


pasgr.org

PARTNERSHIP FOR AFRICAN SOCIAL
& GOVERNANCE RESEARCH



BUILDING RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FOR PUBLIC POLICY
2014-2018 STRATEGIC PLAN



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BUILDING RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FOR PUBLIC POLICY
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MISSION

Advancing research excellence for governance
and public policy in Africa.

VISION

A vibrant African social science community
addressing the continent's public policy issues.

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

HEP	Higher Education Programme
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
MMRC	Multi-Method Research Course
MRPP	Master of Research and Public Policy
PASGR	Partnership for African Social and Governance Research
PDT	Professional Development and Training Programme
RP	Research Programme

NOTE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TAKE-OFF AND THE WAY AHEAD

The 2014-2018 period covered by this Strategic Plan signifies the “take-off moment” for the Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR).

The Plan builds on a strong foundation laid over four years since PASGR’s establishment in 2009, to provide the road map for the realisation of our vision of *a vibrant African social science community addressing the continent’s public policy issues*.

This Strategic Plan is the result of the collaborative effort of the PASGR community, comprising staff at all levels, the Board of Directors and our partners, who contributed to its development in one way or another. It came out of key participatory processes, including an all-staff retreat, a Board of Directors’ retreat and discussions among staff and some of our partners. In putting together the Plan, we also took advice from a major external review conducted in 2013, as well as periodic reviews of the programmes by staff and partners. The Plan will guide our work over the next four years as we consolidate the gains of PASGR’s foundational years, which were simply remarkable.

In just four years, PASGR has emerged as a reputable pan-African organisation focusing on social science research, higher education and short term professional development. It begun as an idea to strengthen research capacity in the social sciences in Africa after the Commission of Africa Report of 2006/2007 noted that a ‘state of crisis’ existed in African social science institutions,

reflected in diminishing resources, declining academic standards, falling outputs and limited engagement in domestic policy formulation.

Today, the building blocks of our three key programmes — Higher Education, Professional Development and Training, and Research — are firmly in place after successful design and piloting. The Higher Education Programme has launched in eight of our twelve partner universities, while more than 500 researchers, academics and policy actors have benefitted from our package of short courses offered by the Professional Training and Development Programme. Under our Research Programme, 33 grants have been made to researchers and academics.

PASGR’s programme work is premised on the firm belief that evidence-based knowledge, derived from rigorous research for effective public policy, is central to state building and national development, and is a key governance issue. PASGR therefore believes in providing the technical tools and competencies, as well as strong research skills, to address society’s problems through effective public policy.

The programmes link capacity building and excellence with awareness raising about the role and importance of rigorous research for effective policy, and policy outreach to research consumers and policy actors.

At PASGR, we are also firm believers in the power of partnerships. All our programmes are anchored in partnerships; all our work is driven by partnerships.

In the Higher Education Programme, which is aimed at strengthening graduate-level teaching and practice of social science research and public policy, we are partnering with 12 universities in seven countries to deliver a collaborative Master of Research and Public Policy (MRPP).

In the Professional Development and Training Programme, we provide a range of short-term courses for different audiences in the African research, academic and policy communities. This includes the popular Multi-Method Research Course (MMRC), delivered in eight modules over 21 days of intensive residential training, and targeted training to strengthen the capacity of public policy actors as research consumers and data users. Apart from training individual researchers and policy actors, we are developing partnerships with universities, regional organisations and civil society organisations to further refine, develop and deliver these courses.

In the Research Programme, PASGR works with African social scientists to produce high quality governance research that addresses critical social and public policy issues and questions. Our partners in the Research Programme include research institutes such as the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) of the University of Nairobi and regional professional associations such as the African Association of Public Management (AAPAM).

Our work is defined by excellence and quality at the highest international standards, innovative programme delivery and attention to gender equity and diversity, guided by the principles of integrity and financial probity.

These core values and principles will continue to guide our work into the programme cycle covered by this Plan.

Moving forward, we will seek strategic and sustainable partnerships by strengthening the existing ones and forging new ones. We are building a community of practice and thought, in excellent research and innovative high quality training, with the PASGR secretariat as a key facilitator.

We hope to measure the impact of our work...by how evidence is translated from research into social and public policy that addresses the current and future key development needs of Africa.

PASGR's priorities include: creative outreach and communication to research and policy communities; rigorous quality control across all programmes; and institutional and financial sustainability.

We hope to measure the impact of our work, not by the number of people who benefit from PASGR's programmes, but by how evidence is translated from research into social and public policy that addresses the current and future key development needs of Africa.

We are looking forward to the journey of the next four years, cognisant of the fact that it will depend on how well we work with partners to translate findings of rigorous research into effective policy action that has a positive impact on the lives of Africans.

Tade Aina
Executive Director

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Strategic Plan defines PASGR's journey over the next four years as it works towards its vision to become 'a vibrant African social science community addressing the continent's public policy issues'.

During this period, PASGR will continue to focus on achieving its key objectives in three main results areas: Higher Education; Professional Development and Training; and Research.

The core objectives are to: (i) Establish and sustain partnerships at national/regional and international levels for advancing research and training, (ii) Facilitate the creation of policy and research communities, (iii) Facilitate the institutionalisation of a research culture in Africa's universities and research organisations.

The foundation for each of the programmes has been laid in the inaugural programme cycle, and this new phase will be used to boost and take to the next level those initiatives that have proved successful, and to redesign where necessary.

BEYOND THE MASTERS PROGRAMME

In the Higher Education Programme, PASGR will, while strengthening the Master of Research and Public Policy, initiate projects and activities that enhance African research excellence in higher education, particularly in the social and political sciences. In this regard, a key

activity under consideration is to begin exploring with African universities how to strengthen their current doctoral offerings. PASGR will therefore focus on two key activities: the first aimed at strengthening the current MRPP Programme through staff capacity enhancements and transformation of individual philosophies towards teaching and learning; catalysing a community of practice around the MRPP; and, monitoring and evaluating programme delivery. The second focuses on designing and launching a doctoral programme in social and public policy with a handful of both current and new institutional partners.

EXPERIENTIAL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The Professional Development and Training Programme, whose priority is to facilitate the creation of policy and research communities, will seek to: (i) deliver experiential professional development that builds policy actors' and researchers' skills and competencies; and (ii) deepen delivery partners' institutional capacity to design and offer high quality professional development courses.

Overall, the programme will continue developing training modules and opportunities to offer courses in various configurations to different audiences. In this programme cycle, for sustainability, it will determine with delivery partners a multi-year plan for collaboration on the design, delivery and accreditation of professional development courses. This will include a funding strategy that will be driven by the collaboration.

SHIFT IN THEMATIC FOCUS

The next four years will see a shift in thematic focus and modes of delivery of the Research Programme. The thematic focus will be broadened from a social policy perspective to one that addresses developmental challenges, with an eye on their implications for public policy. PASGR will also seek to institutionalise research for policy uptake by facilitating communities of practice in the countries where it conducts research. During this phase, attention will be on three research themes: Urban Governance and Turning African Cities Around; Varieties of Modes of Governance and Inclusive Development; and Governance, Social Policy and Social Protection in Africa.

NEW UNIT

Lastly, in recognition of the central role of communications and policy outreach as crosscutting issues, a unit will be created with a mandate to support all programmes, as well as undertake institutional and other communications for PASGR. A Communications Strategy is being developed to guide the unit's work.

All three programme areas will work in harmony towards achieving PASGR's desired impact, namely governance and social and public policy improvements; gender equity and diversity, and the inclusiveness of marginalised communities (including societies coming out of conflict). These will be integrated into all programmes, at all the stages.

PILLAR OF EXCELLENCE

PASGR is built on a pillar of excellent and rigorous evidence-based research for public policy uptake. This presupposes unrelenting attention to tracking, monitoring and evaluation, and measuring performance against agreed outputs and outcomes.

In the period covered by this Strategic Plan, PASGR will continuously develop tools, systems and a culture that emphasises and integrates a robust Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) system that has the necessary and relevant baseline information, indicators and targets.

ABOUT US

The Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) is an independent, non-partisan pan-African not-for-profit organisation established in 2011 and located in Nairobi, Kenya.

Currently engaged in more than 12 African countries, PASGR works to enhance research excellence in governance and public policy that contributes to the overall wellbeing of women and men. In partnership with individual academics and researchers, higher education institutions, research think tanks, civil society organisations, business and policy communities both in the region and internationally, PASGR supports the production and dissemination of policy relevant research; designs and delivers suites of short professional development courses for researchers and policy actors; and facilitates the development of collaborative higher education programmes.

Our vision is *'a vibrant African social science community addressing the continent's public policy issues'*. PASGR's three core programmes bring together the right mix of universities, research institutions, government, policy actors, researchers and academics to:

- Establish and sustain partnerships at national/regional and international levels for advancing research, higher education and training;
- Facilitate the creation of policy and research communities;
- Enhance the institutionalisation of a research culture in Africa's universities and research organisations; and,
- Coordinate a collaborative Master of Research and Public Policy with universities in Africa.

OUR STRATEGIC SETTING

PASGR was conceived around 2008 and started as a project by the UK Department for International Development (DFID) in 2009 to address three crucial aspects of African higher education, governance and public policy.

The first was the critical deficit in social science capacity for effective and high quality training and research that addresses governance and public policy issues in Africa using the best practices and the highest quality of social science theory and methods available.

Second, with the fall of the "Iron Curtain" in the 1990s, the global movement around political liberalisation and democratic governance also became a central element of African politics and governing. The 1990s was the era of transitions for many African countries, from authoritarian rule of one type or other to new forms of competitive electoral politics. Democratic governance in various forms of electoral politics, legal transitions, the presence of some democratic institutions, such as parliaments, the executive, the judiciary and new constitutions, became the norm. This new dispensation called for public accountability, transparency, the rule of law, increasing devolution and decentralisation of governments to take services closer to the citizens. It also raised a regime of internationally accepted rights and a commitment to performance. The demand for performance and delivery by governments at different levels in the era of competitive electoral politics led to the need for evidence-based public

policy and its delivery mechanisms, as well as rigorous monitoring and evaluation processes, the collection, analysis and presentation of evidence, and the use of theories that predict behaviour, processes, systems and actions.

The final element is that in the globalised world, African governments have committed themselves to norms, agreements and compacts, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the emerging post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals. There is need for evidence from research to address issues such as poverty reduction, the quality of life for ordinary citizens and the most vulnerable, as well as issues of inclusion and growth, citizen safety and security, access to employment and sustainable livelihoods, climate change and the provision, maintenance and functioning of basic services.

Also, social policy as a key element of public policy for inclusive development, participatory democracies and just societies is an undisputable element of sustainable and equitable development today.

While a number of vehicles had been established to undertake economic research to address these realities, there still exists a gap in social and political science research that informs public policy for effective governance. This was articulated in the Commission for Africa Report 2006/2007, which described a “state of crisis” in African social sciences, reflected in diminishing resources, declining academic standards, falling outputs and limited engagement in domestic policy formulation.

Central to the poor state of social sciences in Africa is the condition of universities on the continent. They face the common challenges of rapidly rising student numbers not proportionally matched by rising staff numbers; slower growth rates for postgraduate student numbers; significant weaknesses in thesis supervision and poor completion rates (especially at PhD level); persistent gender barriers that inhibit female participation in doctoral education, research and teaching; a looming age cohort challenge with large numbers of teaching staff over 50 years old and nearing retirement; significant weaknesses in research skills and knowledge of graduates from Masters level programmes; and, research activities being crowded out by teaching and administrative loads as well as pressures to undertake supplementary income generation, such as consultancies and teaching at private universities.

WHAT WE DO

PASGR was founded to provide high quality research, higher education and short term professional development that advance and inform relevant social and public policy. Its aim is to address the twin elements of remediation and excellence in social sciences and public policy research in Africa.

PASGR seeks to not only build capacity and enhance excellence, but also create awareness around the need to put governance, social policy and social development at the centre of public policy practice and theory. Thus social and public policy institutions that address inclusion, employment, youth, gender, education, social protection, climate change and sustainable

development need to be reworked to be accessible to trained professionals in the field.

The social and political sciences in Africa today have the opportunity and tasks of contributing to more rigorous and effective policies and debates through high quality research, training and higher education. This is what PASGR sets out to do.

A SUCCESS STORY

PASGR has made significant achievements in its first phase of operation: notably the development of a collaborative Masters programme, professional development activities for researchers and university teaching staff, a number of research projects, and participation in the post-MDGs discussion. A 2013

independent External Review of PASGR, commissioned by the Board, noted that the organisation was establishing a niche in the field of social science research.

VISION

PASGR's vision is a vibrant African social science community addressing the continent's public policy issues

MISSION

PASGR's mission is advancing research excellence for governance and public policy in Africa.

OBJECTIVES

In the next four years, PASGR will seek to achieve seven strategic objectives in pursuit of its organisational priorities:

- Establish and sustain partnerships at national/ regional and international levels for advancing research and training by 2018
- Facilitate the creation of policy and research communities
- Develop and implement a robust monitoring and evaluation system
- Facilitate the institutionalisation of a research culture in universities and research organisations
- Diversify funding and revenue sources
- Establish effective internal processes for organisational development
- Develop strategies that advance the recognition and identity of the organisation



Integrity and financial probity

Responsiveness

Gender equity & inclusiveness

Results-orientation

Drive for excellence

CORE VALUES

NICHE AREAS

The following set PASGR apart from other similar organisations:

- i. It is **pan-African** in reach and thought.

PASGR's vision is of a vibrant African social science community addressing public policy and governance issues. All its three key pillars are pan-African in outlook as they strive to achieve the organisation's vision.

- ii. It is **innovative** in its unique pedagogy, use of technology and focus.

The professional development and higher education work contains strong elements of alternative pedagogy in programme delivery. Both the MRPP and PDT courses use the most current advances in adult learning to maximise learning outcomes. This consists of optimum manageable classroom sizes; interactive learning that include role playing; the case approach; e-Cases; participative learning and several new pedagogical approaches that transcend the old classical modes of delivering learning and teaching.

PASGR is also integrating technology into all its work by using web-based interactive processes and various forms of technology-enhanced learning. A key element of the latter is the emphasis on a Digital PASGR; a PASGR that seeks and integrates technological innovations into its training, higher education, research and policy uptake and outreach work.

iii. Excellence and quality in research and training.

PASGR strives for the highest standards of excellence in its work in research, higher education and in training. We strive to attain the best international practices, gain currency in knowledge, content, processes and methods and be relevant and competitive both within Africa and internationally.

iv. Partnership approach to work.

PASGR is built on partnerships between the secretariat, universities, individual researchers, think tanks, public policy institutions, funders and other stakeholders. The Higher Education Programme that is in partnership with 12 universities exemplifies this approach.

v. Relevance for Public Policy

Policy relevance through high quality social sciences is our *raison d'être*. PASGR strives to build elements of policy impact into its work right from inception to its conclusion. It is testing processes that include

working with outreach vehicles to the different policy communities in research, higher education and training. PASGR has also started to include selected policy actors into different phases of its work, including the design phase, and re-examining the pipeline of the delivery of different activities to integrate policy actors more effectively.

...what PASGR brings and promises in the current context of African politics and economies is a rigorous and excellence-driven social science research, higher education and short term professional development for public policy on the continent.

Overall, what PASGR brings and promises in the current context of African politics and economies is a rigorous and excellence-driven social science research, higher education and short term professional development for public policy on the continent. For this, the organisation plans to mobilise researchers, university partners, policy actors, communities and institutions, development agencies and funders (both within Africa and the international community) to work with as partners to contribute to building capacities and knowledge in the social sciences for effective and transformative social and public policy in Africa.

OUR STRATEGIC APPROACH

Over the next four years, PASGR's work will continue to focus on its three key programmes: Higher Education, Professional Development and Training, and Research. The strategic direction these programmes take will be informed by the success achieved over the last four years, and the lessons learned, guided by the agreed priorities for each of the result areas.

HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMME

In the Higher Education Programme, PASGR works with African universities to strengthen graduate-level teaching and practice of social science research and public policy. Currently, PASGR is working with 12 universities in seven countries to deliver a collaborative Master of Research and Public Policy (MRPP).

The graduate programme, with a dual focus on social science research and public policy, is a two-year full time course that includes a thesis and field experience. The programme uses highly participatory teaching and learning activities, with emphasis on group work, individual and group projects and e-Case studies. It has attracted a rich mix of students across multiple disciplines interested in pursuing or advancing careers in research/university teaching or policy practice.

By March 2015, eight of the 12 universities had launched the programme. This followed an approval by all 12 universities in 2013, and the signing of

memoranda of understanding between PASGR and the partner universities that set out mutual commitments and responsibilities, as well as the process for inclusion of additional universities.

In its development and implementation, the MRPP has involved some notable innovations: skills enhancement in curriculum development, innovative pedagogy and development of interactive teaching materials. The enhanced capacities of teaching staff as well as teaching and learning materials are benefiting other university programmes taught by MRPP lecturers. Further, some universities have recruited additional academic staff to teach on the programme, a development that also underlines the multiplier effect of the MRPP.

It is noteworthy that the MRPP has a strong convening power across social science departments that inspires a community of practice within individual universities and across the partnership. Teaching staff are networked; participating in staff exchanges and collaborative research activities; and, sharing teaching and learning materials. PASGR has provided a range of curriculum delivery support materials including core texts, e-Cases, role play scripts, and IT equipment and software. Teachers have also played a critical role in augmenting the available teaching and learning materials by identifying but also developing and sharing role play scripts, case studies, journals, policy documents and data sets.

LESSONS LEARNED

Developing and launching the programme has not been without its challenges. However, the lessons learned will guide the programme in the next phase. These critical lessons can be summarised as follows:

- Experience has shown that inclusive, participatory processes take time and cannot be rushed without cost. For example, the course design could have been developed faster using “experts” and the inclusion of “northern” universities, but this would have jeopardised the sense of ownership and commitment by the African teaching staff.
- PASGR’s role as a catalyst and facilitator could encourage long-term dependency on PASGR as the programme becomes operational.
- The process should be viewed as a long-term undertaking.
- The expectation that each university will assume responsibility for meeting ongoing operational costs is likely crucial to the sustainability of the programme.

THE WAY FORWARD: 2014 – 2018

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Launch the MRPP and catalyse delivery of a high quality programme
- Develop active communities of practice around MRPP
- Facilitate MRPP visibility and institutional sustainability
- Explore a new doctoral initiative

At inception, the strategic objectives of the Higher Education Programme focused on pursuing “*formal partnerships among African universities on masters and/or doctoral programmes*”. Following extensive consultation with universities, the masters-level programme was created that focused exclusively on facilitating the design and launch of the collaborative Master of Research and Public Policy (MRPP).

It is now timely for PASGR to start examining what else it can do that would enhance African higher education in the social and political sciences. The focus of the Higher Education Programme over the next four years will be the launching of the MRPP in the remaining universities, as well as its roll-out into others, including Francophone countries. PASGR in this programme phase will initiate consultations and meetings with Francophone and bi-lingual institutions, conduct site visits and begin the development of a Francophone MRPP framework.

PASGR will need to incrementally reduce its financial footprints in the MRPP by helping to enable an MRPP-driven fundraising strategy to support ongoing collaborative activities, such as research and curriculum enhancements. It will also support universities to develop sustainability and institutionalisation plans for the MRPP.

Additionally, once the MRPP is fully operationalised in the twelve universities, the Higher Education Programme will start work towards a doctoral initiative.

PASGR will therefore source resources to begin exploring with African universities how best to enhance their current doctoral offerings within the framework of existing discipline-based doctoral programmes, through some form of collaboration with other regional universities.

The strategic objectives will be realised through the following core activities:

1. Collaborative Master of Research and Public Policy (MRPP)

- Upgrading of teaching staff directly involved in MRPP delivery
- Start-up implementation support for progressive roll-out of newly-designed courses
- Completion of programme launch
- Mechanisms for sustaining collaboration around content, pedagogy, quality, marketing and possible programme enhancements
- Doctoral upgrading for teaching staff
- Inclusion of other universities
- Planning for sustainability and institutionalisation of the MRPP

2. New Doctoral Programme Initiative

The initiative's design should:

- Consider the relevance to specific disciplines
- Build on or leverage investment in MRPP and MMRC content in development of courses and pedagogy
- Include MRPP universities and possible new groups of universities
- Be seen as attractive and useful to African universities
- Take into account prospective new sources of financial support.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND TRAINING PROGRAMME

This programme area, which originally incorporated policy outreach and communication, was conceptualised to focus on four broad activities – building awareness about PASGR among the African policy community to generate interest in and demand for research; strengthening the ability of PASGR-supported researchers and educators to build effective relationships with the policy community at the national level; channelling support to researchers and teaching staff in countries or organisations that are unable to participate in other PASGR programmes; and, marketing the activities and research of PASGR corporately and on a programme-by-programme basis.

Over the past three years, the Professional Development and Training (PDT) programme has led PASGR's efforts in work around Development Data, the Data Revolution and the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Initially conceived as a convening forum and capacity building platform for researchers around emerging issues in the Data Revolution and Post-2015 Development Agenda, this work is increasingly becoming cross-programmatic with inputs that straddle research, training, policy forums and higher education.

However, the main focus has been on the provision of a range of high quality professional development courses for different audiences in African research, academic and policy communities.

The flagship of the Professional Development and Training programme is the Multi-Method Research Course (MMRC) delivered in eight modules over 21 days of intensive residential training. The programme also provides targeted training to strengthen the capacity of public policy actors as research consumers and data users.

The Informed Research Consumers module targets public policy actors and seeks to help them distinguish between good and bad research. It also offers practical experience on how to inject research evidence into policy processes and in subsequent enactment.

Increasingly, the short term professional development and training is evolving with two components: (i) the researcher-centred component that builds and enhances research capacity for emerging early and mid-career researchers and academics and (ii) a policy actor-centred component that is aimed at enhancing the capacity of policy actors to appreciate research

and data for public policy, and to discern and judge the quality and utility of research and data for policy. The policy-centred component will also build awareness on the importance of research and data for policy. More modules, including one on academic publishing/ICT tools for research, are under development.

Communications, policy outreach and marketing are important aspects of PASGR's work that require increased attention, as they constitute core elements of the strategic directions going forward. So far they have been relatively under-emphasised. In the period of this Strategy, greater attention will be paid to these elements as outlined under a later section titled Communications and Policy Outreach.

LESSONS LEARNED

The lessons learned, which will guide implementation of the programme in the next phase are:

- Unprecedented demand from regional higher education institutions, think tanks, research networks and civil society organisations means the programme needs to diversify its offerings to also target graduate students, young researchers and advocacy groups.
- There is a need to broaden professional development offerings to target organisational and institutional strengthening.
- To date, all PDT courses have been available only in English (although a number of participants from Francophone Africa have participated). There is thus an entire cohort of Francophone and Lusophone Africa participants left out.

- Making greater use of online short courses and training to develop needed skills and talent could significantly reduce the costs associated with delivery, while increasing reach, improving performance and ensuring standardisation/quality control.

THE WAY FORWARD: 2014 - 2018

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Deliver experiential professional development that builds policy actors' and researchers' skills and competencies
- Deepen delivery partners' institutional capacity to design, deliver and accredit high quality professional development courses
- Innovate in design and content to enrich participants' learning experience, and maximise impact and reach.

To maintain its niche in relation to both the quality of the content and the highly interactive mode of delivery of the courses, PASGR must enhance the value of training to complement its other programmes. PASGR will also work with a select number of partners to seek accreditation and institutionalise the short term professional development courses.

The following activities will be used to realise the programme's objectives:

- Broaden the current suite of short professional development modules by including subject-specific content, technical skills and professional practices.
- Expand and develop both African and international partnerships to develop, co-deliver and promote MMRC and other short term professional development courses.
- Involve delivery partners more in co-design, development, fundraising, delivery and accreditation of high quality modules.
- Work with the Higher Education Programme to stimulate innovation and seek out novel applications that use technology in order to enhance the adult learning experience and facilitate the creative delivery of content.
- Explore different funding and business models for different modules, as well as the best means of operating modules in a cost-recovery mode.
- Build on initial convening and research efforts and policy forums to develop more comprehensive initiatives that address the Post-2015 Development Agenda and its emerging issues. Although anchored in PDT, this will be a cross-programme initiative.

Overall, the programme will continue developing training modules and opportunities to offer courses in various configurations to different audiences. For sustainability, it will determine with delivery partners a multi-year plan for collaboration on professional development courses. This will include a funding strategy that will be driven by collaboration and which may utilise a trust fund model.

RESEARCH PROGRAMME

PASGR's overarching goal is to provide African policy actors with excellent social science research that will inform their public policy actions. The focus is on social science research that is "non-economic" because adequate attention has already been directed at economic research.

Initially, PASGR's Research Programme focused thematically on social policy and governance issues that broadly reflect the priorities of African governments. Social policy is a significant element of public policy. PASGR is aware of this and the challenges and opportunities of inter and multidisciplinary research for development. Therefore, social policy and public policy are integrated and interchangeable in PASGR's work.

In the initial phase, some research projects have been undertaken to develop the capacity of participating researchers, while others have been primarily concerned with deepening the understanding of a particular issue.

PASGR's Board, with advice from an independent research committee and staff, would periodically select research themes. These choices were guided by issues attracting attention in the region, and consideration of the value such research would add by addressing overlooked governance issues.

Some of the areas covered by PASGR's research are:

- (i) Effective Public Services Delivery
- (ii) Social Protection: this project is made up of two sets of research – Governance Characteristics of Non-State Protection Services and the Political Economy of Social Policy Uptake
- (iii) Think Tank-University Relations in Africa
- (iv) Research Leadership in Africa

So far, PASGR has made 33 research grants to academics and researchers in Angola, Benin, Botswana, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Uganda.

LESSONS LEARNED

- There is value in narrowing the target audience of researchers rather than having calls that are open to the entire region
- PASGR should strike a balance between research that is aimed at building researchers' capacity and that aimed at knowledge generation.
- Greater clarity of the research focus or niche will help to build the PASGR Research brand
- PASGR's governance research requires a more precise and specific definition.
- Greater quality control is necessary, not only through a more intensive peer review of PASGR's products, but also through a research leadership approach that insists on the lead researcher's responsibility for quality control.

THE WAY FORWARD: 2014 – 2018

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Provide high quality and policy relevant research to varied audiences
- Integrate policy actors into different phases of the governance research process.
- Institutionalise research-policy communities to facilitate uptake of research evidence in study countries

The next four years will see a shift in thematic focus and the mode of delivery of PASGR's research programme. This will entail the following:

1. Broadening the thematic focus from a social policy perspective to development challenges with an eye on issues that have implications for public policy. The development challenges will be examined through a governance lens that is analytically rigorous and clearly defined in terms of state-society-market relationships.
2. Facilitating the institutionalisation of research for policy uptake by supporting communities of practice in the countries where PASGR research is conducted.
3. Using well recognised principal investigators (PIs) to provide intellectual leadership for research. The PIs will be responsible for providing quality assurance, mentoring carefully selected teams of senior, mid-

career and junior researchers, and taking the study forward to peer-reviewed publications. This PI model will involve the reorganisation of research teams and patterns of work, emphasising and developing research leadership capacities on the continent.

4. Continuously pursuing strategic national, regional and international partnerships with organisations that will strengthen social science research on the continent.

During the period of this Plan, PASGR will focus its attention on three research themes:

- **Urban governance and turning African cities around:** This thematic area will provide analyses on the drivers of recent transformations taking place in some major African cities.
- **Varieties of modes of governance and inclusive development:** Focusing on the nature of recent "growth" in Africa, this thematic area will examine the typologies of modes of governance in Africa and use that to analyse differential effects on inclusive development.
- **Governance, social policy and social protection in Africa:** This theme will focus on analyses of modes of governance and the drive towards effective design and promotion of social policies and social protection programmes in Africa.

COMMUNICATIONS AND POLICY OUTREACH

When PASGR was conceptualised, the need to include communications, outreach and capacity building activities that would help researchers engage users at all stages of the research process, and further enhance its utilisation in the policy process was articulated.

Consequently, the Policy Outreach and Training Programme (now re-named Professional Development and Training) had the following among its four broad activities:

- Building awareness among the African policy community about PASGR to generate interest in and demand for research; and
- Marketing the activities and research of PASGR corporately and on a programme-by-programme basis.

The PASGR website (www.pasgr.org) has been developed and launched, and currently carries several studies and reports from PASGR-supported research projects.

While PASGR's in-house communications role has been relatively under-developed in comparison with its training programme, owing to competing priorities, some modest achievements have been realised.

The PASGR website (www.pasgr.org) has been developed and launched, and currently carries several studies and reports from PASGR-supported research projects. Additionally, a customised web-based project selection tool, which is used to receive and rank proposals and applications for research and training opportunities, is in use.

Also planned is a website for the MRPP, interactive web-spaces for PASGR beneficiaries to publicise their research activities, and an online database concerned with research on the development goals in Africa.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Communications and Policy Outreach should be integrated into all programmes and in all the phases of implementation.
- PASGR should invest more intensively in the design, instruction and management of its digital and electronic communications, particularly the websites and social media.
- Digital PASGR, a platform, work approach and culture that integrates digital processes and structures in all of PASGR's programme delivery, work processes and systems should be developed.

THE WAY FORWARD: 2014 – 2018

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Facilitate the creation of policy and research communities
- Enhance PASGR's institutional and external communications
- Build and implement Digital PASGR.

Communications and policy outreach constitute core elements of the strategic directions going forward. In the period of this Strategic Plan, greater attention will be paid to these elements as issues that cut across all programmes.

PASGR will establish a Communications and Policy Outreach unit that will support all programmes, as well as undertake institutional and other communications for PASGR. A communication strategy is being developed to guide the unit's work. Some of the unit's broad activities include:

- Supporting the different needs of each programme and their respective activities
- Positioning PASGR regionally and globally as a respected actor in African policy and research
- Defining and maintaining PASGR's institutional identity as the key to excellence in social and

political science research for public policy organisations.

- Producing innovative materials and content.

REALISING OUR STRATEGY

An enabling internal environment, backed with the best and most effective operations, management methods and governance are key to PASGR's realisation of its vision and mission.

GOVERNANCE

PASGR has a clear organisational structure, with a secretariat and a reputable Board of Directors. It has been successful in attracting and retaining outstanding Board members. It has adopted bylaws that ensure the majority of Board members are African. The bylaws also provide for funders to sit on the Board, but limit their participation to ensure effective contributions from all PASGR stakeholders. PASGR will continue to maintain the best international practices of transparent and accountable governance in this plan period.

STAFF

PASGR's secretariat consists of able and experienced staff members, who are well respected in their various fields. The secretariat is led by the Executive Director, who reports to the Board. PASGR believes in using best practices in human resources and talent management and will strive to maintain this over the plan period.

FINANCIAL SYSTEMS

PASGR has invested substantial time and effort to put in place appropriate systems to ensure integrity and financial probity. These are tested and validated for compliance as part of the annual audit process, and, to date, no issues have been found to indicate a failure in the systems. PASGR's emphasis on excellence, integrity, innovation and probity will guide the management and development of financial systems and resources over the plan period.

TECHNOLOGY

PASGR has integrated technology into its work by using web-based interactive processes and various forms of technology-enhanced learning. Digital PASGR is the next phase in PASGR's objectives to integrate advances in new technologies into its programmes, operations and work culture.

FUNDING

PASGR so far has relied on DFID as its principal funder in the first four years of its operations. Although other funders, such as IDRC, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the UN Foundation have provided important support, both PASGR's Board and staff are aware of the important tasks of diversification and assertive resource mobilisation for institutional sustainability and PASGR's growth as a thriving pan-African organisation.

As an aspect of this Strategy, PASGR is producing a Development and Fundraising Strategy that incorporates the efforts of the Board, staff and other stakeholders.

THE WAY FORWARD: 2014 – 2018

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- Diversify funding and revenue sources
- Establish effective and appropriate internal processes for organisational development, transparency and accountability
- Develop strategies that advance recognition and identity of the organisation.

It is unlikely that the general structure of PASGR's core administrative functions will change as a result of the new strategic directions. However, there are areas where adjustments and new approaches will be needed to facilitate the Strategy's successful implementation. These are:

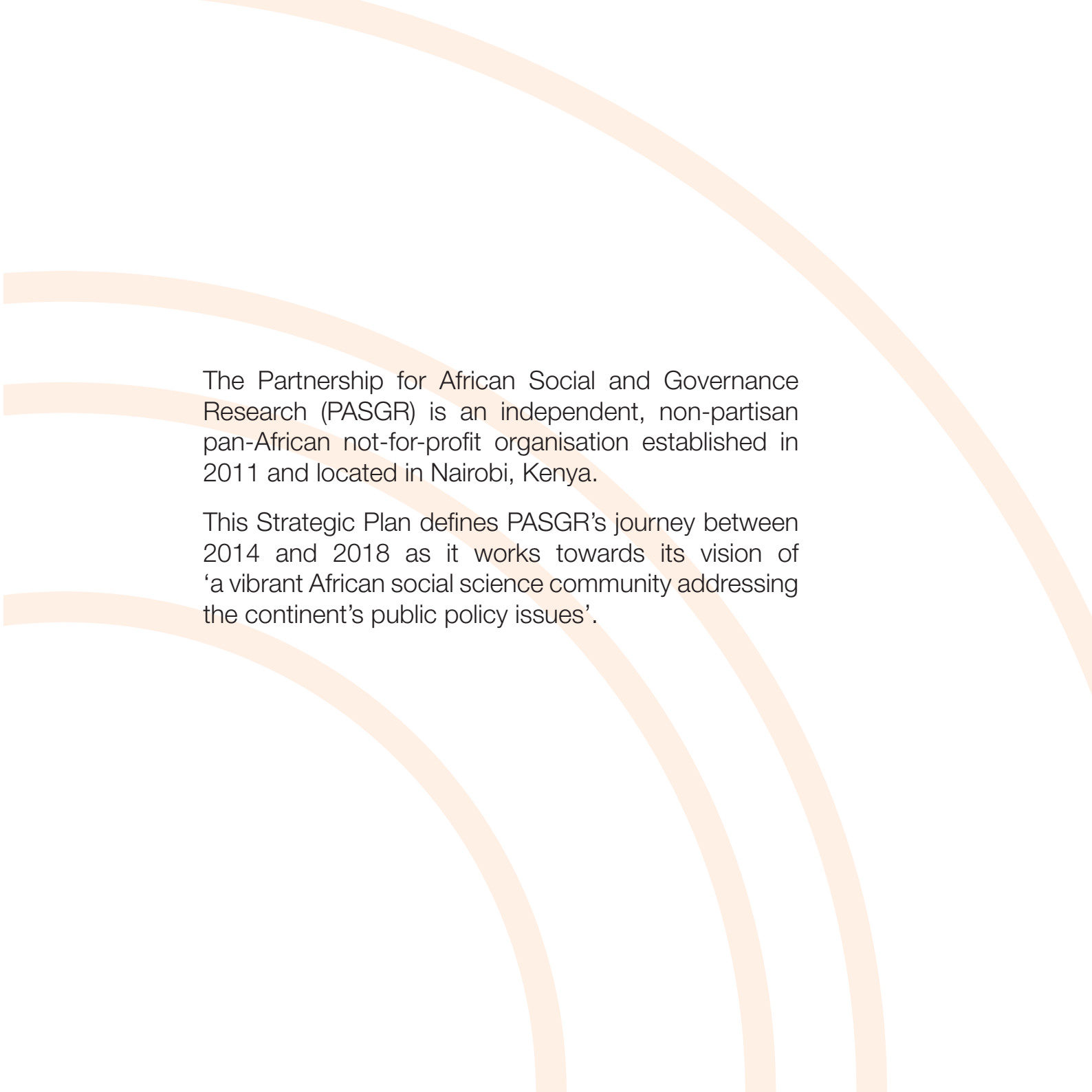
- New emphasis on best practices in human resources development in order to help staff strengthen and monitor performance, identify and address skills gaps, and help individuals with career-related professional development
- Adopting improved management practices within and across programmes by examining roles and delegation of authority, use of internal committees and development of a succession plan at the senior level
- Producing knowledge management approaches to enable PASGR to systematically share, retain and use information and knowledge acquired in its work.

TRACKING OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

PASGR is built on a pillar of excellent and rigorous evidence-based policy uptake. This presupposes unrelenting attention to tracking, monitoring and evaluation, and measuring performance against agreed outputs and outcomes.

In the 2014-2018 period, PASGR will continuously develop tools, systems and culture that emphasise

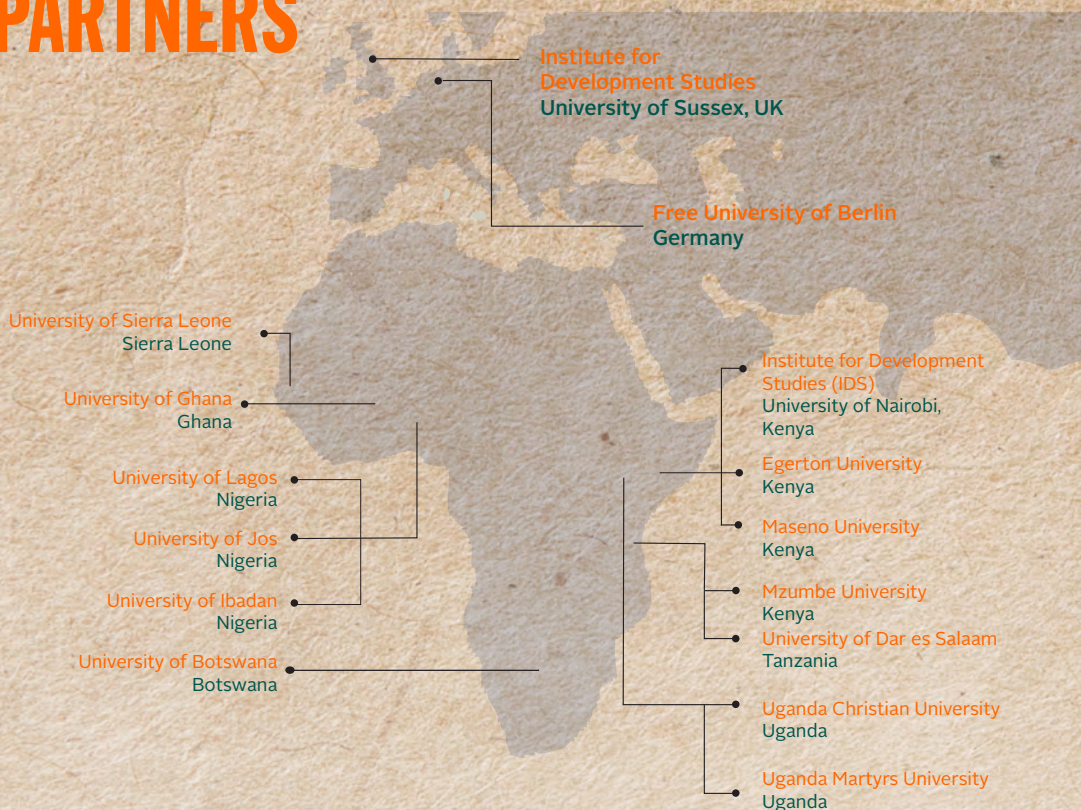
and integrate robust M&E, putting in place the necessary and relevant baselines, indicators and targets. A key element of PASGR's internal staff professional development will be further strengthening of PASGR staff's capacity in monitoring and evaluation, particularly with regards to tracking our work, its achievements and shortcomings and collecting the appropriate data for our M&E processes.



The Partnership for African Social and Governance Research (PASGR) is an independent, non-partisan pan-African not-for-profit organisation established in 2011 and located in Nairobi, Kenya.

This Strategic Plan defines PASGR's journey between 2014 and 2018 as it works towards its vision of 'a vibrant African social science community addressing the continent's public policy issues'.

OUR PARTNERS



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