

JANUARY - APRIL, 2026

# NEWSLETTER



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PHOTO: LEAP4YOUTH project staff from MwAPATA and NYCOM during the Agri-Skills Lab in Zomba

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to share the highlights of our work conducted in the first four months of the year 2026. Between January and April, 2026, we have carried out quite significant research, outreach and dissemination events, including the 16<sup>th</sup> Eminent Speakers Series (ESS), which called for a structured collective action from the champions of change in both the public and private sectors to achieve agricultural transformation in Malawi. The newsletter also showcases events such as the dissemination of two Food Systems Policy Briefs that we conducted under the GIZ Transformative Initiative (TI Malawi) Project, the ANAPRI Policy Dialogue on Trade Restrictions in Malawi, the UCHI Roundtable Event, and the district-based youth engagement activities under the LEAP4YOUTH project supported by AGRA. The issue also exhibits our research outputs published in the first quarter of the year. We hope that reading these articles will be vital for your learning about our work as we keep engaging and collaborating in various areas.

Enjoy the read and stay captivated.



Mr. William Chadza  
Executive Director

## LEAP4YOUTH Project Conducts District-Based Youth Engagement Activities

As part of the process of institutionalising youth-led agri-food systems platforms in the LEAP4YOUTH Project, MwAPATA, in partnership with the National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM), with support from AGRA, conducted a district Policy Clinic with youth networks in Mchinji and an Agri-skills Lab for youths in Zomba. The Mchinji Policy Clinic was held at the Mchinji Community Hall from 2nd to 3rd February 2026, while the Zomba Agri-Skills Lab was held at Zomba Community Stadium Hall from 6th to 7th February 2026. The Policy Clinic aimed to strengthen youth engagement in agrifood policymaking by generating evidence and establishing institutionalised feedback mechanisms. Through the Policy Clinic, the project raised awareness of agricultural and youth-related policies and their implementation mechanisms. The Policy Clinic also exposed the youths to vital knowledge about the available youth opportunities in the agri-food systems. MwAPATA research findings on available youth opportunities and the agricultural incentive booklet were also shared during the Policy Clinic.

On the other hand, the Agri-skills Lab for youths in Zomba equipped young farmers, agripreneurs, and innovators with the critical skills necessary for mindset change towards effective engagement in agricultural policy-making processes and for understanding agricultural and youth-related policies, strategies, and implementation mechanisms. The youths were also introduced to Policy Advocacy as well as Policy Formulation and Implementation processes to enhance their understanding of their role in the process in order to strengthen their active participation in agri-food systems policymaking.

## LEAP4YOUTH Project Hosts the First Ministerial Youth Pre-Budget Consultation



Hon. Joseph Mwanamvekha speaking during the Ministerial Youth Pre-Budget Consultation Workshop

The "Enhancing Inclusive Youth-Led Platform for Evidence-based Agricultural Policymaking and Implementation in Malawi" (LEAP4YOUTH Project), implemented by the Mwapata Institute in partnership with the National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM), with funding from AGRA, supported the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Decentralisation in organising the Ministerial Youth Pre-Budget Consultation for the 2026 - 2027 National Budget. The event was held at BICC in Lilongwe on 19th January 2026. The consultation was facilitated by the responsible Minister, Hon. Joseph Mwanamvekha, MP.

Speaking during the event, Hon. Mwanamvekha urged the youth in the country to support the Government's efforts to mobilise more resources for various developmental projects for the 2026/2027 financial year. He also said that the Government is facing several challenges, as 90 per cent of the money it collects in tax revenue goes to mandatory expenses such as wages, salaries, and interest payments.

"To mobilise more resources for us to do what we are supposed to do, we need to invest now, not in consumption but in production and make sure that youths are properly empowered," he said.

According to the Minister, youths in Malawi make up over 50 per cent of the population, hence the need to empower them with skills that can make them productive and therefore, add value to the country's economy.

The LEAP4YOUTH project's main goal is to institutionalise youth-led agri-food systems platforms that influence policymaking and policy implementation, contributing to sustainable youth employment in Malawi.

## Mwapata and TI Malawi Project Partners Disseminate Two Food Systems Policy Briefs

On Thursday, 22nd January 2026, the Mwapata Institute disseminated the two Policy Briefs titled "Policy and Practice: Lessons for Localising Malawi's Food Systems Transformation" and "Does accessing multiple social support programmes improve household resilience and food security?" The two Policy Briefs are the outcomes of the research conducted by the Mwapata Institute under the Transformative Initiative for Food Systems (TI Malawi) Project, in partnership with GIZ Malawi and CSONA. Mwapata's Research Fellow, Dr Anderson Gondwe, and Research Analyst, Mrs Dinah Salonga, presented the two Policy Briefs.

During the dissemination workshop, which was held at the BICC in Lilongwe, various stakeholders in the Food Systems sector, including development partners, Government Ministries, Departments, and Agencies (MDAs), farmers' organisations, the youth, women, Civil Society, the private sector, the media, and academia, discussed actionable solutions that would empower policymakers and stakeholders with evidence-based insights to inform their decisions and initiatives related to food security and resilience.

The dissemination workshop also served as a vital platform for enhanced awareness and collaborative development of actionable strategies to address the identified challenges in the food systems based on policy research findings that are outlined in the two Policy Briefs. The event was graced by the Deputy Director of Planning at the Ministry of Agriculture, Mr Readwell Musopole. Speaking during the event, Mr Musopole called for strengthened collaboration among stakeholders in putting into action the policy recommendations highlighted in the two Policy Briefs.



Research Analyst, Mrs Dinah Salonga during her presentation at the dissemination workshop

## The MwAPATA Institute Convenes the Inaugural National Food Systems Technical Working Group Meetings



Dr Anderson Gondwe (Fifth from left, front row) and Mrs Dinah Salonga (Second from left, back row) representing MwAPATA at the FS-TWG meeting



MwAPATA Research Fellow, Dr Anderson Gondwe, facilitating the Food Systems Sub-Technical Working Groups (FSS-TWG) meeting

The MwAPATA Institute, in partnership with the National Planning Commission and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (MoAIWD), convened the inaugural National Food Systems Technical Working Group (FS-TWG) meeting and the first Food Systems Sub-Technical Working Groups (FSS-TWG) meeting. The inaugural FS-TWG meeting was organised with support from GIZ Malawi's STEP UP Project and was held at the 44 Hotel in Lilongwe on Thursday, 5th February 2026, while the first FSS-TWG meeting was held at the Lifestyle Boutique Hotel in Lilongwe on Tuesday, 14th April, 2026. Research Fellow, Dr Anderson Gondwe and Research Analyst, Mrs Dinah Salonga, represented the MwAPATA Institute at both meetings.

The inaugural FS-TWG meeting brought together various stakeholders in Malawi's Food Systems, including government ministries and departments, civil society organisations, the private sector, academia, financial institutions, research institutions, development partners, and the media. During the meeting, five sub-TWGs were established to coordinate action on critical pillars. These are: Policy and Programmes; Advocacy and Communications; Fundraising; Capacity Building; and Research, Monitoring & Evaluation. At the meeting, participants discussed the possibility of merging the Research, M&E, and Capacity Building sub-TWGs in the future, given the similarities in mandates and memberships. The FS-TWG formulation reflects Malawi's commitment to strengthening the coordination, financing, and governance of its food systems transformation.

On the other hand, the first FSS-TWG provided the space for each of the sub-technical working groups to develop a prioritised set of interventions to be implemented in 2026 to transform food systems. During the meeting, the sub-technical working groups developed a consolidated high-level annual program of action on food systems transformation, guided by the Food Systems Synthesis Report action tracks and investment plans. They also identified resource gaps and mapped strategies and plans for resource mobilisation to fill financial gaps in food systems transformation programs. In addition, the sub-technical working groups developed and rolled out a Food Systems Monitoring and Evaluation Framework guided by the Food Systems action tracks, pathways and development frameworks. They also identified Food Systems advocacy and communication issues, gaps, and developed implementation plans to address the identified gaps in order to ensure an impactful food systems transformation.

The FSS-TWG meeting came as Malawi edges towards the 2030 development milestones endline, with the need for careful prioritisation of interventions that would steer the transformational agenda of the initiative to achieve the country's development ambitions through a Food Systems approach. The meeting was a decisive step forward to ensure a streamlined and more coordinated implementation of interventions to achieve the goals of Malawi's food systems transformation.

## The Mwapata Executive Director Participates in the Launch of the 2025 National Census of Agriculture

Representing the Mwapata Institute, the Executive Director, Mr William Chadza, participated in the Launch of the 2025 National Census of Agriculture (NACA) Report by the National Statistical Office (NSO) held at BICC in Lilongwe, on 16th March 2026. The launch brought together various stakeholders in the agriculture research sector as well as development partners. The Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Hon. Rosa Mbilizi, was the Guest of Honour.

Among other objectives, the 2025 NACA findings aim to support evidence-based agricultural planning, implementation and evaluation. The findings are also expected to support policymaking aimed at strengthening national food security, increasing employment opportunities and improving national development informed by data.



Mwapata Executive Director Mr William Chadza (2nd from right) receiving a copy of the NACA Report from the Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Hon. Rosa Mbilizi.

## Mwapata Co-organizes the 5th African Regional Conference on Loss and Damage



Dr Maggie Munthali (First from left, second row) and other participants during the group photo at the 5th Regional Conference on Lost and Damage

## Dr Maggie Munthali Participates in the Policy Dialogue on Earth Day



Research Fellow Dr Maggie Munthali was a panelist at the Policy Dialogue on Earth Day organised by the World Agriculture Forum (WAF). The dialogue was held on Wednesday, 22nd April 2026, from 3:00PM (CET) under the theme "Building Carbon-Positive Food Systems through Soil Health". Representing Mwapata, the leading Agricultural Policy Think Tank in Malawi, Dr. Munthali joined five distinguished panelists that discussed the WAF Global Soil Health Coalition and the urgent need to place soil health at the center of climate policy.

In collaboration with partners led by the Civil Society Network on Climate Change (CISONECC), the Mwapata Institute co-organised the 5th Edition of the African Regional Conference on Loss and Damage, held at BICC in Lilongwe from 25th – 27th March 2026. The theme for the conference was: "Advancing Sustainable, Equitable and Just Financing and Technical Support for Loss and Damage in Africa." The Conference aimed to advance a coherent approach to financing, assessment, and addressing loss and damage (L&D), while enhancing access to technical assistance, including through the Santiago Network on Loss and Damage (SNLD). The Minister of Natural Resources, Hon. Patricia Wiskes, was the Guest of Honour.

Representing the Mwapata Institute at the conference, Research Fellow Dr Maggie Munthali, moderated the discussion on the topic "Delivering Technical Support for Loss and Damage: Lessons from SNLD". The discussion focused on identifying financing models and governance structures capable of delivering accessible and equitable resources; improving robust, context-appropriate methodologies for assessing economic and non-economic losses; and examining how litigation, human rights frameworks, and accountability tools can reinforce climate justice in Africa.

## MwAPATA participates in the Commodity Platforms Capacity Strengthening Workshop and Learning Visit



Dr Gondwe during MwAPATA's presentation at the Commodity Platforms Capacity Strengthening Workshop

The MwAPATA Institute participated in the Commodity Platforms Capacity Strengthening Workshop and Learning Visit under the TRADE Programme. The workshop, which was held at the Amaryllis Hotel in Blantyre on 11th February 2025, aimed to strengthen the institutional capacity of commodity platforms by addressing critical governance, financial, strategic, and accountability gaps identified through the assessment, thereby positioning platforms for sustainable operation and more effective engagement with the TRADE Programme. Representing the MwAPATA Institute at the workshop were Research Fellow, Dr Anderson Gondwe and Research Analysts, Mrs Dinah Salonga and Mrs Joyce Minofu.

On behalf of MwAPATA, Dr Anderson Gondwe made a presentation titled "Strengthening Strategic Planning and Policy Alignment of Commodity Platforms". The presentation focused on research-based recommendations towards strengthening platforms' capacity to develop realistic, bankable, and costed multi-year strategic plans. The recommendations in the presentation also ensure clear alignment of platform priorities with national economic transformation and industrialisation agendas, as well as policy coherence as a strategic tool to attract partnerships, investment, and diversified funding sources.

## Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Launches the Policy Innovations Hub

On Thursday, 26th April 2026, the MwAPATA Institute participated in the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) Policy Innovations Hub Launch and Dialogue held at the BICC in Lilongwe, organised by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), under the Global CGIAR Policy Innovation Science Program (Policy Program). Malawi is one of five countries, alongside Ethiopia, Kenya, Nigeria, and India, selected to host the Policy Program, which seeks to address the persistent gaps in the systematic translation and application of research evidence to support the holistic transformation of food, land, and water (FLW) systems. The initiative particularly targets high-level policy arenas where strategic decisions shaping these systems are made.

Officially launched by the Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Hon. Thoko Tembo, MP, the Policy Hub serves as the central interface between the CGIAR, the Government of Malawi, and development partners, ensuring effective coordination of all country-specific activities under the Policy Program. Representing MwAPATA at the launch were the Executive Director, Mr William Chadza and Research Fellow, Dr Anderson Gondwe.

Following the Deputy Minister's official launch of the hub, the MwAPATA Executive Director made a presentation on "Agriculture Policy Research in Malawi". Among other things, the presentation highlighted recommendations towards improving the agricultural policy analysis practice in Malawi. The recommendations included the need to strengthen partnerships among policy analysis institutions and diversifying financing for the agricultural policy analysis. The presentation also called for generating credible evidence to transform agri-food systems in Malawi.



MwAPATA Executive Director, Mr William Chadza during his presentation at the Innovations Policy Hub Launch



Vice President for the Centre of Technical Expertise at AGRA, Mr Jonathan Said during his keynote presentation at the 16<sup>th</sup> Ndizotheka Eminent Speakers Series (ESS) event

## 16th Eminent Speaker Calls for a Structured Collective Action from Champions of Change in Malawi to Achieve Agricultural Transformation

On 9th April 2026, the MwAPATA Institute convened the interactive and insightful 16th edition of the Ndizotheka Eminent Speaker Series (ESS) held at the BICC in Lilongwe. The 16th ESS was organised in collaboration with the National Planning Commission of Malawi, the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and Oxfam, with support from AGRA and the Royal Norwegian Embassy in Malawi. The theme for the event was "Policy and State Capability for Agricultural Transformation: Creating and Enabling Environment for Private Sector Investment in Malawi."

In his presentation, the keynote speaker, Mr Jonathan Said, who is the Vice President for the Centre of Technical Expertise at AGRA, called for a structured collective action from the champions of change in both the public and private sectors to achieve agricultural transformation in Malawi. He emphasised that if the problem hindering the transformation is misaligned incentives and fragmented actors, then the solution is not more traditional projects but structured collective action.

The thought-provoking presentation from the eminent speaker was followed by various reactions from the participants, who raised different suggestions as potential solutions to unlock transformative private sector investment in agriculture. The discussion was mainly centred on the coordination of key players investing in agricultural transformation. A panel discussion that followed the plenary cemented the eminent speaker's insights as the panelists shared their perspectives on actions that ought to be taken to create an enabling environment for private sector investment in Malawi's agriculture. Among other things, approaches like commodity cluster compacts were recommended as a pathway to agricultural transformation.

The 16th ESS brought together key stakeholders from the government, civil society organisations, development partners, private sector, farmer organisations, academia and research institutions, students and the media to discuss policy-related challenges and opportunities towards creating an enabling environment for private sector investment in Malawi for agricultural transformation. The eminent speaker series aims at increasing awareness and strengthening coordination among these stakeholders on critical policy issues affecting agriculture, natural resources, trade and community development in Malawi.

## MwAPATA Conducts a Deep-Dive Analysis of the Apiculture Value Chain under the Ulimi ndi Chilengedwe Project



MwAPATA Research Analysts, Mrs Joyce Minofu (left), Mrs Dinah Salonga (right) and Research Fellow Dr Christone Nyondo (2<sup>nd</sup> from right) during a key informant interview with a Consultant at HoneyBee Company in Blantyre

The MwAPATA Institute is currently conducting a deep-dive analysis of the apiculture value chain as part of the Ulimi ndi Chilengedwe (UCHI) project. This research involves engaging key industry stakeholders at different value chain nodes to learn and gather insights. These include manufacturers and suppliers of beekeeping inputs, beekeeping farmers, honey processors, honey off-takers, forestry conservation institutions, etc.

So far, the MwAPATA research team has collected data from districts in the southern and eastern regions, including Blantyre, Mulanje, Chiradzulu, Thyolo, Zomba, Balaka, Ntcheu and Mangochi. The research team will continue to collect data from other districts in the central and northern regions. The key outcome of the research will be a Policy Brief that MwAPATA will publish, highlighting apiculture practices, benefits, challenges, opportunities, and policy recommendations to improve the honey value chain in Malawi.

The UCHI Commercialisation Project is a five-year initiative (September 2024 - September 2029) financed by the European Union (EU) and implemented by UNDP Malawi in collaboration with the Malawi Government, particularly the Ministries of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development; Industrialisation, Business, Trade and Tourism; Local Government and Rural Development; Natural Resources, Energy and Mining; and Health.

## Stakeholders at the UCHI Roundtable Event Brainstorm Pathways to the Commercialisation of the Banana, Soybean, and Rice Value Chains

On Thursday, 16th April 2026, the Mwapata Institute, in partnership with UNDP Malawi, the TRADE Program and the National Planning Commission, with support from the European Union in Malawi, convened a high-level, multi-stakeholder roundtable event under the Ulimi ndi Chilengedwe (UCHI) Commercialisation project. The event, which was held under the theme “Turning Potential into Commercial Outcomes: Strengthening Implementation for Inclusive Agricultural Commercialisation,” took place at the Sunbird Capital Hotel in Lilongwe. During the event, the MwAPATA Institute presented key findings and policy recommendations from the deep-dive analyses of the banana, soybean, and rice value chains, with a focus on translating those findings into coordinated action for inclusive agricultural commercialisation.

UNDP Deputy Country Representative, Chika Charles Aniekwe, asserted that the three value chains hold significant potential for Malawi’s agricultural transformation, emphasising that strengthening them can contribute to improved productivity, expanded agribusiness opportunities, and increased incomes for smallholder farmers. On the same note, Secretary for the Ministry of Industrialisation, Business, Trade and Tourism, Wiskes Mkombezi, highlighted that the Government has strategies and policies in place to ensure the transformation of the value chains under the UCHI project. He cited the small and medium enterprises and cooperatives that deal with issues related to various value chains, including the three.

The roundtable event brought together government policymakers, private sector actors, financial institutions, development partners and other critical stakeholders who brainstormed and mapped pathways to the transformative implementation of evidence-based actions for Inclusive Agricultural Commercialisation.



From the left (in front), Research Analyst, Mrs Joyce Minofu, Research Fellows, Dr Anderson Gondwe and Dr Christone Nyondo during a plenary session at the UCHI Roundtable Event

## Stakeholders Warn that Trade Restrictions Stagnate Malawi's Agricultural Growth



Group photo of the participants at the Policy Dialogue on Agricultural Trade Restrictions in Malawi

On 21st April 2026, the Mwapata Institute convened a Rapid Evidence and Policy Dialogue on Agricultural Trade Restrictions in Malawi. The dialogue, held at Sunbird Capital Hotel in Lilongwe, was organised in collaboration with the Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources (LUANAR) and supported by the Africa Network of Agricultural Policy Research Institutes (ANAPRI). The event brought together stakeholders in trade and related sectors to discuss, expand the scope, and address the knowledge gaps left by the Mwapata and LUANAR's recent study on the potential impacts of export mandates on Malawi's economy and development trajectory on an "ex-ante" basis. The stakeholders shared more extensive insights required to quantify the impacts of broader trade restrictions beyond those of export mandates. Among other things, most of the participating stakeholders in the dialogue agreed that trade restrictions risk undermining long-term agricultural growth in Malawi. The participants called for more predictable, rules-based trade policies supported by targeted safety nets and strategic grain reserves to balance food security concerns with stable and competitive agricultural markets.

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## Mr Lemekezani Chilora Participates at the AGRA Media Onboarding Meeting

MwAPATA's Research Analyst, Mr Lemekezani Kingston Chilora, participated in the Media Onboarding Meeting organised by AGRA on 16th March 2026 at the Bingu International Convention Centre (BICC) in Lilongwe. The meeting aimed to strengthen the capacity of journalists from different districts and institutions to better understand AGRA's mandate, strategic priorities, and country-level interventions in Malawi. In addition, the meeting aimed to build informed, long-term partnerships between AGRA and its partners and the media, and to enhance accurate, evidence-based reporting on agriculture and food systems, thereby increasing the visibility of AGRA-supported initiatives that contribute to inclusive agricultural transformation.

Representing the MwAPATA Institute, Mr Chilora delivered a 5-minute pitch on the "Enhancing Inclusive Youth-Led Platform for Evidence-based Agricultural Policymaking and Implementation in Malawi" (LEAP4YOUTH Project), which the MwAPATA Institute is implementing in partnership with the National Youth Council of Malawi (NYCOM), supported by AGRA.



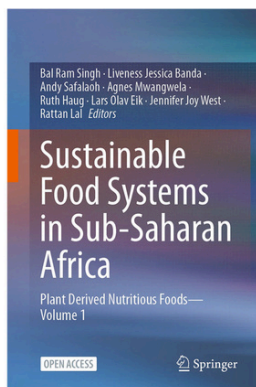
Research Analyst Mr Lemekezani Chilora presenting on behalf of the MwAPATA Institute at the AGRA Media Onboarding Meeting

## Research Outcomes Published in this Quarter

### Do Land Reforms Promote Equity in Land Rental Market Participation? Evidence from Malawi

Book Chapter, Published on 26 February, 2026

In this chapter, which has been published in the Sustainable Food Systems in Sub-Saharan Africa: Plant Derived Nutritious Foods Journal - Volume 1, MwAPATA researchers Muthali, Chilora and Muyanga, with co-authors Phiri, Chitete, Malata and Machira from LUANAR investigate the inequities between male and female-headed households in land rental market participation in sub-Saharan Africa. Using the amount of land rented-in, overall results reaffirm that rental market participation is higher among male-headed households, but the gap is on the decline. However, the contribution of the reforms, particularly the transfer from communal ownership to individual property rights is yet to play a role in addressing the gap between the gender groups.



## Mrs Joyce Minofu Represents MwAPATA at the PPVC II Project Workshop



MwAPATA Research Analyst, Mrs Minofu (right) during a Breakaway Session at the PPVC II Project Workshop

MwAPATA's Research Analyst, Mrs Joyce Minofu represented the MwAPATA Institute at the Policy Prioritisation through Value Chain Analysis (PPVC II Project) Workshop, held at Sankala Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya, from 9th to 11th March 2026. Joyce and fellow participants at the workshop finalised the Malawi Banana Value Chain analytics under the PPVC II project.



### Does accessing multiple social support programmes improve household resilience and food security?

Policy Brief, Published on 27 January, 2026

In this Policy Brief, MwAPATA Researchers Gondwe, Salonga, & Chiwaula examine whether access to multiple social support programmes improves household resilience and food security in Malawi. They find that participation in multiple programmes is associated with higher food consumption and resilience, and recommend bundling complementary interventions to enhance impact, especially in the current context where households face multiple economic shocks.



### Policy Lessons for Localising the Food Systems Transformation Agenda in Malawi

Policy Brief, Published on 23 January, 2026

MwAPATA Researchers Gondwe, Nankwenya, Salonga, & Chiwaula review Malawi's policy for supporting food systems transformation efforts. The Policy Brief highlights strong policy intent but weak implementation due to underfunding towards critical enablers of transformation. It calls for increased and re-prioritised financing, stronger institutional coordination, and enhanced regulatory enforcement. Recommendations in the Policy Brief include the need for budget allocations to prioritise initiatives that encourage the diversification into nutrient-dense crops and livestock and investments into long-term enablers such as research, extension, and infrastructure.

## About MwAPATA



### Evidence for Transformation



#### VISION

To be a sustainable, world-class, Malawian agricultural policy research think-tank.

#### MISSION

To generate credible evidence for policy engagement, formulation, and implementation support.

### OUR CORE VALUES

Professionalism

Relevance

Independence

Mutual Respect

Excellence

Sustainability