

Beyond 'Community Advisory Boards': effectively engaging research communities

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KEMRI Wellcome Research Programme (KWRP)

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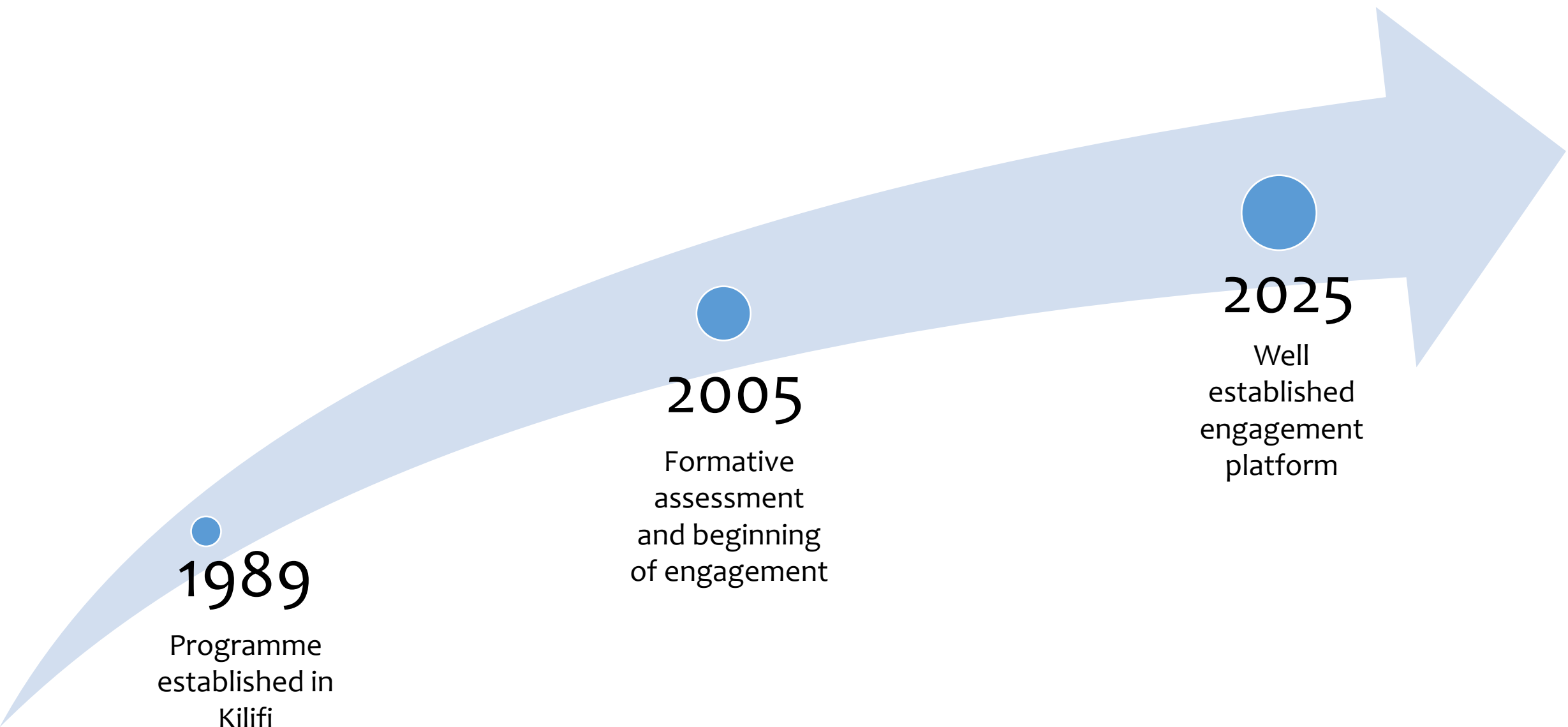
REPUBLIC OF KENYA



21st October 2025



Our journey

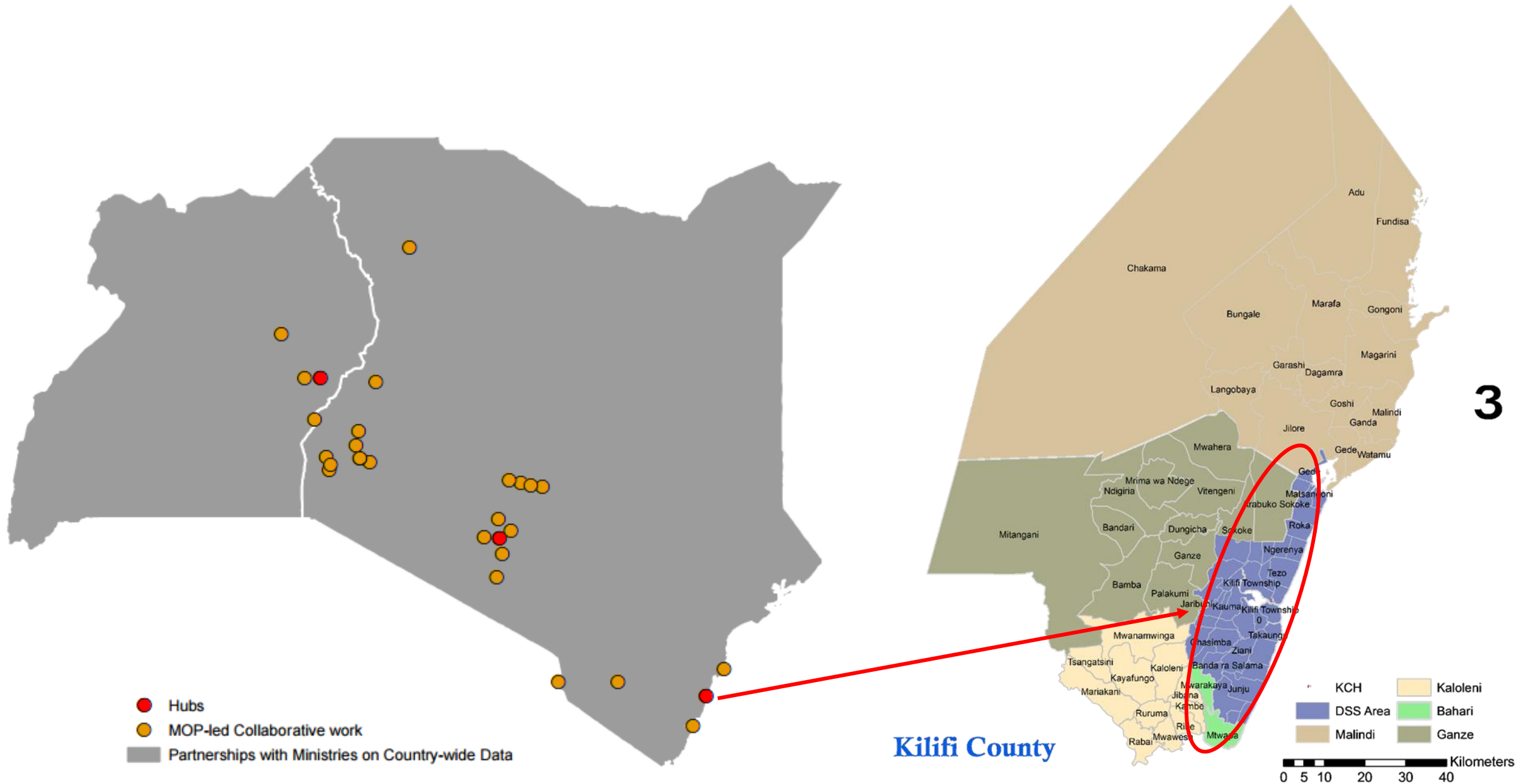


1989
Programme
established in
Kilifi

2005
Formative
assessment
and beginning
of engagement

2025
Well
established
engagement
platform

KEMRI Wellcome Research Programme



Research sites and audiences



KILIFI (HQ)

Clinical trials; Surveillance; Social Science/Health Systems; Biobank

Engagement audience: Host (mostly **rural**) community; DoH.; Schools & young people; Universities; Media



NAIROBI

Clinical trials; Health Systems; Policy; Regional and International Collaborative research

Engagement audience: **Policy makers** (MoH, Medical associations); Hospitals; Universities; Media



MBALE (Uganda)

Clinical research in 2 large busy hospitals

Engagement audience: mostly hospital based stakeholders; Mbale/Soroti community; MoH, Media (Radio)

Focus on Kilifi – rationale for engagement



- Rapid expansion from simple building to state of art campus
- Small lab to large state of art Clinical, Microbiology and Immunology labs
- Mostly rural population with low literacy levels
- Poor understanding of research
- Constrained healthcare
- Rumors (blood)

Arguments for engaging communities

- So...; an increasing focus on respect, rights, interests, and well-being of research participants; (Marsh, 2008 & Kamuya, 2013)
- Can support strengthening of research processes such as informed consent, and benefits/payments (Gikonyo, Bejon, Marsh, Molyneux 2008 & Njue et al 2014)
- Important for scientists to understand the lived experiences of communities, research participants, and/or patients during planning and conduct or research.

Updated Declaration of Helsinki

WMA DECLARATION OF HELSINKI

Even well-proven interventions should be evaluated continually through research for their safety, effectiveness, efficiency, accessibility, and quality.

6. Medical research involving human participants is subject to ethical standards that promote and ensure respect for all participants and protect their health and rights.

Since medical research takes place in the context of various structural inequities, researchers should carefully consider how the benefits, risks, and burdens are distributed.

Meaningful engagement with potential and enrolled participants and their communities should occur before, during, and following medical research. Researchers should enable potential and enrolled participants and their communities to share their priorities and values; to participate in research design, implementation, and other relevant activities; and to engage in understanding and disseminating results.

Looking beyond Community Advisory Boards (CABs)

KWRP experience

Engagement with communities



**Network of Community Representatives
(CAB-like structure)**



Open Days

Researcher contiguity



Policy spaces



Community meetings



Social events

Engaging broader publics



Community theatre



Radio + social media

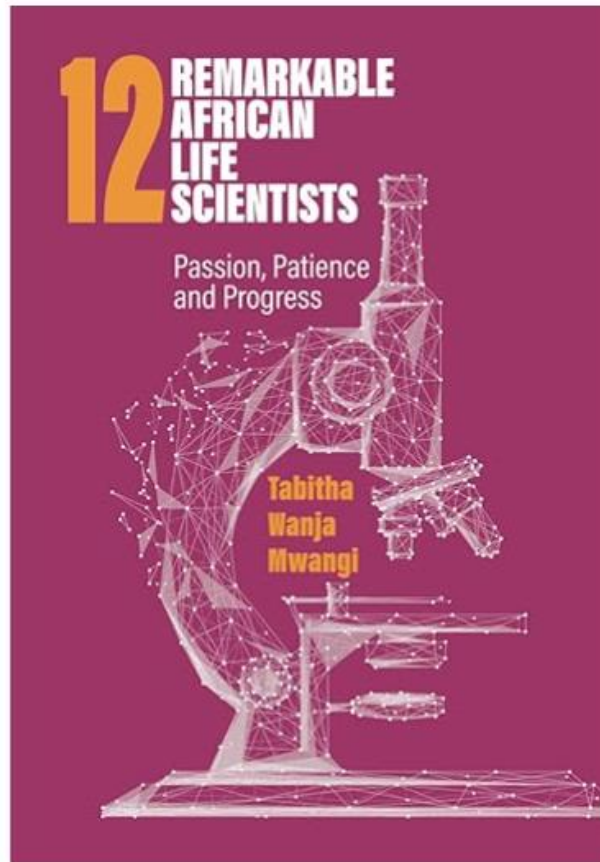


Exhibitions

Nurturing future scientists



Media – talk shows

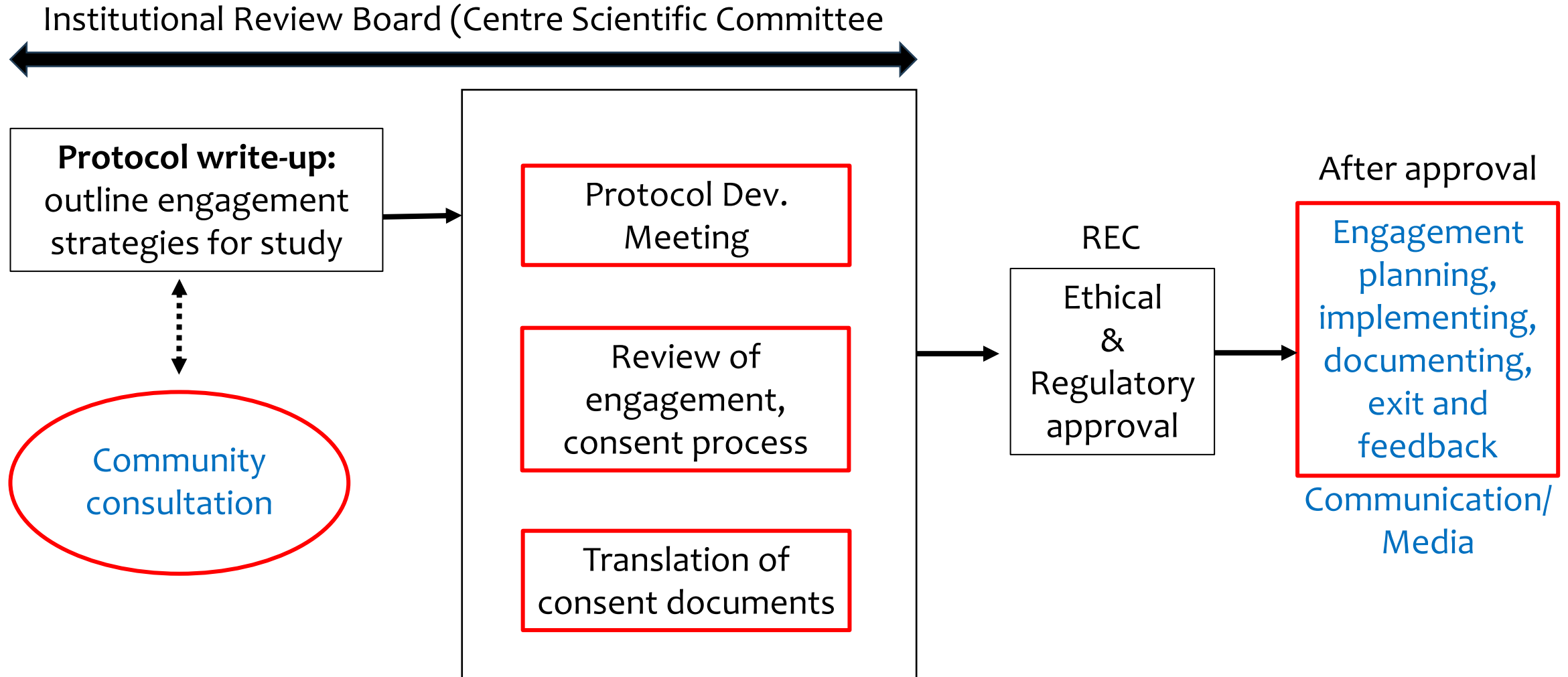


Inspirational book



School leavers attachment

Embedding engagement institutionally



Key learnings

- Engagement must be implemented in **an ethical manner** – is continuous, not a one-off event
- Requires resource allocation – **must** budget for staff and activities (an important budget line)
- Balance research timelines with meaningful engagement (should not be a tick box)
- Leadership support crucial for successful engagement work (Directors/PIs are involved)

Engagement Platform (2025)

KHDSS Community Facilitators



Mary



Wara



Doreen

School Engagement Team



Shadrack



Grace

Nairobi: Policy & Public Engagement



Joy



Lynnea

Research Communication and Consent



Kanze



Betty



Mercy



Lydia

M & E/Action Research



Chebet



Gladys

Field Staff



Anderson



Raymond



Hilda



Dennis

Media Engagement



Roselyne

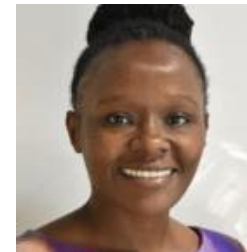


Angela

Team Leads/Management



Salim



Cynthia



Noni

Additional resources

1. Marsh, V., Kamuya, D., Rowa, Y., Gikonyo, C., & Molyneux, S. (2008). **Beginning community engagement at a busy biomedical research programme: experiences from the KEMRI CGMRC-Wellcome Trust Research Programme, Kilifi, Kenya.** *Social science & medicine*, 67(5), 721-733.
2. Angwenyi, V., Kamuya, D., Mwachiro, D., Kalama, B., Marsh, V., Njuguna, P., & Molyneux, S. (2014). **Complex realities: community engagement for a paediatric randomized controlled malaria vaccine trial in Kilifi, Kenya.** *Trials*, 15, 65. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1745-6215-15-65>
3. Davies, A., Mwangome, N., Yeri, B., Mwango, G., Mumba, N., Marsh, V., ... & Jones, C. (2019). **Evolution of a programme to engage school students with health research and science in Kenya.** *Wellcome open research*, 4.
4. Mumba, N., Njuguna, P., Chi, P., Marsh, V., Awuor, E., Hamaluba, M., ... & Kapulu, M. C. (2022). **Undertaking Community Engagement for a Controlled Human Malaria Infection Study in Kenya: Approaches and Lessons Learnt.** *Frontiers in Public Health*, 10.
5. Gichuru E, Kombo B, Mumba N, Sariola S, Sanders EJ, van der Elst EM. (2018). **Engaging religious leaders to support HIV prevention and care for gays, bisexual men, and other men who have sex with men in coastal Kenya.** *Critical public health*, 28(3), 294-305.

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