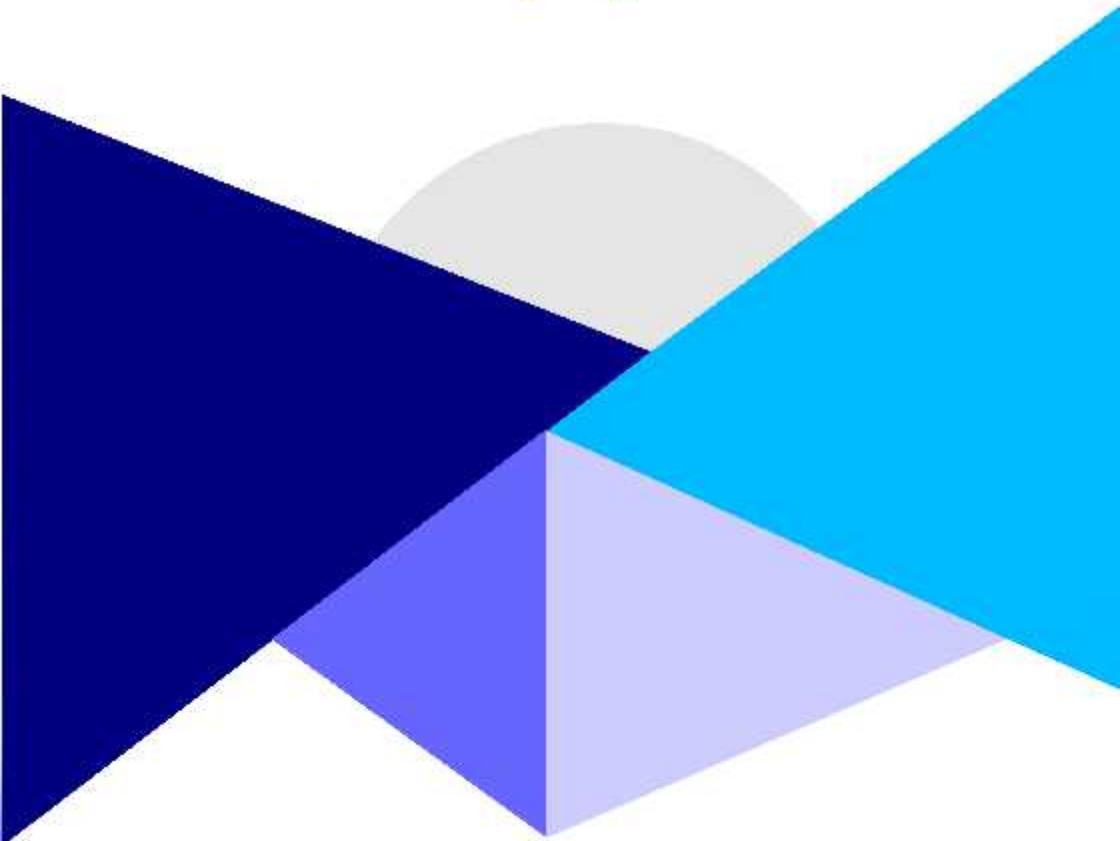


# Strategic Plan 2017-2022

Laying the Foundations



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## Summary

Over the next five (5) years, we seek to:

1. Deliver value added services in information systems research, knowledge management and brokerage, and advocacy for the use of research and evidence in policy processes;
2. Create and deepen our collaboration with policy making institutions and knowledge producing organisations, such as academic and research institutions, the Civil Service and the Legislature;
3. Work to extend our presence in different regions of the African continent, with the aim of expanding our reach in service delivery

As part of our activities, we will conduct research into information systems, with the view of optimising performance, manage knowledge effectively and efficiently for improved uptake in policymaking and development practice, and also undertake advocacy activities for Evidence-Informed Policy Making (EIPM) in our operational areas.

We will continue to pride ourselves in the values with which we deliver our services: professionalism; objectiveness; social responsiveness.

## Introduction

The pace of development globally, is growing very fast to an extent that developing countries, most of which are concentrated in Africa, cannot afford to lag behind.

Many development agendas and strategies are being pursued, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by the United Nations (UN), and Agenda 2063 by the African Union (AU).

The Government of Ghana has worked to align these global development goals with its national priority areas, under the leadership of Ghana's National Development Planning Commission (NDPC).

To meet these targets, development plans, programmes and policies need to consider among many other things;

- the nature, size and dynamics of the problem(s) at hand
- policy options that might be considered to address the problem
- effective and ineffective interventions to solve the problem(s)
- the likely positive and negative (as well as intended and unintended) consequences of proposed plan, programme and policy options
- effective and ineffective modes of delivery and implementation, and
- the costs and benefits of the proposed policy, and on whom will these costs and benefits fall

It is acknowledged that policymaking processes are very complex, multifactorial and nonlinear, especially in developing country contexts. And with the many interests to satisfy, policy makers are constantly challenged to deliver on their mandates in the most effective and efficient manner.

A key ingredient, however, that reduces the risks involved in policymaking is access to timely, high quality and relevant information. Such information that helps policymakers make decisions and get results that are concrete, manageable and achievable are referred to as *evidence* in evidence-to-policy contexts.

### Text Box 1

*Against the realisation that weak institutions undermine national development efforts, the government's Transformation Agenda will aim to strengthen state institutions responsible for development planning and economic management as well as develop efficient mechanisms for citizens' engagement in the development process. **Evidence-based public policy making** and enhancing development communication will form a major part of these initiatives.*

Ghana Shared Growth and Development Agenda II, pp. 23

Considering this challenge posed to policy makers, and the vast availability of publicly available information and knowledge resources, PACKS Africa is positioning itself to encourage and facilitate an efficient and effective utilisation of these resources by policymaking institutions.

As an organisation, PACKS Africa is encouraged to deliver high value products and services to ensure that the challenge faced by policy makers are reduced to the barest minimum, bearing in mind our core values – professionalism; objectiveness; social responsiveness.

As an organisation we seek to become the preferred think tank, managing knowledge for development practice in Africa. And our internal capacities will be developed within the next five years to effectively deliver on this vision.

Being a new organisation, our efforts in the next five years will be directed to:

1. Deliver value added services in information systems research, knowledge management and brokerage, and advocacy for the use of research and evidence in policy processes;
2. Create and deepen our collaboration with policy making institutions and knowledge producing organisations, such as academic and research institutions, the Civil Service and the Legislature;

3. Work to extend our presence in different regions of the African continent, with the aim of expanding our reach in service delivery

We recognize the daunting challenges we are going to face in this regard, as an organisation, hence the need to craft our *modus operandi* in such a manner that will make us sustainable within the period.

Among many other options, we look forward to building trust relationships with other stakeholders, to deliver on our core mandates through win-win arrangements.

We will also rely on the high quality competencies and experiences of our staff, particularly those of the Executive Director, who has been working within the sector for over five years.

The proceeding sections of this document explore:

- Things we will do to fulfil our mission (activities)
- Things we will need to deliver the mission (inputs)
- How we will know we are on the right track (monitoring, evaluation & learning)
- How others will know how we are doing (communication)

## Activities

Being our foundational period, we seek to concentrate on delivering value added services in line with our core activities, which revolve around;

- Information systems research
- Knowledge management, and
- Advocacy for the use of research and evidence in policy making

### Information systems research

Our work in information systems research will be to evaluate information systems, which produce and/or procure information and knowledge resources, process, maintain and store these resources, as well as communicate and use them for various purposes.

The objective of these evaluation works will be to identify strengths and weaknesses, observe trends and explore opportunities for improvement.

In line with these, recommendations will be made after the evaluation work on each information system for actions and decisions that will optimize the performance of the systems.

Our work in this area will constitute the core of our consultancy services, which will be delivered to all kinds of organisations that produce and/or procure information and knowledge resources, manage, secure, communicate and/or use them.

## Knowledge Management

We define knowledge management as the application of management principles such as planning, organizing, directing and controlling, to the entire spectrum of activities performed in the life of knowledge resources – from production or procurement, through processing, maintenance and securing, to the communication and use of these resources.

As such, our work in this area will deploy high value expertise to deliver services such as;

- the synthesis of knowledge on thematic issues in the form of systematic reviews, knowledge maps, policy and budget briefs, infographics and fact sheets,
- the facilitation of open access rights to knowledge resources for policy making institutions within our operational areas,
- the training of staff of policy making institutions, and
- the offer of “information as a service” product ranges to our partners at demand

Our training programmes will concentrate on helping staff of policy making institutions to develop skills to access, evaluate, synthesize, communicate, use and make reference to information and knowledge resources.

Although consultancy services will be provided in this area of our work, we will not relent on including a great proportion of these into customised programmes funded through grants.

## Advocacy for EIPM

Through this strand of our work, we will seek to encourage the use of knowledge, mostly in the form of research and other types of evidence, in policy making processes.

Two main programmes are being deployed in this area, namely, our #Evidence2Policy series and Evidence leagues. Despite these, we will endeavor to include sensitization meetings and workshops into our institutional capacity building programmes to achieve the desired effects of advocacy.

### *#Evidence2Policy Series*

This novel programme from PACKS Africa is scheduled to be run as a periodic discussion of topical issues, with particular focus on available research for policy making.

With the aim of reaching out to a wider audience, the programme intends to involve stakeholders such as policy making institutions, research producing institutions, opinion leaders and the general public in such discussions. Targeted objectives for the series include;

- the provision of a remote platform to enhance dialogue between researchers and policymakers on topical issues worth policy intervention
- an education of the general public on scientific issues in topical areas without the challenge of physical convergence

- the broad exploration and identification of new areas for further research in topical areas
- the chronicling of scientific issues digested in the public domain for easy reference by audiences who may not be able to participate

### *Evidence leagues*

Leagues will be developed for individual public officials and institutions, with the aim of tracking trends in their use of knowledge products in their official work as agents of public policy making.

Such leagues will factor into their construction, differences among individual officers and institutions, including, experience, levels of influence and budget resources at their disposal.

Effort will be made to treat these as advocacy tools and not necessarily as an assessment of their effectiveness in public policy making, which would otherwise be perceived as combative, resulting in disinterest.

To this effect, some of the league results will be treated as internal resources of these institutions, and communicated to individual parties or as a collective assembly.



*Photo Credit: Kirchuffs Atengble*

## Inputs

This section focuses on the second component of our strategy, which is to “create and deepen our collaboration with policy making institutions and knowledge producing organisations, such as academic and research institutions, the Civil Service and the Legislature”.

### Governance and management

Although a new player in the sector, PACKS Africa has instituted a strong Board of Directors, who are poised to ensure the proper functioning of the organisation.

Members of the Board have been selected from different backgrounds to contribute their expertise to the works of the

organisation ([see a profile of the Board](#)). And it is the desire of the organisation to main a good mix of professionals on the Board, whose fields of operation will contribute directly to its operations.

Management of the organisation is also led by a dedicated group of young professionals, who have vast experience in the operational areas of the organisation.

In addition to these, services of other professionals will be secured to augment human resource shortfalls, at least in our foundational stage ([see organisational chart](#)). Capacity development and retention will be high on our priority list.

### Business model

As a private think tank, PACKS Africa is not guaranteed any source of income. We are committed therefore to the exploration of all legitimate and ethical avenues for maintaining the operations of the organisation.

Primary among the sources opened to the organisation is the rendering of consultancy services in line with our operations. Due to the technical nature of our work in information systems research and knowledge management, the organisation will secure a good amount of its finances from services rendered.

In our foundational stage, we may not have the full complement of capacity to deliver on certain activities, hence the organisation will secure the services of other consultants in such cases. And

Agreements for the Performance of Work (APW) will be signed with these consultants.

Apart from consultancy services, the organisation will participate in competitive calls for grant applications and the expression of interest from funding institutions both locally and internationally.

A third strand of sources we will consider for funding are donations. We will work to build a reputation for quality service delivery, and communicate the impact of our operations to an extent that institutions and individuals who seek to donate resources for improvement in public policy making in our catchment areas will prefer to work with us.

### Operational resources

Through our fundraising mechanisms, resources (human, financial and logistical) needed to deliver services to our partners will be secured.

In instances where we are not able to secure operational resources, we will not hesitate to enter into agreements and other arrangements with our partners to secure such resources.

### Partnerships and networks

Partnerships will constitute a great deal of our work. The nature of our work is such that partnerships will be a key mechanism for sustainability, and will cut across all kinds of stakeholders – funders, beneficiary institutions, ancillary service providers.

To this end, Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) will be signed with a good amount to our partners, while not ignoring contracts and Agreements for the Performance of Work (APW). In our best interest, we will work at maintaining such trustworthy relationships.

We will endeavor to join networks and associations that seek parallel interests as we do. Staff of the organisation will also be encouraged to join these networks and associations as individual members, where possible, for the benefits of capacity development.

## Monitoring, evaluation & learning

As an organisation seeking to influence the uptake of research and other types of evidence in policy making process within our operational areas, PACKS Africa is keen on integrating Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) systems in all that we do.

MEL at PACKS Africa is structured at organisational level and at programme/project level, and shall cover all three focal areas: information systems research, knowledge management and advocacy for Evidence-Informed Policy Making (EIPM).

For organisational level MEL, we will focus our foundational period activities on a continuous review of our operations, including;

- Our capacity as an organisation (staff, funding, partnership, etc.), and
- Relevance of our programmes/projects to our mission

In subsequent times however, we look forward to reviewing our planning, implementation and MEL processes, our organisational structure, and mission of the organisation.

For programme/project level MEL, specific activities will be developed to fit into programme/project deliverables for each milestone/period. Precisely, we will focus our attention in this area on monitoring targets, results, changes and challenges.

With respect to capacity for MEL, we have a good availability of staff competence with much experience, who also employ such skills in our information systems work.

## Communication

It is the desire of PACKS Africa to have a targeted communication with its audience. And to this effect, different tools will be employed, with due cognizance of peculiar needs of our stakeholders and our own capacity.

*He who talks  
incessantly, talks  
nonsense*

African Proverb

Our target audience will include individual, policy making institutions such as an individual Ministry of state, the Cabinet or Parliament, or some form of collectivity; sector-based academic or research institutions, civil society organisation and think tanks;

and local and international funding partners. Others will include individual staff of policy making institutions, as well as members of the general public.

Apart from our external audiences, PACKS Africa will also concentrate on facilitating knowledge sharing internally among staff of its divisions, and with its Board of Directors.

At regular intervals, needs of our different stakeholders will be assessed, and the set of tools used in communication consequently revised. These revisions will endeavor to incorporate the effectiveness of communication tools, media and channels used.

In our foundational years, we seek to concentrate on the underlisted communication tools, media and channels; and a communication action plan will be developed to guide a targeted implementation of this strategy.

- build, maintain and update an appealing corporate website
- create and maintain a social media presence, with particular focus on Twitter at start
- deploy Dropbox for internal file management and knowledge sharing
- use Eventbrite for managing subscriptions to our public engagement programmes
- develop targeted publications such as research reports, training, workshop and event reports, programme and project reports, and synthesized knowledge, in the form

of systematic reviews, budget and policy briefs, and fact sheets

- engage the media through mostly news and press releases, and
- create avenues for face-to-face interactions with stakeholders such as consultation, review and briefing meetings, as also will be through our workshops

## Looking forward

As an organisation, PACKS Africa is developing the needed structures to give us a firm foundation.

While working to achieve results in our priority areas, we will bring to bear characteristics such as synergy and flexibility in our activities, which are sure guarantees to our success.

Our corporate values will surely guide us, even as we synergize our approach to MEL and communication.



*Photo Credit: Emmanuel Adusei Poku*

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