



Clarified Purpose.  
Clearer Impact.

# Strategic Plan 2025-2029



⌚ Former Ambassador of Ireland to Tanzania, H.E. Mary O'Neil giving her remarks during the 27th Annual Research Workshop held in Dar es Salaam in November 2023.

# Strategic Plan 2025-2029

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# Introduction

**We** are excited to share with our partners and all stakeholders the seventh Strategic Plan covering 2025-2029. Almost 30 years after REPOA was established as an independent research institution, we are delighted that we continue to make a meaningful contribution towards the development of evidence-informed policies and to the strengthening of capacity of the policy-research ecosystem.

Whilst at inception our focus was on poverty alleviation strategies by building and strengthening policy research capacity in Tanzania, which resulted in the name “research for poverty alleviation” whose name REPOA was as an acronym, today our scope has expanded to include a much broader offering. REPOA has moved from being an acronym to being our identity. Whilst the institution remains committed to supporting initiatives to reduce poverty, its scope and approach have evolved in recognition of the multifaceted drivers of poverty and its undeniable relationships with development. The thrust of the institution’s work is grounded in promoting socio-economic transformation essential for inclusive and sustainable development. We are motivated by our desire to see improved livelihoods for all citizens – something that you will see further reiterated in our sharpened Theory of Change (ToC).

In line with Tanzania’s focus on transforming and diversifying its economy, growing trade and boosting international cooperation, REPOA continues to position itself towards understanding and delving into the themes that can support policymakers to align these priorities with national development plans. With our core business being knowledge generation, over the 30 years of REPOA’s existence we have sought to serve as Tanzania’s premier research organisation dedicated to driving impactful change through rigorous and insightful strategic research. We continue to be a valued point of call for policymakers and other seekers of knowledge products and have a proven track record of influencing policy changes. Through research-based evidence and strategic collaborations with key partners and change agents, we also strive to strengthen local research and analysis capacity by training





researchers and research users, providing technical policy advice to our various stakeholders. Finally, we continue to see growing interest in our independent and reputable forum for research dissemination and policy dialogue through various avenues, including our Annual Research Workshops.

REPOA takes prides in its recognised expertise that is based on the multi-disciplinary academic background and research experience of its researchers and associates in sectors that we believe will drive Tanzania's socioeconomic growth and lead to prosperity for all. Areas of expertise range from economic growth, structural transformation, and poverty diagnostics; institutions and value chain analysis; governance, decentralisation, and local economic development; human development, gender analysis and inclusion; to natural resources and extractives management; and climate change adaptation and resilience. We intend to grow analytical capacity overall and produce a growing population of researchers to allow for more people who can actively and meaningfully contribute to policy

review, recommendations, and formulation. Our 2021 tracer study sought to understand the usefulness of our work, and where respondents see we can add more value. This, and other inputs, have enabled us to think critically about our past and the future.

Having spent time reflecting on what we have achieved, and what the next five years look like, we came to the realisation that we did not need an entirely new Strategic Plan, but rather to realign the present one with the evolving development agenda, and to strengthen key aspects of our work for better targeting, enhanced outcomes and impact to the society. We embarked on a process of engaging with some of our key partners, and as part of this we learnt that:

1

Many of the assumptions and decisions we had made in the previous Strategic Plan will continue to be relevant in the next five years.

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2

We wanted to be clearer about who we are, and what we do; specifically, the value that we bring and how to deepen this. We have developed a simple but robust Theory of Change (ToC) that communicates this.

3

We needed to be able to articulate to our stakeholders our unique value proposition, and our strengths.

4

Given the nature of our work, the attribution of impact remains a challenge. Thus, we wanted to sharpen how we measure our results and determine our contribution, which is a truer reflection of the nature of our work.

5

As we continue to focus on producing high-quality products that our stakeholders value, we wanted to think carefully about how we reach a wider audience and impact more individuals and institutions.

6

We wanted to retrain our gender lens to ensure that it looks not only at the experiences of girls, boys, women, and men, but that our eye examines intersectionality in all the forms that it may be relevant within our context.

7

We recognise the often purely academic posturing of our work, which can sometimes be devoid of the human side of policy formulation and implementation. We see the years ahead as a time to truly put people at the centre of what we do at REPOA, showing the true impact of our work on real people.

*With all this in mind, we hereby present to you the REPOA's Strategic Plan for 2025-2029. We hope that you will enjoy engaging with our sharpened thoughts, and our aspirations for the future.*

# About REPOA



## Vision

To be the leading policy research institution in Africa.



## Mission

To engage in policy research and dialogue that promotes socioeconomic transformation for inclusive development.



## Values

At the heart of what we do is our unwavering commitment to the improved welfare and livelihoods of all citizens through collaborative efforts with our key stakeholders to accelerate socioeconomic transformation in Tanzania. To continue to do what we do to the highest standard and with great drive, we have articulated the values that underpin our existence as an organisation. These values, which we all uphold, are not what we aspire to do, but who we are intrinsically.



## Quality

We apply well-considered methodologies to our work to ensure rigor and excellence.

## Innovation

We exercise optimal intellectual capabilities to learn and improve the way we do things, applying innovative solutions to fulfill our mission in the most efficient and effective ways.

## Integrity

We conduct all activities in a manner that maintains the good reputation of our organisation by being truthful and honest.

## Accountability

We accept responsibility for our actions and decisions in the performance of our roles, to be transparent and fully accountable to our stakeholders.

## Inclusiveness

We accept and value contributions from all people regardless of the differences in gender, ethnicity, religious background, or political affiliations.

# REPOA's Evolution

*Understanding that REPOA exists within a complex and ever-evolving world, we have always been mindful that the role we play changes along with the needs of our various stakeholders, while remaining true to the service that we provide. REPOA's research programme has also been evolving overtime, adapting its research agenda and methods of engagement to satisfy the information and knowledge needs of its stakeholders. The distinct phases of REPOA's strategic plan and focus are summarised as follows:*

**1995 -1999** Phase 1 focused on capacity building of local researchers through provision of tailor-made trainings and research support through the open competitive system (OCS).

**2000 -2004** Phase 2 embarked on poverty reduction efforts through effective engagement in analytical works for the National Poverty Monitoring (PMS); and continued strengthening research capacity, including special link with the grassroots.

**2005 -2009** Phase 3 focused on contributing to the national goals on economic growth and poverty reduction as articulated in the Development Vision 2025 and the National Strategies for Growth and Reduction of Poverty I.

**2010 -2014** Phase 4 emphasised the link between economic growth and reduction of poverty and integrated governance and service delivery, and social protection as important pillars of human development as outlined in the National Strategy for Growth and Reduction of Poverty II, and the First Five Year Development Plan (FYDP I).

**2015 -2019** Phase 5 geared towards promotion of socio-economic transformation in Tanzania for inclusive development and attainment of regional and globally agreed goals, drawing from the aspirations of Tanzania Development Vision 2025, FYDP II, the EAC Development Vision 2050, SADC Industrialisation Strategy, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030.

**2020 -2024** Phase 6 focused on transformation for inclusive growth and sustainable poverty reduction, as outlined in the FYDP III; and the institutional reforms needed for effective governance frameworks that recognise gender-based drivers of inequality, promoting women empowerment and local economic development.

**2025 -2029** Phase 7 continuing to consolidate our efforts contributing to the acceleration of socioeconomic transformation (including structural transformation of the economy, private sector development, effective governance, and response to climate change). Our programmes will expand the narrative to consider the complexities of influencing policies to reduce poverty, inequality, and to promote local economic development.

These transitions, which are informed by the changing development context and evidence from prior research, have always kept the institution at the frontier of knowledge and as an effective intermediary between the state, the private sector, development partners, civil society organisations (CSOs) and the community.

## Context

*Whilst we strive to provide evidence-based knowledge that is crucial for transformative policies, we equally recognise the multiplicity, complexity, and dynamism of various drivers of economic and social development of nations. These drivers occur and evolve differently at national, regional, and global levels.*

Over the past two decades, Tanzania has sustained a relatively high growth rate compared to its peers in Sub-Saharan Africa and global averages. It averaged 6.2% across a decade to 2022<sup>1</sup>, despite a slowdown recorded in 2020-21 due to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Economic growth in 2023 was 5.3%, up from the previous

year's recorded growth of 4.7%<sup>2</sup>. Tanzania graduated from a low-income country to a lower-middle income country in 2020<sup>3</sup>, however this growth performance has not led to anticipated decline in the corresponding levels of poverty. Some reasons for this include slow changes in the structure of the economy, sluggish growth of productivity, a large informal sector, growing inequality, a weak business environment, low levels of human development, and increasing vulnerability to climate change. The key driver of change, therefore, is transformation of the economic and social structures, and for this to occur, effective policies and institutional reforms will be required, along with partnerships from all development stakeholders. Effective policies must be informed by evidence from credible research, and

this strategic plan is intended to sharpen the focus of REPOA's interventions to effectively play a leading role in providing the needed knowledge and evidence for policy makers and other development stakeholders. In doing so, it is important to examine the operating environment for research, to assess the extent to which the previous Strategic Plan 2020-24 achieved its objectives, and from which the analysis of our strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats is undertaken. These also serve to project the outlook for the 2025-29 Strategic Plan.

<sup>1</sup>Economic Surveys for various years

<sup>2</sup>Tanzania Economic Outlook | African Development Bank Group (afdb.org)

<sup>3</sup>Tanzania Overview: Development news, research, data | World Bank



➞ REPOA's Director of Collaborations & Capacity Building, Dr. Lucas Katera (right) fielding questions from the hosts of Clouds Radio's popular Power Breakfast - morning live talk show in August 2023 - contextualizing Tanzania's summary of results for the Round 9 of Afrobarometer Surveys.



## Research operating environment

The legislation governing research in Tanzania has seen significant changes, whose aim is communicated as fostering a conducive environment for scientific and academic inquiry. The Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH) remains a key ally in the research process, as the entity responsible for guiding policy and permissions for scientific research in the country. REPOA's work builds on the foundation of the National Science, Technology and Innovation Policy (2016)<sup>4</sup>, which aims to integrate science, technology, and innovation (STI) into national development plans. It highlights the importance of supporting research institutions and creating partnerships between the public and private sectors, which has always been at the heart of what we do, as a think-tank.

<sup>4</sup>1684598716.pdf (costech.or.tz)

In recent years we have seen the promotion of data protection and privacy regulations, which have aimed to strengthen the ethical handling of research data, ensuring privacy and confidentiality. These are crucial for fostering trust and compliance in research involving people, perhaps also creating opportunity for openness and expressing of real views during the data collection process.

Recognising that research is conducted within an ecosystem with other players, we rely on the credibility and robustness of data from key government agencies such as the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), including Census data on the population; the Household Budget Surveys (HBS) data on household incomes and consumption; the Agricultural Sample Census to collect data on agricultural production, land use, and farming practices; and the Integrated Labor Force Survey (ILFS) data on employment, unemployment, and labor market conditions.

Within the research space we also look to retain and attract talent that can join REPOA's efforts not only internally but also as part of the broader ecosystem of researchers and analysts in academia, civil society, as well as the public and private sectors. Whilst we take great pride in hosting and employing the country's top researchers, many of whom stay with us for many years, we are also mindful that they sometimes do move on to other opportunities. In the past, REPOA researchers have been called to serve within the public sector, including as senior advisors, whilst others have gone on to new roles elsewhere. All the same, their expertise and experience, whether within or outside the organisation, means that the wider ecosystem has more individuals with the analytical and research skills needed to not only formulate but to interrogate and contribute positively to policy development. Wherever researchers who leave REPOA go, they continue to serve as brand ambassadors and users of the knowledge products the organisation produces



➔ Guest of Honour and Minister for Community Development, Gender, Women and Special Groups, Hon. Dorothy Gwajima presides over the launch of REPOA's book "Women-on-Women Violence in Tanzania: Current Realities and Future Directions," authored by Senior Research Fellow Dr. Sr. Regina Opoku in July 2024.

## Implementation of strategic plan 2020-24

As we reached the halfway point of our 2020-2024 Strategic Plan, we started to reflect on the changing landscape around us, and our offering as REPOA to the stakeholders that we engage with. An external and independent mid-term review of our 2020-24 Strategic Plan advised the following:

- The three main research themes: Productive Sectors and Inclusive Development (PSID), Gender and Human Development (GHD), Governance, Accountability, and Citizen Participation (GAP), alongside two cross-cutting themes: Environment and Climate Change; and Technology, Innovation, and Data Management remain relevant to Tanzania's development policies and plans, as well as global trends.
- REPOA, its leadership, and the entire team are highly respected, but it is key that these views and relationships continue at an institutional level and go beyond the individuals.
- Tracking key indicators of success, as well as reporting on them, remained a challenge. It is for this reason that as part of the Strategic Plan refresh process, a monitoring and evaluation specialist was engaged to embed improved tracking and reporting into the new SP. This will enable us to think critically about not only what we are doing, but how we are doing it and what we are tracking from the outset.
- The midterm review highlighted that the Theory of Change (ToC) required a revisit, to ensure greater coherence of thought, but also clarity on how our activities and outputs lead to the desired outcomes and impact, and how we communicate it.

- Whilst there were differing views from stakeholders as to REPOA's role in advising versus advocacy, we remain very clear that we are not an advocacy organisation. We remain impartial and independent but provide our objective opinion based on in-depth analysis in the most constructive manner that serves to influence policy change in the best interests of citizens for whom policies are created.
- Due to the nature of our work, it is not always easy for external entities to see and experience the extent of our outputs and their impact. However, this is also in part due to our results reporting framework and tools, or perhaps our communication – as mentioned by some respondents in our midterm review. As a result, we placed an emphasis on becoming clearer about our M&E framework and strengthening it in the SP 2025-29. We are also taking a closer look at how we communicate externally, and the importance given to this area of our work.

Overall, the consensus appears to be that REPOA continues to focus on research-informed evidence for policy formulation, in thematic areas that will contribute to accelerated socioeconomic transformation and ultimately lead to inclusive development. At the same time, given the skillset and expertise of the team, there is scope for us to explore offering our services to the private sector as they look to use evidence-informed research for their own decision-making as they identify the impacts that certain decisions can have on their businesses but also on the economy at large.

## Risk management framework

Like many other organisations, REPOA faces and will continue to face a variety of risks from both external and internal sources. These risks will be shaped by and evolve over time in the context of its activities and the changing

environment in which it operates. Risk is defined as the possibility that an event will occur and adversely affect the achievement of the institution's mission and objectives. Risk management will continue to play a crucial role in an organisation's pursuit of its financial stability and superior performance. Risk assessment will involve a dynamic and iterative process for identifying and assessing risks, and how to mitigate and manage the consequences should any of the identified risk materialise. Management will continue to identify risks under different categories relating to operations, reporting, and compliance, and take responsibility to managing such risks effectively to safeguard its assets and liabilities; protect its employees and community against potential losses; and to minimise uncertainty in achieving its goals and objectives and maximise the opportunities to achieve its vision. REPOA is aware that some risks can never be eliminated fully, and it will continue to implement and constantly update its risk management strategy that provides a structured, systematic, and focused approach to managing risk.

REPOA Risk Management Framework is informed by the ISO 31000:2018 Risk Management -Principles and Guidelines and forms an integral part of the organisation's corporate governance arrangements, strategic planning and continuous monitoring process.

The Board, through its Audit and Risk Committee, and Management of REPOA will continue to assess and update its risk matrix on an annual basis. The assessment considers the likelihood of occurrence and the potential impact or consequences to the organisation.

## Outlook for 2025-29

Going into our new Strategic Plan for 2025 to 2029, what is required is not necessarily a major shift in our work, but realignments and further refinements to our research programme and approach for engagement as most of what we offered during the previous period still holds. What is changing is the external environment

that we operate in, as Tanzania works on developing its Vision 2050, and the world navigates a time of 'polycrisis', information overload, and unprecedented times. The work we do to support the formulation of evidence-informed policies for better socioeconomic outcomes for Tanzanians is more relevant than ever.

As newly realigned themes come to the fore, we retain the strategic imperatives of national aspirations to build a resilient and competitive economy and a modern society. Gender equality, technology and innovation, demographic transition and youth remain cross-cutting and deeply critical areas for us to consider across all themes. As we look ahead to 2025-2029, we share Tanzania's development vision as it unfolds alongside national strategies, regional affiliations, and global trends. The government's ongoing implementation of the Third National Five-Year Development Plan (FYDP III), which will come to an end in 2025/26, focuses on growing industrialisation, human-centred development, and fostering the country's economic competitiveness.



➔ Guest of Honour and President of the Revolutionary Government of Zanzibar, Dr. Hussein Ali Mwinyi officiating the 26th Annual Research Workshop held in Zanzibar, in November 2022.

Alongside these priorities we also see continued infrastructure development, private sector growth and job creation, and improving social services for the growing population.

Industrialisation remains central to Tanzania's economic agenda, as the government continues to promote value addition in agriculture, mining, and manufacturing sectors to boost exports and reduce dependency on raw material exports. The next national development blueprint is expected to create employment opportunities for the growing number of young men and women, and stimulate economic diversification, with the development of special economic zones (SEZs) and industrial parks attracting foreign direct investment and enhancing industrial capacity. Infrastructure development in transport and energy will likely continue to be a critical focus, with mega projects such as the Standard Gauge Railway (SGR) and the Julius Nyerere Hydropower Project (JNHP) expected to improve connectivity and energy

supply, thus supporting industrial growth and regional trade. Furthermore, expanding digital infrastructure is crucial for integrating into the global digital economy and fostering innovation; creating greater connectivity across the country, region, and the globe, and creating opportunities for young people to formulate and grow their businesses within a space that they are familiar and comfortable in, with great credit to social media as an entry point for many.

We are also seeing enhanced investment in human capital through education and healthcare. The government's emphasis on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) is designed to equip the workforce with skills needed for a modern economy. The 2023 Education and Training Policy aims at aligning the country's education system and curriculum with the country's aspirations for its youth, whilst also seeking to improve healthcare infrastructure and services to address public health challenges and ensure a healthy workforce.

Regionally, Tanzania is known for its relatively stable political environment. The country's active participation in the East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC), and the African Union (AU) will continue to be pivotal as these regional frameworks provide platforms for enhancing trade, investment, and policy harmonisation. Tanzania's strategic position as a gateway to landlocked countries in the region underscores its potential as a regional trade hub and can provide numerous opportunities for trade agreements and collaboration with its neighbours. The port of Dar es Salaam has potential to serve as one of the busiest in East Africa - as a gateway for countries like Zambia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Burundi, Rwanda, and Uganda thus crucial for regional trade and logistics. Socially and politically, we do know that migration and displacement caused by regional conflicts, environmental crises, along with urbanisation can put additional pressure on the country's resources and social services.

As a resource-intensive economy we continue to see growing interest in natural gas, a range of minerals, and agricultural products that are abundantly available. These resources have the potential to continue to contribute to the regional economy and energy security, and will keep generating attention and income for the nation if well managed. As we interrogate various assumptions and scenarios, we will keep this key area on the agenda to explore how this can and should lead to accelerated and inclusive socio-economic transformation. Another attraction point for Tanzania are its natural wonders such as Mount Kilimanjaro, Serengeti National Park, and the spice island of Zanzibar which provide a significant source of tourism revenue, promote cultural exchange, and reinforce Tanzania's response to climate change.

Globally, Tanzania must navigate challenges and opportunities presented by climate change, technological advancements, and shifting geopolitical dynamics. Unpredictable climate patterns affect a wide range of industries and primary sectors that Tanzania is



reliant on for its growth. Understanding how to navigate the increasing changes in climate and being able to adapt will be crucial for growth. Adopting sustainable environmental practices and investing in green technologies will be critical for mitigating climate risks.

Furthermore, embracing digital transformation and innovation can drive economic growth and improve service delivery. As innovation grows, so too must our ways of working – citizens of all backgrounds need to be able to keep up with these advancements and leverage them for their individual and collective betterment. Embedded in initiatives such as the Doha Programme of Action, we recognise the important role that shared responsibility and partnership will continue to play going forward, towards greater opportunities and prosperity for countries such as Tanzania.

For REPOA, the 2025-2029 period presents immense opportunities to influence policy through evidence-based research. By aligning its strategic priorities with national, regional, and global development agendas,

REPOA can play a pivotal role in shaping policies that promote inclusive and sustainable development in Tanzania. The organisation's focus on research, capacity building, and policy engagement will be essential for addressing the complex development challenges and harnessing opportunities in the coming years. Our research seeks to not only inform national policies, but regional and global ones that influence Tanzania including those formulated at the levels of the EAC, SADC, AU, United Nations (UN), and Multilateral Financial Institutions.

Tanzania will likely navigate all these factors and dynamics while addressing expected and unexpected polycrises. We understand that global economic shocks, which have the potential to affect trade, foreign direct investment (FDI), and remittances will continue to spur as well as challenge the very growth that they promote. Similarly, as an exporter of agricultural products and minerals, Tanzania is vulnerable to volatile global commodity prices, which have the potential to

reduce export revenues and impact the livelihoods of those dependent on these sectors.

Beyond economic shocks, there is the risk of extreme weather events, including droughts, floods, and cyclones – all of which are occurring more frequently and are more intense than before. These events threaten agricultural productivity, food security, reliance on the blue economy (along Mainland Tanzania's coastline and Zanzibar) and infrastructure. Alongside these adverse weather conditions there is continued environmental degradation and deforestation, all of which pose risks to biodiversity, which are crucial not only for agriculture and tourism, but also overall environmental health and natural ecosystems.

Finally, in areas that are less easy to predict, we see pandemics and epidemics such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which highlighted the vulnerabilities in global healthcare systems, including in Tanzania. Future health crises could strain healthcare resources, disrupt economic activities, and exacerbate poverty and

inequality, on top of the existing challenges in this sector such as shortcomings in maternal and child health, growing incidence of non-communicable diseases, and chronic medical conditions that have long afflicted our populations.

As geopolitical landscapes evolve and development partners focus on other priorities, we recognise that there will be greater need for self-reliance, domestic resource mobilisation, and locally made solutions. Thus, the policies that REPOA intends to influence through evidence-based research will explore strategies for preparation and risk mitigation, presenting scenarios and possibilities to allow for informed decision-making, in the face of complex and interconnected global challenges.

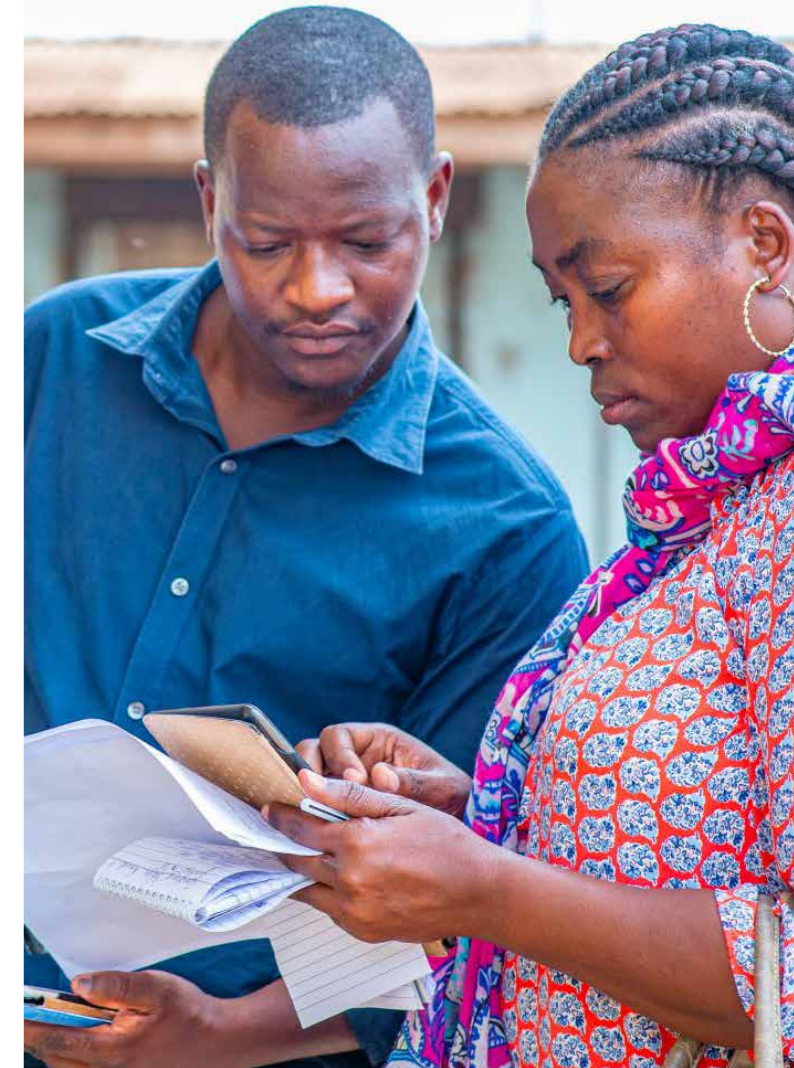
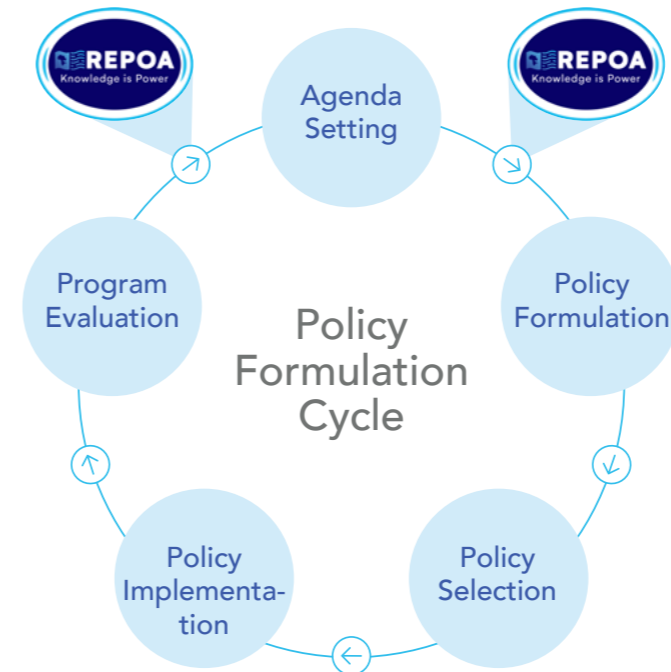
# Strategic Aspirations & Positioning

In our quest towards improving the welfare and livelihoods of all Tanzanians through evidence-informed policies, we reflected on what our unique value proposition is. By reviewing the *policy formulation cycle*, as defined by renowned social policy research scholars McNutt and Hoefler<sup>5</sup>, we identified our entry-points and value addition in two areas, based on where we have always operated and where we see ourselves fitting in. REPOA's work can be placed between the "agenda setting" and "policy formulation" nodes of the process, providing much-needed analyses and recommendations. The insights from REPOA's research are essential for informed decision-making and harness

the experience of well-trained researchers. This unloads the burden of in-depth research from policymakers and their institutions.

We engage with key partners in contributing to setting the agenda by providing research-generated evidence and insights on the development needs and constraints that needs policy attention. At a later point in the policy formulation cycle we also see our role sitting between programme evaluation and agenda setting, which then leads to policy formulation.

*This is better illustrated in the diagram on the following page.*



<sup>5</sup>Hoefler, R. 2021. *The Surprising Usefulness of the Policy Stages Framework* | *Journal of Policy Practice and Research* (springer.com)

Beyond these two entry points where we see our work adding value, we also look to create more opportunities for enhanced research uptake, as more stakeholders access and use various knowledge products availed by REPOA.

We aspire towards a world where policies are set through thoughtful consideration that starts with a clear agenda, and that is deeply grounded in being informed by research. As policymakers look to address constraints to transformation, we see REPOA's contribution being evidence that informs policies that subsequently lead to inclusive development. We know that the knowledge products we generate exist within a broader ecosystem where change must happen and are therefore mindful that as we talk about 'stakeholders' we are engaging with entire systems, and not just isolated individuals and institutions. As part of this, our value proposition has become clearer, as we have clarified where our sphere of control ends, what we can influence, and then what is of interest to us but out

of our direct control. Through a now sharper Theory of Change (ToC), which we spent time interrogating internally and with the help of external facilitators, we are better placed to engage with partners on exactly what we do, and how we do it. We have been able to better understand ourselves, and why we do what we do.

In this upcoming implementation period we have also opted to become very intentional about what we mean by 'intersectionality'. We know that not all citizens experience the world around them in the same way, and that there are systemic prejudices that apply depending on race, age, gender, location, and other factors. As social scientists we also know that these identities and experiences do not operate in isolation of one another, but in many cases overlap to create varying degrees of disadvantage for some compared to others. When we explore different research topics, we intend to deepen how we examine the lived realities of girls, boys, women, and men in different contexts to as reasonable a degree

as possible, to ensure that we are capturing evidence from a gender-aware lens, alongside other factors. In doing so, we know that this will achieve yet another of our goals, which is to place real people at the centre of what we do at REPOA; making it explicitly clear that the target of policies that our work influences and affects are real people; all of us. People have also become a central focus of the capacity that we develop. We are optimistic about achieving a critical mass of policy researchers and analysts in a range of sectors who are well skilled, to be able to not only conduct high quality policy research, but also to interrogate and sharpen the generation of knowledge and formulation of policies that affect the lives of millions, including themselves.

By positioning ourselves this way, and continuing to conduct thorough and high-quality research that informs policy decisions and interventions, we see a much clearer path towards our goal. Beyond the keen look we have taken to our monitoring and evaluation (M&E) going forward, and as part of applying rigor to all

we do, we are also learning to use observation as a data collection tool. In addition to the adjustments we have made to our M&E Framework, we will be using this as an additional input to help us reflect on our work.

## Strategic positioning

With the increasing shift of private sector embedding principles of shared value, sustainability, and corporate investment into their business models, including the role they play in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we see REPOA as uniquely placed to respond to a gap in helping companies better situate themselves within the national development plans and the tapestry of Tanzania's economic prosperity. Our evidence-informed approach can inform private sector thinking on how they too can more meaningfully contribute towards inclusive policies that turn their work into better outcomes for all citizens. As the conversation moves from 'aid' to 'trade', we envisage a greater



role for the organisation in its engagement with the private sector, providing them with valuable insights and research capacity for thematic areas that we have identified. In reviewing where our strengths lie, and through conversations with partners, a vital piece of feedback was that REPOA is a 'trusted' partner who is clear about their niche and does not try to 'do it all'. In addition, the Annual Research Workshop (ARW) is seen as a respected and valuable platform for dialogue and knowledge sharing. These are aspects of our work that we intend to continue. Valuable advice was provided, that we need to boost our visibility, to ensure that more stakeholders and potential users are aware of REPOA's work. Research uptake will be a key priority in this new SP, with boosting of capacity and resources in this space to ensure wide reach of our knowledge products. We also know that historically we have collected a wealth of data, which can be communicated for different audiences to add value to their work. We want to look at what can be used for which audience beyond how and where it has already been used.

In addition, in line with feedback that REPOA's impact is not clear, we have sharpened our examination of what we measure and how we measure it, to ascertain our contribution to evidence-informed policy in Tanzania and beyond. We know that our offering is wider than only to government, which is evidenced in our many partnerships, and we are working to showcase this better going forward.

As we worked on developing this Strategic Plan we also reflected on how we measure our contribution to policy development. We have learnt over the years that measuring 'impact' and attribution of our work is difficult, but we were clear that there was immense value in the work that we are doing, and we needed to be able to track this. Recognising that research and policy work require time and patience, we knew that we needed to find ways of measuring that were better aligned with our way(s) of working, the outputs that we were creating and the outcomes we were contributing to. We therefore, as guided by a monitoring and evaluation specialist,

opted to explore how attribution is assigned in contexts similar to ours, and "contribution analysis" was deemed the most appropriate. This approach seeks to explore and demonstrate "plausible association", which is an alternative to attribution, and which seeks to arrive at credible causal claims using monitoring data<sup>6</sup>.

In developing our improved Theory of Change we reflected on:

- 1 The extent of our influence.
- 2 Our process of influencing in contexts and spaces that are layered, complex, and very nuanced at times.
- 3 How vital trust and relationships are to our work – reliability, integrity, quality, and soundness.
- 4 How we communicate is just as important as what we communicate.

<sup>6</sup>Kane, R., Levine, C., Orians, C. and Reinelt, C., 2017. *Contribution analysis in policy work: Assessing advocacy's influence*. Washington DC: Center for Evaluation Innovation

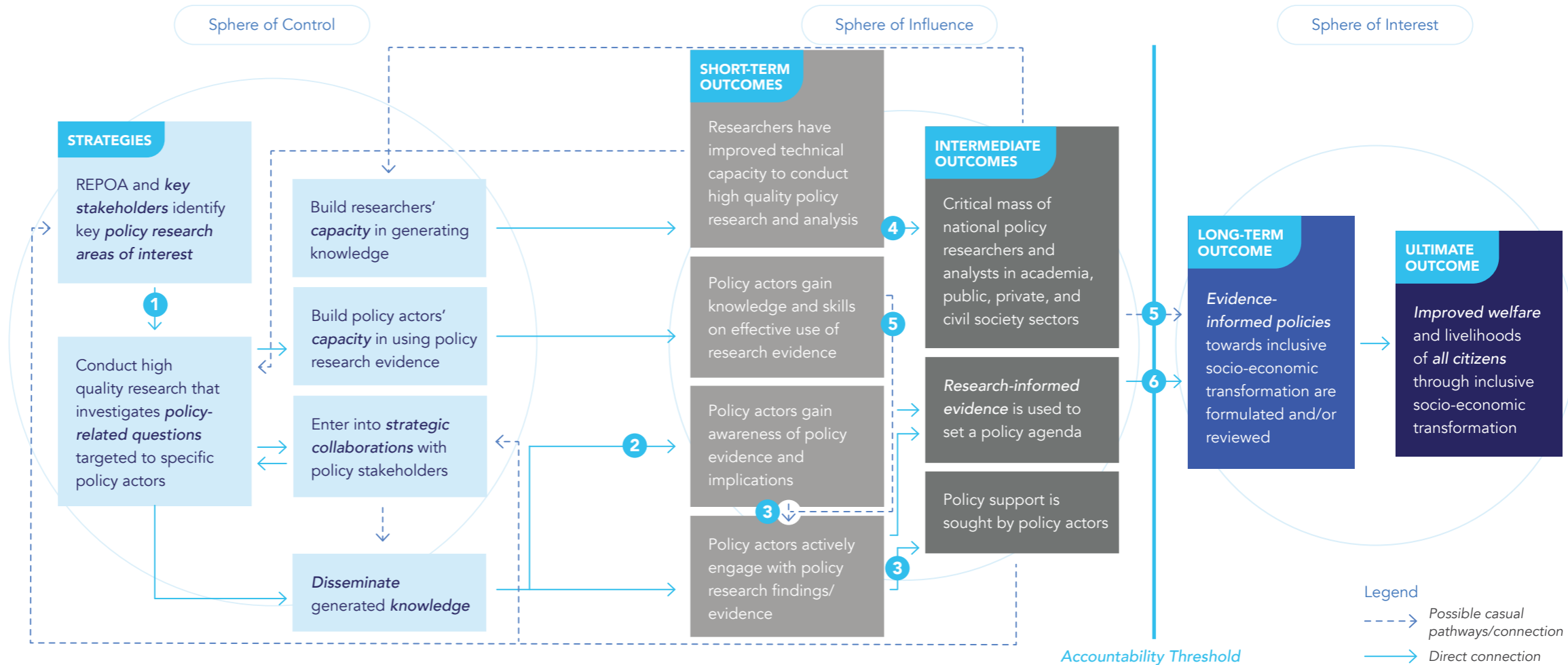




# Theory of Change

## Assumptions

- 1 Desired end-users have been engaged in the research process.
- 2 Knowledge is well packaged and targeted.
- 3 (a) Stakeholders have effective channels to engage with REPOA and provide feedback. (b) REPOA are intentional in soliciting feedback and following up.
- 4 (a) Researchers are given opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills to specific projects. (b) Researchers are motivated to remain in the field through meeting of their individual and professional goals.
- 5 Researchers and research users apply their skills to actively contribute to policy.
- 6 (a) Policy area is relevant to decision-makers and aligns to their overall development goals. (b) Evidence is viewed as vital for informing policy decisions.



*The Theory of Change (ToC) begins with identifying policy research areas of interest together with key stakeholders. Involving a range of interested parties from the beginning of the policy research process is a critical aspect of the work that is involved in policy influence. From here, we design and conduct high-quality research that explores policy related questions targeted to specific policy actors. During this time, our independence, impartiality, and rigorous standards are key to ensuring we present findings that are as unbiased as humanly possible. During this stage the policy actors and the questions they seek answers to are important, as they ensure relevance of the produced knowledge, and better positions the likelihood of the use of the outputs we develop.*

REPOA's strategic interventions then branch into three distinct areas, which align with the proposed structure and staffing for the organisation:

### 1 Strategic research and collaboration with policy stakeholders

In the pursuit of expanding reach in terms of depth and breadth of our policy research influence, REPOA will realign its strategic research and forge collaborations with research and policy actors at national, regional and global levels in line with our mission.

### 2 Capacity development of researchers and research users/policy actors

Capacity development considers both supply-driven training informed by REPOA's research experience, and those that are demand-driven by policy makers and other stakeholders. These are important for sustaining policy research and for enhancing research uptake by policy actors.

### 3 Dissemination of generated knowledge

Research outputs such as reports, policy briefs, books, journal articles and others will reach our targeted stakeholders through dissemination; whether by direct delivery, through our resource centres, at workshops and seminar presentations, policy dialogues, on-demand engagement, targeted roundtables, and via specific trainings on evidence-informed policy making.



# Monitoring & Evaluation

Where our previous M&E Framework tracked outputs, and focused on the activities we were conducting, going forward we are positioning ourselves to look at the outcomes that we are contributing towards. With our sharpened ToC, we know that we want to be clearer about what we are participating in developing, as our role in promoting improved national (and international) livelihoods and inclusive development. In our reflection, we articulated that if we were to summarise what REPOA does, it can be broken down into five key elements:

- 1 Capacity development
- 2 Production of knowledge
- 3 Dissemination of knowledge
- 4 Use & uptake of research findings
- 5 Strategic collaborations

These five areas enable us to contribute to the development of evidence-informed policies, which then lead to socio-economic transformation and ultimately, inclusive development. Our improved M&E Framework therefore breaks down the metrics that we will be tracking, and why we track them, to align better with our overall goal.

## Expected Short-term Outcomes

In the short-term it is expected that:

- Researchers will have improved capacity to conduct high quality policy research and analysis;
- Policy actors gain knowledge and skills on the effective use of research evidence;
- Policy actors gain awareness of policy research evidence and implications;
- Policy actors actively engage with policy research evidence.

Once again, the focus is on people; different actors and the changes that can be observed from their interaction with REPOA's interventions.

In the policy influence process, the intermediate outcomes represent the highest level at which REPOA seeks to contribute. The ToC thus includes an 'accountability threshold' which communicates the extent of policy influence that REPOA aims to engage in, and the boundaries of what we can realistically attribute clearly to our direct efforts. These are factors that are within REPOA's sphere of influence and through which REPOA can demonstrate plausible association with the outcomes.

## Expected Intermediate Outcomes

Intermediate outcomes include:

- A critical mass of policy researchers and analysts in academia, public, private and civil society sectors.

- Policy support being sought by policy actors following exposure to knowledge products, information or evidence in various forms. This could lead to further strategic collaborations being established and additional areas of research being identified for further investigation.
- Research-informed evidence provided through REPOA being used to set a policy agenda and inform various policy reviews.

Beyond the accountability threshold lie the long-term and ultimate outcomes which are within our sphere of interest. These are areas that REPOA would have difficulty in presenting credible causal claims given the many actors involved in contributing towards these outcomes.

### Long-Term and Ultimate Outcomes

The long-term and ultimate outcomes include:

- The formulation and review of evidence-informed policies towards inclusive socio-economic transformation.
- Improved welfare and livelihoods of all citizens through inclusive socio-economic transformation.

### Assumptions

The Theory of Change considers six sets of assumptions that need to be tested at various stages during implementation of the Strategic Plan. The assumptions are as follows:

- 1 Desired end-users have been engaged in the research process, which boosts the likelihood of uptake and use.
- 2 Knowledge is well packaged and targeted, such that it is appealing to users. This is increasingly important in today's world where there is an abundance of content produced, and users are struggling to keep up with all those outputs.

- 3 (a) Stakeholders have effective channels through which to engage with REPOA and provide feedback.  
(b) REPOA staff are intentional in soliciting feedback and following up to grow the usefulness of the outputs, but also to understand the needs.
- 4 (a) Researchers are provided with opportunities to apply their knowledge and skills to specific projects, which not only leads to a wealth of research-informed products, but also further boosts their capacity as researchers.  
(b) Researchers are motivated to remain in this line of work through the meeting of their individual and professional goals.
- 5 Researchers and research users use their skills to actively contribute to policy.
- 6 (a) Policy areas are relevant to decision-makers and align with overall development goals.

- (b) Evidence is viewed as vital for informing policy decisions.

As part of our M&E Framework, we have become more intentional about how we collect data on our outputs and outcomes, looking at a range of tools including interviews, questionnaires, document reviews, logs, and events registries. The entire team participated in several externally facilitated sessions to learn and better understand what is meant by monitoring, and the role that each of us plays in this process. In looking at our outcomes, we seek to answer not only whether the right things are being done, but equally if things are being done right.

In looking at both contribution analysis and outcome harvesting, we want to be able to tell a clearer story about our role in policy formulation.



# Research Programme

REPOA's research programme for the next five years intends to inform policy making and design of strategies and interventions to address various development challenges. It considers the changing global, regional, and country contexts, including multiple crises ranging from, climate change, geopolitical conflicts, fluctuations in energy costs, slow economic recoveries from the COVID-19 pandemic, continued digital divide in the era of the 4th industrial revolution, and demographic transition.

Tanzania achieved the status of 'low-middle income' but at a level below the target set in the Vision 2025, and there are many other targets that have not been met including that of structural transformation. The Government of Tanzania is preparing the next development vision 2050, which will seek to accelerate the achievement of desired growth path towards a diversified and a competitive economy, but also one that is resilient, sustainable, and inclusive. REPOA's research programme will contribute research-based evidence to support policies and strategies geared towards steering Tanzania in the desired path and in fulfilling its regional and global commitments. The ultimate purpose is the improvements in the welfare and livelihoods of all citizens, which comes along with the economic, social,

and political rights and civil liberties desired by human beings. REPOA understands this task to be enormous and will require the contribution of many institutions and actors in the development space. REPOA will thus focus on the few thematic research areas, that we believe the in-house multidisciplinary research capacity and our institutional collaboration and networks can deliver during the next five years.

The proposed research thematic areas include:

- 1 Economic resilience, competitiveness, and inclusive growth
- 2 Inclusive governance and citizen participation for sustainable development
- 3 Human development and the empowerment of women and youth

The proposed research areas are outlined here:

## Economic resilience, competitiveness, and inclusive growth

### i The business environment and private sector development

The private sector continues to serve as one of the key drivers of the economy. A conducive business environment and favorable investment climate are critical for private sector growth, job creation, and economic diversification. Research in this area will help identify barriers to business development and provide guidance on how to further attract and retain both domestic and foreign investments. This is vital for Tanzania's trade competitiveness in the East African region, continent of Africa, and the global market. It is also key to the growth of SMEs that are crucial for the youth employment and achieving the demographic dividend.

## ii Structural transformation and development trajectory in Tanzania

As Tanzania continues to transition from an agriculture-based economy to a more industrialised and service-oriented one, it is essential to analyse the progress, challenges, and opportunities this will present. Our work in this area will contribute to the formulation of policies that accelerate transformation of the economic structure, raise productivity, promote balanced development and mitigate disparities within the country across different social groups; furthering our insistence on inclusive growth.

## iii The green transition and climate change

As a resource-intensive economy, reliant on its natural resources for revenue and growth, Tanzania is vulnerable to climate change impacts which threaten its agricultural sector, water resources, and biodiversity. Research on green transition strategies, including renewable energy adoption and sustainable practices will be vital for

building resilience against climate risks. This aligns with global efforts to combat climate change and supports regional sustainability initiatives, including Tanzania's spearheading of the Clean Cooking Project.

## iv Trade competitiveness, value chains and regional integration

Research in this area will aim to understand how Tanzania can overcome barriers to trade, and how Tanzanian producers can effectively integrate into Global value chains (GVC) and regional value chains (RVC), which are most likely to underpin the success of any export-led growth strategy. GVC opens access to technology and information needed for a competitive production process; exposes local firms with stringent international quality standards and leads to innovation that is constantly needed for trade competitiveness. AfCFTA will only be beneficial to Tanzania if producers and exporters will become competitive, and if the various constraints to regional trade integration are effectively eliminated.

## Inclusive governance and citizen participation for sustainable development

### i Domestic resource mobilisation and public expenditure management

Effective domestic resource mobilisation and prudent public expenditure are fundamental for sustainable development. Mindful tax collection mechanisms and efficient use of public funds can significantly improve social services, infrastructure development, and allocative efficiency. This research area supports the broader goal of achieving financial self-sufficiency, reducing dependency on external aid, and accelerating economic growth.



## ii Natural resource governance

Tanzania's abundant natural resources, if managed well, can drive economic growth and development. Research on governance frameworks, transparency, and accountability in resource management ensures that the benefits are equitably distributed and contribute to sustainable development. This is crucial for preventing resource-based distortions in the economy, conflicts, and fostering social and political stability.

## iii Local economic development (LED) in the context of decentralisation

Decentralisation policies aim to empower local governments and communities and allow for more effective decision-making. Researching local economic development strategies can identify best practices and challenges in implementing decentralisation, based on Tanzania's historical experience, but also that of other countries. Examining LED across a country as resource rich as Tanzania will ensure that development and its

benefits reach all regions, reducing regional disparities within Tanzania, and more importantly, empower LGAs to effectively address unemployment of youth in their respective localities.

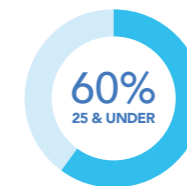
## iv Citizen's participation and voice in public policy

Citizen agency and participation aligns with our commitment to putting people at the centre of all that we do. These two concepts are the cornerstone of democratic governance and accountable policymaking and ensures that the policies being developed work for the people. As more Tanzanians become involved in public policy processes, we see the policies reflecting their true needs and aspirations. This research area supports the broader aim of inclusive governance and sustainable development by fostering a more engaged and informed citizenry, alongside the critical mass of individuals able to analyse and reflect on the impact of policies.

# Human development and the empowerment of women and youth

## i Economic and social empowerment of women and youth

Beyond applying a gender lens to our research, we also see the value in conducting research specifically on women's economic and social wellbeing. Enabling women is crucial for achieving gender equality and inclusive growth that brings along the entire population, and not just certain groups. Research on barriers to women's participation in the economy and society helps design interventions that promote gender equity. While attention to women's empowerment includes young women, it is imperative that specific research and policy engagement focus on the youth more generally, recognising that the population of Tanzania is relatively young, with 60% representing the age of 25 and below.



The highly touted demographic dividend will be significantly delayed unless significant and targeted investments to build the human capital base of our youth is undertaken, along with well-informed and strategically designed youth empowerment programmes.

## ii Human capital development

Research on access to education, healthcare, and other basic services will highlight areas needing improvement and help in policy formulation. With 65% of the population located in rural areas, dispersed across the vast expanse of Tanzania, and considering that 60% represents young people of 25 years and below, the availability and access to key social services between rural and urban, and among the various segments of the population, especially youth and women will be a key area of research. By spotlighting issues of basic social services, greater focus can be applied on how to enable all of Tanzania's population to participate meaningfully



in productive activities for their own welfare and the country's development and accelerate the demographic dividend.

### iii Social protection in the context of societal vulnerability

Social protection mechanisms are essential for safeguarding vulnerable populations against economic shocks and hardships. Research in this area will help to identify effective social safety nets and support systems. This aligns with the global agenda of reducing poverty and inequality and supports regional and global efforts to create more resilient societies. Alongside the Doha Plan of Action, and its associated initiatives, we see great opportunity for REPOA's work to contribute to these discussions and promoting evidence-based design of feasible and transformative social protection system.

### iv Poverty and Inequality

While research on the root causes and manifestations of poverty and inequality had defined REPOA in its early years, further knowledge and research insights are needed in designing targeted interventions to uplift marginalised communities and groups. This supports Tanzania's national development objectives and regional commitments towards inclusive growth and social cohesion. In examining the evolving poverty and other forms of deprivation, both its sources and its implications, we can design more effective strategies to address poverty and inequality, and how to level the field for all to enjoy the same opportunities and benefits from economic growth and natural resources.



→ Zanzibar's Minister of Trade & Industrial Development, Hon. Omar Said Shaaban (second left) launching booklet for REPOA's Research Programme on Structural Transformation & Development Trajectory in Tanzania 2024-28 during the 27th Annual Research Workshop held in Dar es Salaam in 2023. Others are REPOA's Executive Director, Dr. Donald Mmari (right) and along with the Tanzania's Planning Commissioners, Amb. Ombeni Sefue (second right) and Amb. Ami Mpungwe.



# Proposed Staffing

*REPOA's research capabilities are driven by people; qualified and experienced researchers who are specialists in their areas of study. Over the past few decades, we pride ourselves on the fact that we have nurtured and housed researchers who have since gone on to serve far and wide, including in the upper echelons of government. Whilst this may appear counterintuitive, to nurture talents that may, and sometimes do eventually leave us, our Theory of Change (ToC) is clear that this is intentional as we seek to develop a range of policy researchers and analysts.*

Evidence-informed policies require a range of individuals with the capabilities to interrogate and develop policies that take into account the realities and needs of the people that they seek to serve; millions of citizens in Tanzania and beyond. For this reason, REPOA seeks to always ensure a steady pipeline of researchers at all levels of seniority who have the requisite skills to serve internally and externally.

We also clarified our keen interest in research uptake externally and ensuring that the evidence-informed knowledge products we develop are accessed by a wide audience. For this reason, we have bolstered our communications and external engagement function. We know that the work of our researchers will need to

be disseminated to a range of stakeholders, and to do this, we need to strengthen the external engagement function of the institution. This will entail that the communications, M&E and partnerships functions will benefit from a higher-level leadership role, which will bring these key functions together to carry our work further.

Over its nearly 30 years of existence, REPOA's governance structure has enabled it to transition smoothly through leadership successions. During the implementation of this Strategic Plan, REPOA will also recruit its next Executive Director as the current one will be completing his tenure. Through this process we know that succession planning is at all levels, and not only the senior-most. For this reason, we continue to ensure that all managerial roles are focused on organisational needs and having alternate staff to fill positions in the absence of the position holder. Whilst this can be challenging

when running an organisation as lean as ours, we are aware that it is crucial to ensure stability and continuity.

As organisational needs change, and when resources allow, the structure of our team may change. The current organisation structure works well for where we are at present, and what we seek to do, but in line with our programmatic growth plans we see that there may be need to adjust some roles. If so, this will come into effect gradually, and as we continue to read the landscape around us.

# Budget Forecast & Resource Mobilisation

*Our 2025-2029 budget forecast shows an increase in projected needs of 52%. This is driven by a few key factors that to us are crucial to take into account going forward:*

- 1 As Tanzania enters an election year in 2025, we see increasing demand and need for our work. We anticipate an incredibly busy time ahead for REPOA given the work that we do, and we need to ensure that we have the resources to meet this demand.
- 2 We are also looking to expand our offering to a wider audience, including the private sector. This

enables us to diversify not only our 'collaborators' base, but also the diversity of our revenue streams.

- 3 We have articulated proposed staffing changes, including strengthening of the external engagement function, and recruitment of additional researchers. We anticipate recruitment of additional staff in a phased manner over the course of the new SP period. These positions will be created and filled as the demand for our work and capacity of our team grows. Our budget takes this into account.
- 4 We are mindful of inflation rates and depreciation of local currency. These have led to some

additional operational costs and thus we have taken this into account in the budget forecast.

- 5 The increased focus on our M&E and the suggested contribution analysis approach also has budget implications, especially with regard to ensuring we monitor and assess the quality of our work through engagement of independent external consultants.



In 000s of Tanzanian Shillings

	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2025-2029
<b>GOAL 1</b>						
Research-informed evidence used to set a policy agenda and regular reviews	5,014,102	5,551,264	6,225,791	6,848,370	7,588,862	31,228,390
<b>GOAL 2</b>						
Critical mass of policy researchers and analysts in academia, public, private and civil society sectors	3,335,613	3,704,927	4,194,819	4,614,301	5,131,387	20,981,047
<b>GOAL 3</b>						
Policy support sought by various actors	2,462,184	2,687,750	2,956,525	3,252,177	3,577,395	14,936,031
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>10,811,899</b>	<b>11,943,941</b>	<b>13,377,135</b>	<b>14,714,848</b>	<b>16,297,644</b>	<b>67,145,468</b>



→ On the left former ambassadors of Norway and Denmark to Tanzania (H.E Elisabeth Jacobsen and H.E Mette Nørgaard Dissing-Spandet respectively); ambassadors of Sweden and Finland to Tanzania on the right (H.E Charlotta Ozaki Macias and H.E Theresa Zitting respectively) - along with former Zanzibar's Minister of Labour, Economy & Investment, Hon. Mudrick Soraga; and REPOA's Executive Director, Dr. Donald Mmari - lifting copies of the launched report on the Business Climate Survey of Nordic Companies in Tanzania, 2022-2023 at an event held in June 2023.

As we look towards mobilising the resources required to implement this Strategic Plan, we are mindful that the funding landscape continues to change as global priorities shift and competition becomes tighter than ever before. This was one of the key drivers for our intentional focus on being able to tell the story of our contribution to policy formulation; we know why REPOA exists and the crucial role that it plays. This, however, is not always so evident to some of our partners and stakeholders, and we wanted to ensure that we are not taking our track record for granted. As teams change in and out of organisations, including ones that we work closely with, we know that we must always be able to tell our story, and to tell it well to sustain the partnerships that we have, and to form new ones.

In the 2025-2029 period we will continue to think about how to attract the resources needed to implement this new Strategic Plan, and to maintain a steady pipeline to ensure our sustainability. We will build on existing relationships and leverage our results and impact to form new ones; showcasing the impact that REPOA's work has and the need for its continued existence. We firmly believe that resources are not only financial and will look to explore other avenues for collaboration and support, including expertise.







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