

Executive Director's Bulletin

Special Edition

    @aphrc



Greetings from the Executive Director's desk!

After a brief lull, I am happy to share some highlights of my engagements in the last and first couple of months of 2025 and 2026, respectively. I took advantage of being in the same country with key funders and partners to pay them a visit and explore opportunities for collaboration. The goal of the visits was to acknowledge their ongoing support, express our gratitude for their continued confidence in the Center's work, learn about their current strategies in light of the geopolitical shifts, and identify opportunities for APHRC.

During these meetings, I discussed the Center's vision within our rapidly changing environment and gathered valuable feedback on emerging ideas and collaborative opportunities. The visits provided an opportunity to share updates on our work, while learning more about our partners' current and future strategies.

This is a special edition Bulletin covering highlights from December 2025 through January 2026. It provides high-level updates on emerging ideas and opportunities from the funders' and partners' visits that may be pursued by various teams at APHRC.

Meeting with partners

December 1-2, 2025



Patricia C. Vaughan
Co-President,
Population Council



James Sailer
Co-President,
Population Council



Population Council: I met with Pat Vaughan and Jim Sailer to discuss potential joint ventures. We focused on legacy initiatives such as the GIRL Center and health in humanitarian settings, as well as a potential joint initiative on reframing the discussion on demographic shifts in Africa and Asia.

guttmacher



Dr. Onikepe Owolabi
Vice President for
International Research,
Guttmacher Institute

Guttmacher Institute: I met Dr. Onikepe Owolabi, Vice President for International Research at the Guttmacher Institute. While the Institute is not a funder, they remain a strong collaborator on our sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) work. Our discussions centered on developing joint proposals to upscale areas of mutual interest. There is also interest in collaborating with researchers working on demographic transitions and climate. I am confident that concrete plans will emerge from follow-up discussions with the relevant teams at the Center.



Wafaa El-Sadr
Executive Vice President of
Columbia Global and
University Professor of
Epidemiology and Medicine



I concluded my visit at **Columbia University**, where I was hosted by our board member, Delivette Castor. During the visit, I met with Wafaa El-Sadr, Executive Vice President of Columbia Global and University Professor of Epidemiology and Medicine. As a result of this meeting, we have already initiated discussions regarding a potential partnership. I also gave a talk titled *"Safeguarding Africa's Health Gains Amid Funding Cuts: Beyond Catastrophising."* The talk is part of an effort to shift the narrative about the recent funding cuts from doom and gloom to a more positive one focused on opportunities. More details [here](#).

Meeting with Various Funders

December 1-3, 2025



Rockefeller Foundation: I met Naveen Rao, Senior Vice President for Health Initiative, and Sara Farley, Vice President, Global Food Portfolio. We explored participatory community approaches within the climate-health nexus, specifically regarding agroecological practices and the role of African knowledge systems in global health architecture. Our goal is to connect APHRC to the Accra Initiative on Africa Health Sovereignty (Accra Reset) and explore partnerships with the Foundation's Kenya office, particularly through our Nutrition and Food Systems unit.



Carnegie Corporation of New York: I met with Tade Aina, Senior Program Director. Given Carnegie's long-term support of the CARTA program, we agreed that I would share a concept note on the importance of African knowledge systems in a reformed global health architecture. This will complement the ongoing work by APHRC and Science for Africa Foundation (SFA) on repositioning African research and academic institutions in global health conversations.

**Bloomberg
Philanthropies**



Neena Prasad
*Director of Food Policy and
Maternal and Reproductive
Health Programs, Bloomberg
Philanthropies*



Kristine Momanyi
*Public Health, Bloomberg
Philanthropies*

Bloomberg Philanthropies: I met Neena Prasad, Director of Food Policy and Maternal and Reproductive Health Programs, and Kristine Momanyi from the Public Health Team at Bloomberg Philanthropies. My presentation covered the Center's intermediary role in making South-South connections, our capacity strengthening programs, including CARTA, and our fund management role.

January 13-15, 2026

Gates Foundation

Gates Foundation: The visit to the Gates Foundation took place on January 13-15, 2026. The visit started with a "learning session". This is usually intended to introduce a grantee to the wider Foundation staff, but since most Program Officers already know APHRC, I spoke about the need for "*A stronger African Knowledge System in a Reformed Global Health Architecture.*" The talk was very well received and is shaping further conversations about the Center's envisaged role as an ecosystem catalyst and enabler.

I later recorded an interview that will be included in training resources for Program Officers (POs) at the Gates Foundation to help them support grantees better. I focused on the need for strong trust relationships, and POs' responsibility to deeply understand a grantee's vision and strategy. The latter is essential in facilitating connections between the grantee and other Program Officers to ensure a more comprehensive coverage of the grantee's strategy and hence greater chances of achieving impact.

I met with Linda Patterson, Deputy Director for Exemplars in Global Health, to learn more about their background, approach, and role in driving impact. Moving forward, APHRC will explore opportunities to embed the Exemplars in Health initiative within the Countdown to 2030 work and other initiatives on strengthening health data systems. There are opportunities to enhance the Exemplars work, e.g., by identifying priority issues from national decision-makers that can then be examined using the Exemplars methodology; integrating analytic



Linda Patterson
Deputy Director for
Exemplars in Global Health,
Gates Foundation

outputs into policy, strategy, and program design; and applying this approach at the sub-national level.

I met Emily Dansereau, Senior Program Officer for Global Development, to discuss the inclusion of survey innovation within the post-DHS (Demographic and Health Survey) strategy. This strategic shift suggests a broader scope for innovation, potentially including:

- Improving the speed and efficiency of conducting surveys.
- Integrating multi-modal data (e.g., data fusion of HDSS (Health and Demographic Surveillance System), DHIS II (District Health Information Software/System), and DHS) and exploring the role of non-classical datasets in generating health insights, including lessons from the Countdown to 2030 initiative.
- Identifying health areas where DHS data is less effective or necessary, which could lead to a leaner DHS and an enhanced role for alternative data sources.
- Advancing innovations across the entire data value chain beyond collection.



Emily Dansereau
Senior Program Officer for
Global Development,
Gates Foundation

These developments present numerous opportunities for engagement across several of our research programs. APHRC has since submitted a concept note to her on how the Center can contribute to developing a program of work around data system innovations.



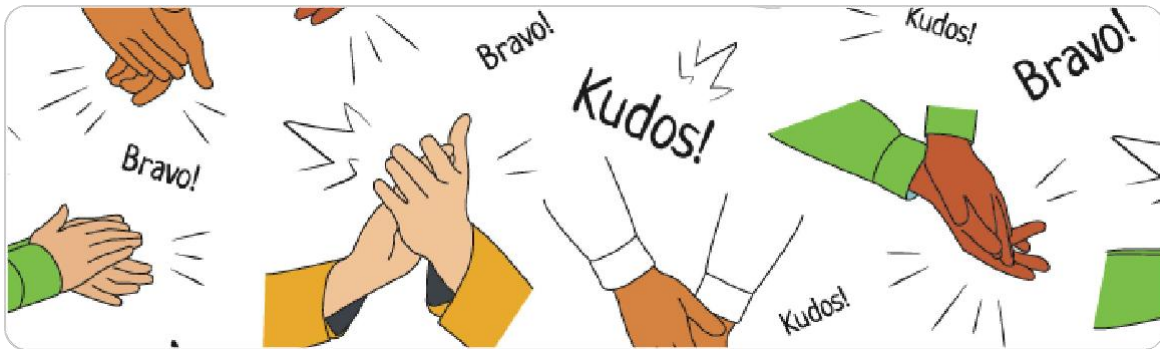
Cynthia Mwase
Director of Health, Africa,
Gates Foundation

Lastly, I met with Cynthia Mwase, Director of Health, Africa. As you know, the Foundation is one of APHRC's primary funders. The Foundation is currently interested in a more integrated approach, moving toward a coherent, joined-up proposition that aligns our various workstreams. To meet this preference for "joined-up thinking," we need to reorient and realign APHRC's strategy so that our ideas provide utility across multiple program strategy teams. The Foundation's goal is to combine multiple concept notes into a single organizing framework that addresses priorities across its various departments. Several of our teams are already collaborating to implement this new engagement approach.

Finally, our recent engagements have resulted in several promising opportunities and new connections. I am confident that we will harness this goodwill and move with urgency to tap into these initiatives, which offer a valuable way to synergize our efforts.

Overall, the visits to various funders and partners were useful in providing a better understanding of their strategy and ways of working. They have also opened up new opportunities for collaboration and spurred a new way of working. In line with our Systems Thinking strategy, the Center is challenged to adopt "joined-up" thinking while designing projects.

Kudos Corner



My kudos go to all of us for exhibiting a highly collaborative spirit in the face of a highly challenging funding environment in 2025. We gave up a few perks, worked extra hard in fundraising, worked on projects that we would rather not have worked on, filled time sheets and LoE forms diligently, ensured that we implemented projects to the extent possible, and ramped up the burn rates, among others. In the end, we kept our heads above water in 2025 and have started in a relatively strong financial position.

As I mentioned in my address to staff during the February staff meeting, we are poised to move from surviving in 2025 to thriving in 2026.

One Last Thing....

With guidance from the Visibility team, the format of this Bulletin will change going forward. Look out for a fresh and (hopefully) more exciting format in the coming weeks.



Please share your feedback on the bulletin to executive-director@aphrc.org

C. Kyobutungi

Catherine Kyobutungi

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