Professor Mawa identified the factors that were found to promote gender equality in STEM to include flexibility of the programs, presence of gender equality centres, parental and family support for women, changing perceptions of gender and gender stereotypes, and the availability of scholarships that specifically prioritize or target women.

On the other hand, the hindering factors were prevalent gender stereotypes, presence or lack of pools of mentors within the institutions, gender-based discrimination practices in families and institutions, lack of relevant employment opportunities for women who graduate in STEM related fields, and inequitable platforms for career progression. He further provided the analysis of the key enablers which were:

- Readiness and the practice of giving supportive feedback,
- the utilization of peer group supervision models,
- having in place mentors with the right attitudes, and
- proper intentions to develop committed and successful women into leadership roles

Professor Mawa concluded his presentation with an observation that these factors can work either separately or in combination. In some cases, can become contractual obligations of mentors and supervisors while in some contexts can be practiced as positive virtues without guidelines rather than formally defined relationship.

Following Professor Mawa's presentation, the following questions, reflections and comments were raised by participants:

- Dr. Richard Awiti from Rwanda suggested considering disability as an important dimension of gender. Another participant added to the list of enablers the practice of matching female students with women in science so that they can inspire them from the early stages of their studies.
- Another important question was whether the findings were generalizable. In this case, the clarification was provided that the generalizability would be constrained by context specific forces. However, the selected findings were the ones that were crosscutting. Participants from Rwanda shared experiences from their own institution that mentorship practices were there but not formally recognized or institutionalized.





- Culture, also, was identified as an important consideration. For example, if the culture does not approve the conduct of working close with a man, such a practice will not be accepted.
- Ms. Hilda Mushi from the Commission for Science and Technology, Tanzania had an observation that technology can be used to enhance mentorship. She also stressed the importance of linkages between Higher Learning Institutions and industry.
- Another participant questioned if the participants across the five cases and their institutions had a shared understanding of the concept of mentorship as distinguished from supervision. Responding to this, Dr. Gitau admitted that from the conception of the study, the team had taken the concept by face and more work was needed to have a comprehensive operationalization of what mentorship was and what it was not.
- Dr. Halima from the Islamic University in Uganda observed that women-specific scholarships would be a sort of discrimination. Instead, she proposed the need for other remedial initiatives such as the ways of supporting child care for women scientists so that they can concentrate on their studies instead of focusing on the child. She also added that scholarship providers needed to be flexible on the age eligibility for Masters and PhD scholarship to allow women who decide to start studies late due to reproductive roles to access scholarship opportunities.
- Dr. Charles Hamis from Uganda Martyrs University questioned the measurability of the constructs used to characterize the ideal supervision and mentorship framework such as empathy, commitment, positive relationship. He also questioned why the conception of gender was limited to biological differences between men and women. Dr. Flora Karimi, the Co-Investigator responded that it was important to go back and relook at those concepts in the course of developing the framework.

The deliberation on the session ended up with a recognition by participants that it was important to have a framework to guide supervision and mentorship at institutional and regional level. The institutionalization of the framework needed to take into account context specific factors including cultural beliefs and norms, institutional structures, and resources.

7 Framework Development Session and Activities

This session was the core of the workshop. It had several sub-sessions that focused on different aspects of the proposed supervision and mentorship framework and hands on activities that covered almost 90% of the time allocated for the workshop within the two days. For a keen follow up, we will further divide the session into several sub-sessions as follows:

7.1 Determination and Documentation of Success Factors

This session took form of group work where participants were assigned to 5 groups using systematic random counting from 1 to 5. All participants who counted the same number were assigned to the same group forming five groups of 6 to 8 (some had additional members who were not in the venue during the counting). Professor Mawa, Dr. Uwizeye, and Dr. Karimi provided instructional clarifications on what the groups were supposed to do.

Each group had to reflect on the presentations provided regarding the components of the framework that were proposed during the country validation workshops that could generically be themed under identified codes such as resources, quality control, management, stakeholder engagement, and others (or cross cutting issues).

Members in each of the groups had to discuss, identify and list down on the flip chart the variables they thought should best characterize a component they have been assigned. After discussion and listing down the points, the members of each group had to mount their flip chart in a specific corner of the room and move to the flip chart prepared by the next group (lets say group 1 moved to group 2's flip chart).



*Dr. Dieudonne Uwizeye
providing clarification on
the framework
development exercise*



Using colored stick notes, the members of each group would agree (green), disagree (red), or suggest otherwise, or comment) on each of the point provided in the list. The process of rotating continued until the groups had rotated around all the five groups' flip charts.

Each of the groups had to take its flip chart and look at the reaction and comments that were unanimously provided by the other groups. The group members had to further discuss and develop a revised lists of the success factors for their assigned components taking into consideration the reactions and comments from the members of the other groups. Following the completion of this assignment, each group selected a member to present on its behalf. Presentations were made and groups received reactions from participants.



Section photos of a groups critiquing and commenting on the other groups' flip charts during the rotation Process.



7.2 Development of the principles, standards, and guidelines

Following the presentation and comments, each of the groups was assigned to develop the principles, standards, and detailed guidelines. The groups had to use the IUCEA's Standards and Guidelines for Postgraduate Studies in East Africa 2018 as examples. This exercise continued to the end of Day 1, which was marked by a Networking Cocktail and Joint Dinner at Radisson Blu Hotel.

7.3 Presentation of the categorized components of the framework

After the arrival registration that went up to 09:00 hours, the groups that had some pending works were given 40 minutes to work towards completion of the pending work. Facilitated by Dr. Dieudonne Uwizeye and Ms. Leah Mwangi, each group presented its component showing the general principle, standards, and specific guidelines as well as the role of institutional, regional, and regulatory actors in the operationalization and implementation of the framework component. All the five groups presented and received comments from the rest of the participants.

7.4 Country teams' contextualization of the framework

This session, which was facilitated by Dr. Dieudonne Uwizeye focused on the assessment of the applicability of the key supervision and mentorship components by country teams. Delegates from each of the five countries were assigned in a group to discuss, agree, and document major actionable suggestions they thought would apply well to their own contexts. In the process, the teams were required to specify the specific actors and how they would facilitate the implementation of the framework components. One member was selected for each country group to list down the agreed points and send them to the workshop secretariat.

After 32 minutes of the discussion, the selected members of the country teams presented the key points they had prepared.

The following issues were commonly articulated (either directly or indirectly) in all the five country teams' presentations:

- There should be regular training for supervisors (organized by institutions and their management)
- Institutions are required to have budgets for implementing capacity building initiatives to support supervision and graduate students' research (especially women).
- Establishing and strengthening systems and mechanisms for regular and timely monitoring and evaluating of supervision and mentorship
- Co-supervision of students across institutions should be encouraged
- Establishing strong academy-industry linkage since STEM stretches beyond academy to the industry.
- Raising awareness of the stakeholders including students and institutions on the need and



importance of mentorship.

- There is a need to pool efforts and resources among higher education institutions in order to leverage their capacities to meet the unmet supervision and mentorship needs such as labs, supervisors, etc
- Mentorship should be institutionalized, recognized and rewarded in any appropriate and possible ways.
- There should be more scholarships and grants that target women scientists both within institutions and by lobbying funders to prioritize women.
- Stakeholder engagement is a prerequisite for the successful initiation and implementation of gender empowerment framework components at all levels (institutional, national, and regional)
- The need to have in place and enforce harmonious policies and guidelines for ensuring gender equality and equity as well as policy measures to ensure effective supervision and mentorship
- Both supervision and mentorship should be gender responsive and culturally sensitive
- Sustainability measures and strategies are crucial in order to make the framework a long-term solution for promoting gender equality and women empowerment
- Leveraging resources available in different professional associations and industry should be used to address and bridge the gap that exist due to the limited availability of mentors. Through such platforms, mentees can be matched with potential mentors
- In a summing up remark, Dr. Salome Guchu, the Principal Innovation and Outreach Officer from IUCEA summarized the key issues required to include need assessment, allocation of resources, formal supervision and mentorship policies, collaborations and networks, follow up, and sustainability measures



8 Next Steps and Way Forward

This closing session was facilitated by Dr. Flora Karimi and Professor Michael Mawa. Towards the closure, Dr. Karimi appreciated the strong participation and commitment that participants had revealed through the two days. She vowed that APHRC and the study team would continue to rely on the commitment of the participants towards making the framework work for the benefit of all.

Professor Michael Mawa maintained that the framework was for all the participating members and their institutions. Therefore, each and everybody had a responsibility of taking it further to the success. He invited teams and individuals to be ready to contribute in the future. He acknowledged that one of the unresolved issues that needed further discussion had been on the definition of mentorship. He proceeded and provided the issues that needed to follow after the workshop with tentative deadlines as follows:

Issue at hand		Timeline
1	APHRC to consolidate the framework and share it with the participants and other stakeholders for inputs,	September 30, 2023
2	An online validation of the framework	October 30, 2023
3	Submission of the draft framework to the IUCEA Quality Assurance Committee for review and consideration	November 30, 2023
4	Approval of the framework by the IUCEA Board	December 30, 2023
5	Selection and preparation for piloting the framework in selected institutions in each country	December 30, 2023-February 2024
6	Piloting of the framework implementation and feedback	March 1, 2024-July 30, 2024



9 CONCLUSION

This brief report has summarized the key proceedings of the co-creation and validation workshop that was conducted in Nairobi on 31st August and 1st September 2023. Informed by both the observation of the rapporteur and the evaluation by workshop participants, there is no doubt that the workshop was successfully organized and conducted. The workshop included both a succinct synthesis of the study essence, how it was executed, the initial findings presentation, and the findings' validation and input for the framework from previous validation workshops that were conducted in the study countries. This made it easy for the participants to understand and provide valuable inputs. The interest and commitment of the participants in providing inputs was maintained through the use of motivating facilitation approaches that kept the participants motivated, interested, and inspired to come up with the final output: the framework for supervision and mentorship.

In all aspects and sessions of the workshop, it was observed that gender equality in higher education and particularly in STEM postgraduate studies and related careers is a matter of concern. It was clear that guided efforts beyond an individual institution are required to address the complex social, cultural, and economic constraints that affect women's opportunities and equal chance for progression in higher degrees and related careers. Therefore, the workshop revealed its importance as a way of coming up with a relevant, legitimate, and context friendly strategy for promoting gender equality and improving the quality of supervision and mentorship experiences for women in STEM postgraduate studies and careers. What may be predicted from the participants' passion and willingness to contribute during the co-creation workshop is the increased chances for gaining the support of more stakeholders during the piloting and scaling of the framework-related interventions at institutional, country, and regional levels.





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