

# Building a Resilient & Impactful Global Health Career

From Clinical Research to National Policy

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"Making strategic and clinical impact on  
people and populations."

This mission has guided my journey from the clinic, to the research site, to the halls of  
national policy

# My Professional Pathway

**2005-2008**  
**Clinical**  
**Foundations**

**2008-2012**  
**Study**  
**coordinator**

**2013-2019**  
**Research**  
**Scientist**  
**"independence"**  
**CO-I > PI**

**2020-Present**  
**Senior principal clinical**  
**research scientist**  
**\*KEMRI Ag DSPPGM 2022-**  
**2025**  
**PI >CO-I**

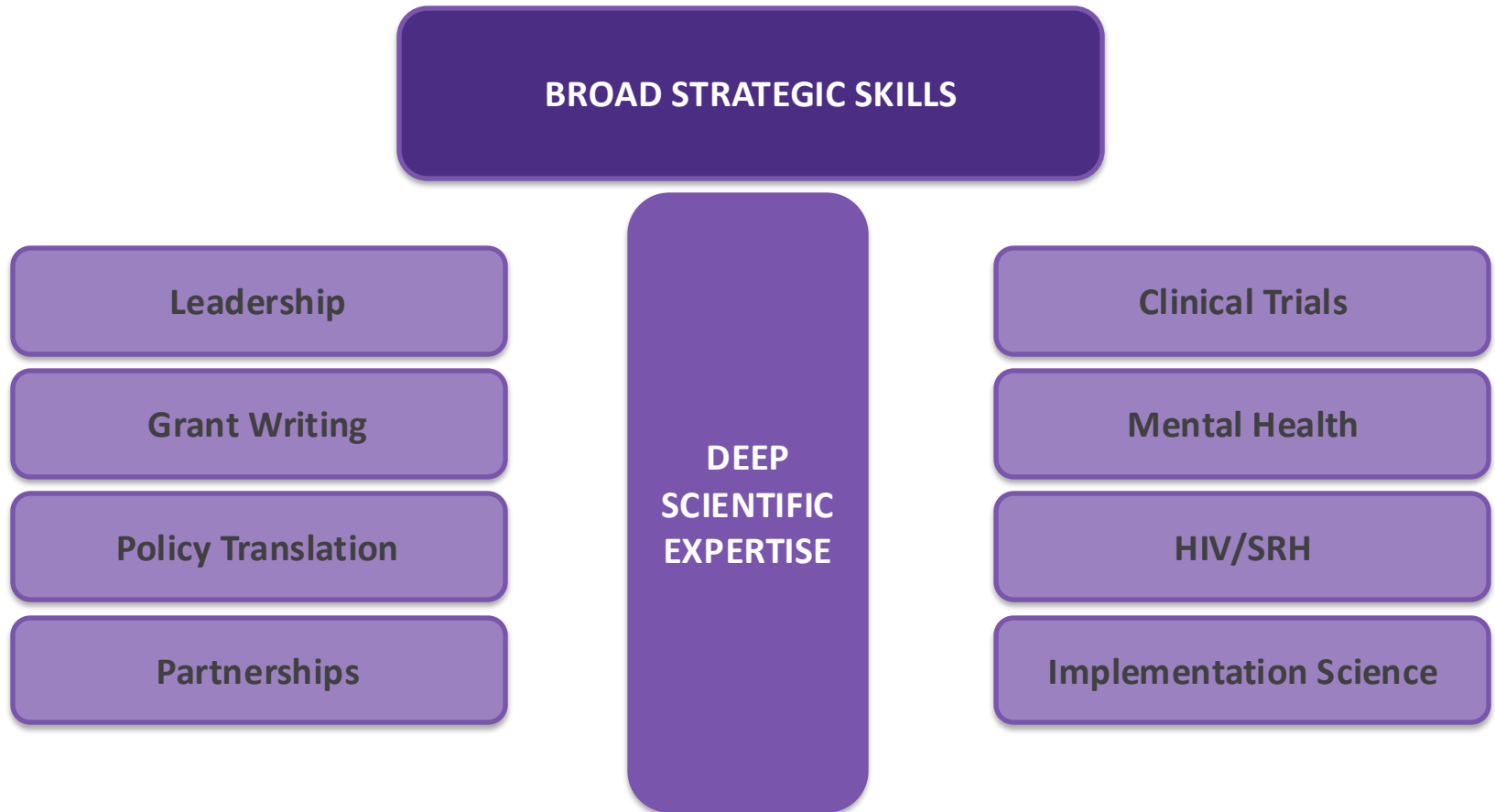
MBChB → MSc → PhD → MMed (Psychiatry)

**30+ Multi-site Trials**  
**100+ Publications**  
**\$50M+ Research Portfolio**  
**120+ Staff**

PI & director the KEMRI Kargeno Research and Policy Hub-Kisumu

**We are pluripotent**

# The "T-Shaped" Global Health Professional



# Part 1: Mastering the Core Fundamentals



## Grant Writing

Securing diverse funding sources through a strategic, portfolio approach



## Publications

Building a cohesive narrative through high-impact publications to influence policy

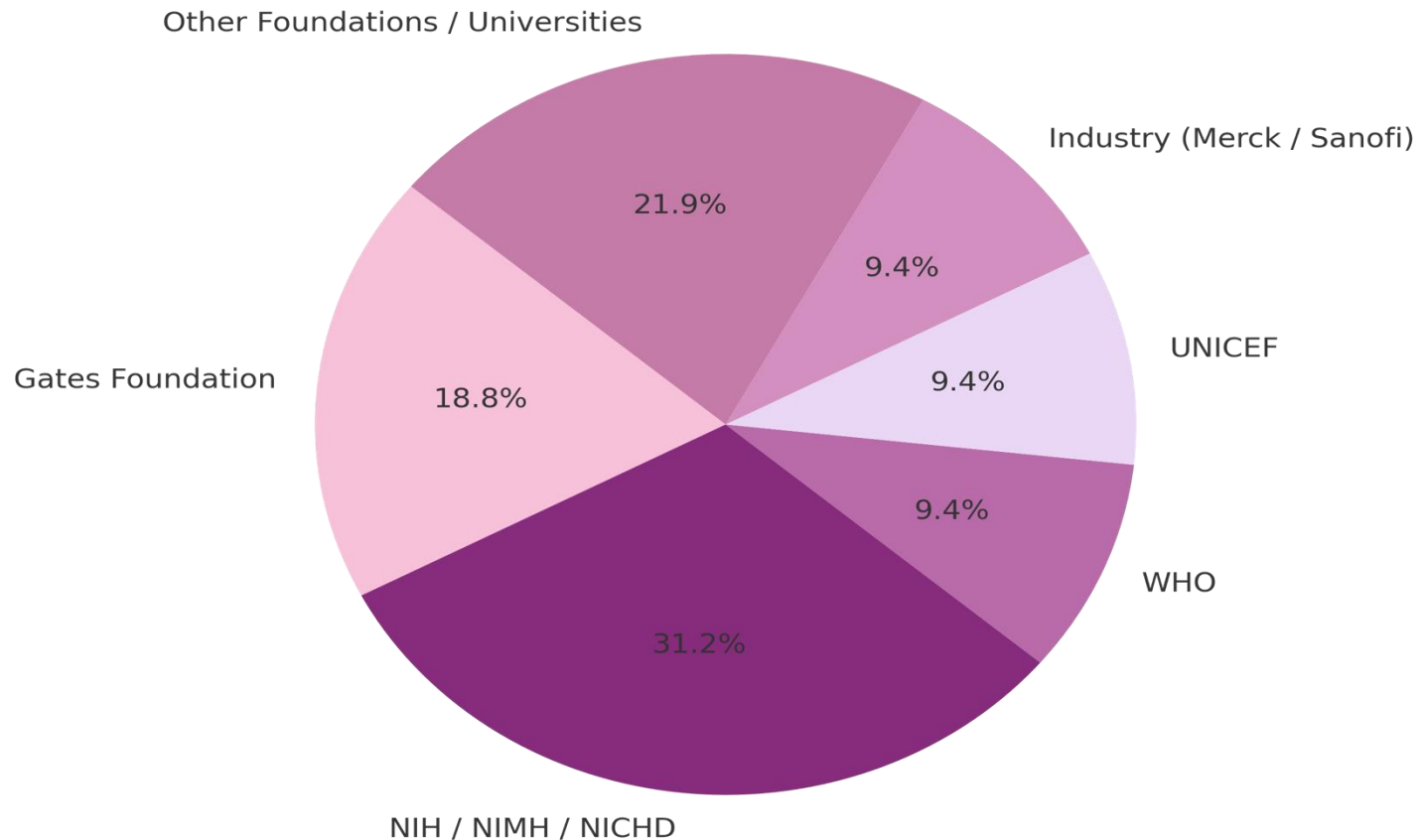


## Time Management

Prioritizing tasks effectively as a leader with expanding responsibilities

**Mastering the core fundamentals of grant writing, publications, and time management is essential for building a resilient and impactful global health career.**

# Grant Writing: Don't Put All Your Eggs in One Basket



Resilience comes from diversifying funders and understanding their different priorities

**Socialise don't specialise**

# Grant Writing: Building a Cohesive Story

## The Evolving Narrative

My research portfolio has built a cohesive story over time:  
From MAMAS (stigma & ANC/HIV access) →  
→ ANC–HIV & FP–HIV integration → ECHO  
→ iCCM (community systems) → MOTIVATE & MACCESS (digital innovation)  
→ Pith Moromo & Pii Enigma (structural determinants)  
→ Covid era: Vaccine clinical trials (Covid, RSV, HPV)  
→ Tunawiri, TATUA, VSM (mental health & social support).

## Connecting the Dots

Each grant builds on the previous:  
→ moving from qualitative and epidemiologic studies → implementation science → biological mechanisms, and → large clinical and vaccine trials  
  
creating a coherent path toward stronger health systems.

## Mentorship and Productivity

A deliberate grant-development pathway (Co-I → Co-PI → independent PI)  
  
enabled mentees to secure their own funding and transition into scientific leadership.

**"Each grant is a chapter.  
Your portfolio is the book."**

**30+ completed studies | 7 active trials**

# Publication Strategy: Evidence to Impact

## The Evolving Narrative Narrative

106+ publications

Aim for a publication record that reflects depth, consistency, and purpose. High-quality papers across related themes : whether in SRH, HIV prevention, HPV, community systems, or mental health

build your scientific identity and demonstrate your leadership in the field

## Connecting the Dots Dots

publications should speak to each other and demonstrate intellectual continuity:

→shifting from describing problems, →to testing solutions, →to evaluating mechanisms, → to informing scale-up.

shows funders and policymakers that you are not doing isolated projects — you are building a program of science.

## From Paper to Policy

- FP/HIV integration policy,
- WHO HIV/FP guidance,
- WHO's single-dose HPV,
- Kenya's pneumonia guidelines,
- iCCM and community health policy,
- CHP–PHN UHC platform

demonstrating publications as a lever for national and global change

## Mentorship and Productivity

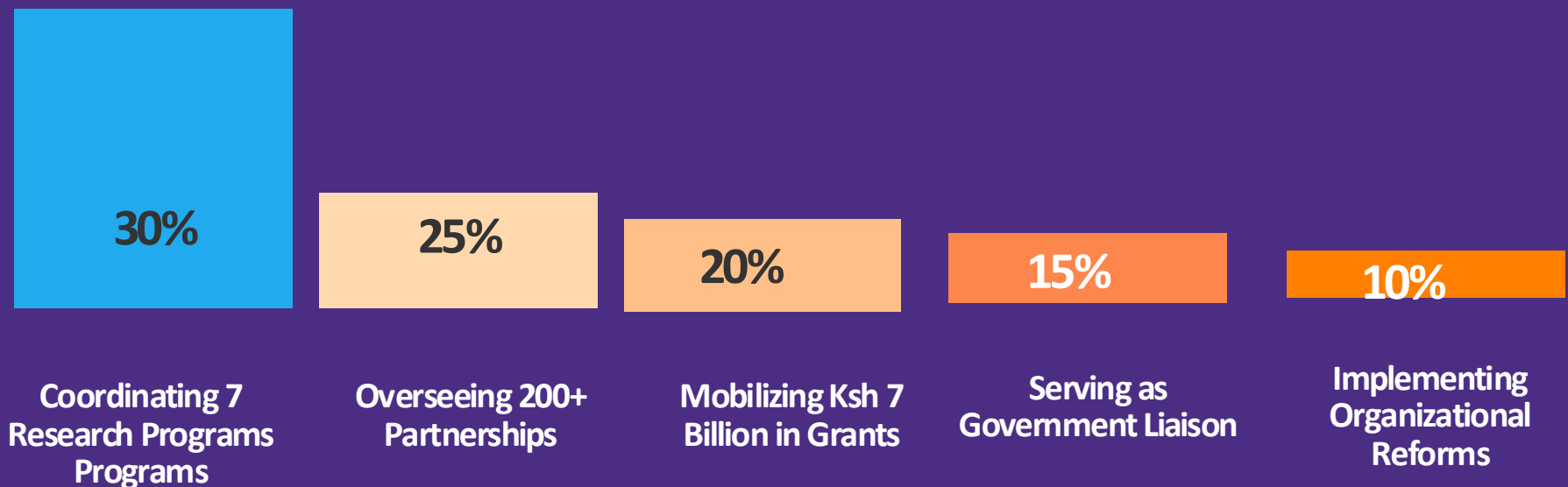
A structured publication strategy — first-authorship for mentees and senior authorship for myself

- has grown capacity,
- accelerated careers,
- ensured sustained productivity.



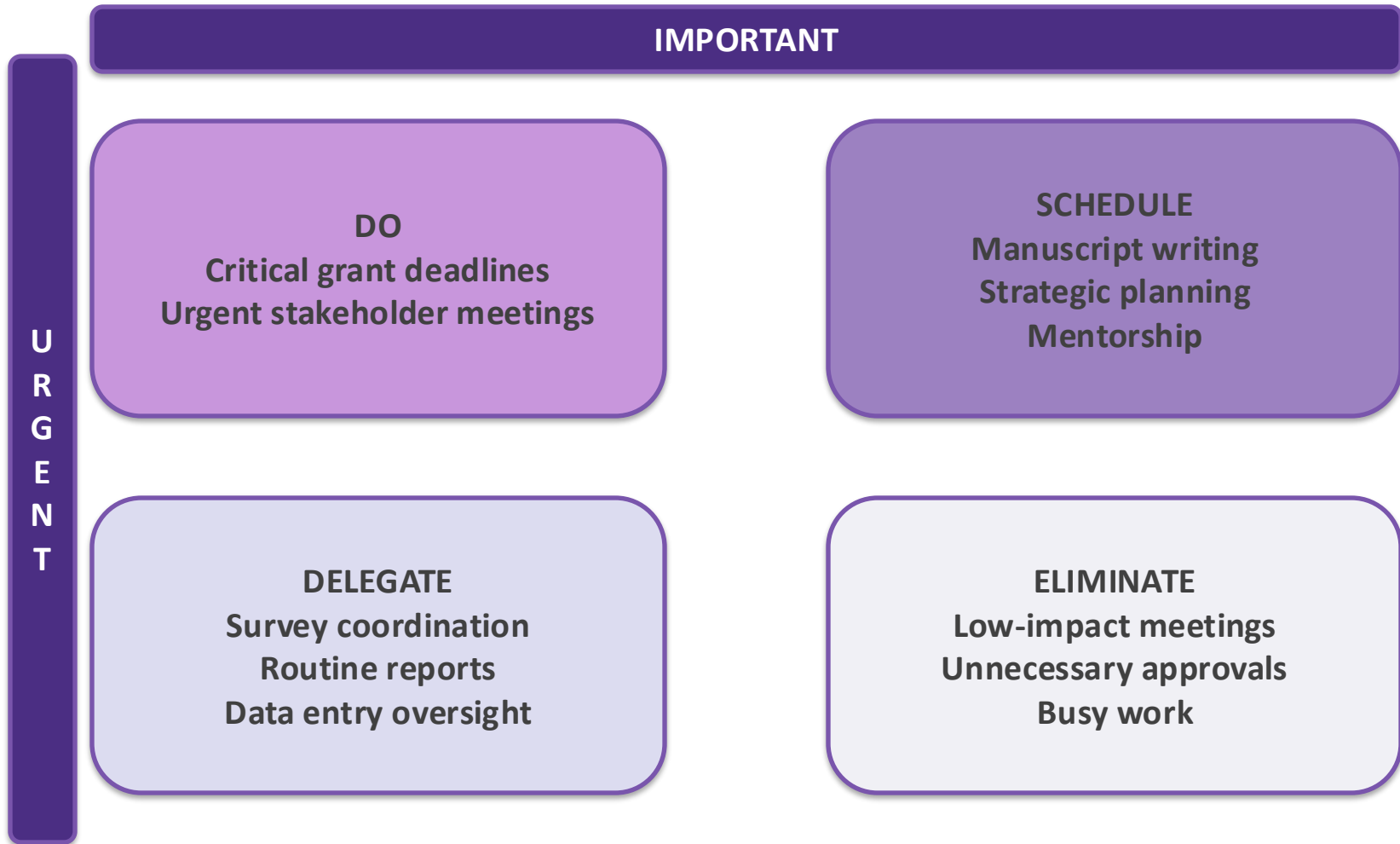
# Mastering time: The 'Acting Director' Test

Percentage of time spent on key responsibilities as Acting Director



How? Prioritization is key

# Prioritization: The Eisenhower Matrix for Researchers



Guard your "Focus Time" for writing and strategic thinking



## **Part 2: Building Resilience & Strategic Agility**

- **Repackaging Your Skills**
- **Expanding from PI to Leader**

# Navigate Shifts: The "Repackaging" Mindset

## Case Study 1: The Pivot

- Core Skill: Leading complex women's health trials.
- Repackaged From: Contraceptive safety (ECHO Trial).
- Repackaged To: Vaccine efficacy (KEN SHE HPV Trial).

## Case Study 2: The Deep Dive

- Identified Gap: Mental health was the missing piece in AGYW wellbeing.
- Strategic Move: Returned to medical school for Psychiatry.
- Result: New expertise, new funding streams (Tunawiri, TATUA studies).

# From Principal Investigator to Institutional Leader



## Amplifying Scientific Impact

Moving from Principal Investigator to institutional leader enables broader scientific influence through interdisciplinary collaboration and larger-scale initiatives.



## Understanding Institutional Systems

Administrative roles offer valuable insights into policy-making, resource allocation, and the functioning of institutional systems, empowering informed decision-making.



## Personal and Professional Growth

Embracing leadership enhances personal development and increases the ability to shape research directions on a larger scale.

*"My time as Acting Director wasn't a detour from science; it was an accelerator for impact."*

# Systems Thinking: Leadership in Action: The One-Stop-Shop

## Established KEMRI's One-Stop-Shop External Grants Office

Unlocked nearly Ksh 7 billion in annual grants portfolio by streamlining KEMRI's grant management processes.

## Served as KEMRI's Lead Interface with Key Stakeholders

Collaborated closely with the Ministry of Health, National Treasury, Attorney General's Office, and development partners to navigate complex policy and regulatory environments.

## Played a Pivotal Role in High-Stakes Negotiations

Led negotiations with partners like Wellcome Trust, USARMY-WRAIR, LSTM, CDC, and JICA, balancing institutional integrity and national interests.

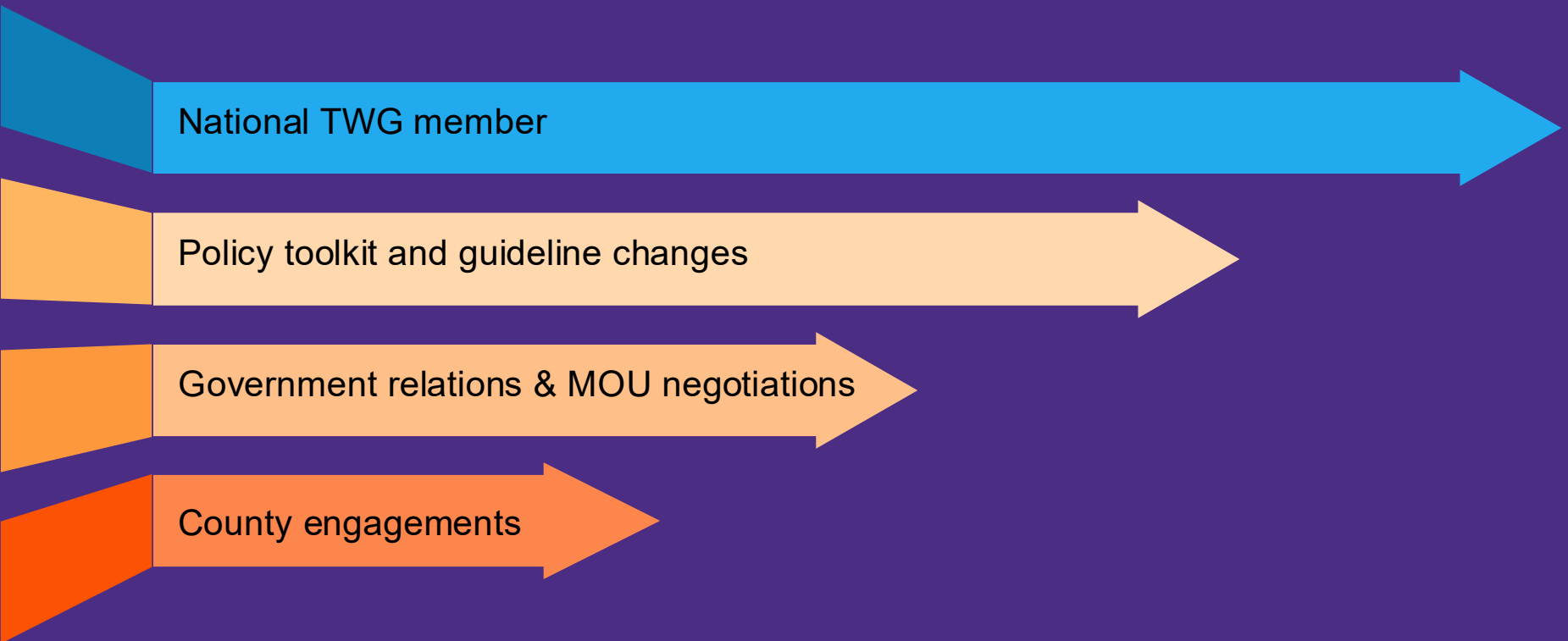
## Coordinated KEMRI's Diverse Scientific Programs

Provided strategic oversight and operational leadership for KEMRI's seven multidisciplinary research programs, spanning a staff complement of ~2,000.

## Stewarded KEMRI's International Collaborations

Managed and strengthened KEMRI's portfolio of over 220 active partnerships and collaborations with global health institutions.

# From Research to Policy Influence



## A shaper of the system

# Contribution 1: Evidence for Community Health



- Provided critical evidence on the role of community health workers (CHWs) in strengthening community health systems in Kenya. Kenya.
- We have demonstrated that CHWs can safely and effectively deliver essential services like services like treating childhood pneumonia, malaria, and diarrhea in the community, as well as providing family planning and mental health health support.
- **This evidence has informed national policies and policies and guidelines, enabling the scale-up of up of these community-based interventions to interventions to achieve universal health coverage.**



# Contribution 2: Innovation for Access



## Mobile phone improving adherence

A mobile-based platform to improve adherence and retention among women living with HIV in Kenya



## Community health workers with smartphones

Use of mobile phones to enhance integrated community case management (iCCM) delivery in Homa Bay County, Kenya



## Data management system

Expertise in the design, implementation, and evaluation of digital health interventions and electronic data management systems

**Impact:** Demonstrated how tech can solve practical barriers to care

# Contribution 3: Centering Mental Health

## Identified Mental Health as a Critical Gap

Recognized that mental health was a missing piece in the holistic wellbeing of adolescents and young women (AGYW) in sub-Saharan Africa.

## Leading Landmark Mental Health Integration Studies

Now serving as the Principal Investigator on two groundbreaking studies - Tunawiri and TATUA - that aim to integrate mental health care into existing HIV and perinatal services.

## Building a New Sub-Specialty

Combining expertise in infectious diseases, maternal health, and psychiatry to pioneer an integrated approach at the intersection of HIV, sexual and reproductive health, and mental health.

## Mentoring the Next Generation

Supervising graduate students whose research explores the links between mental health, HIV, and other global health challenges, building capacity in this critical area.

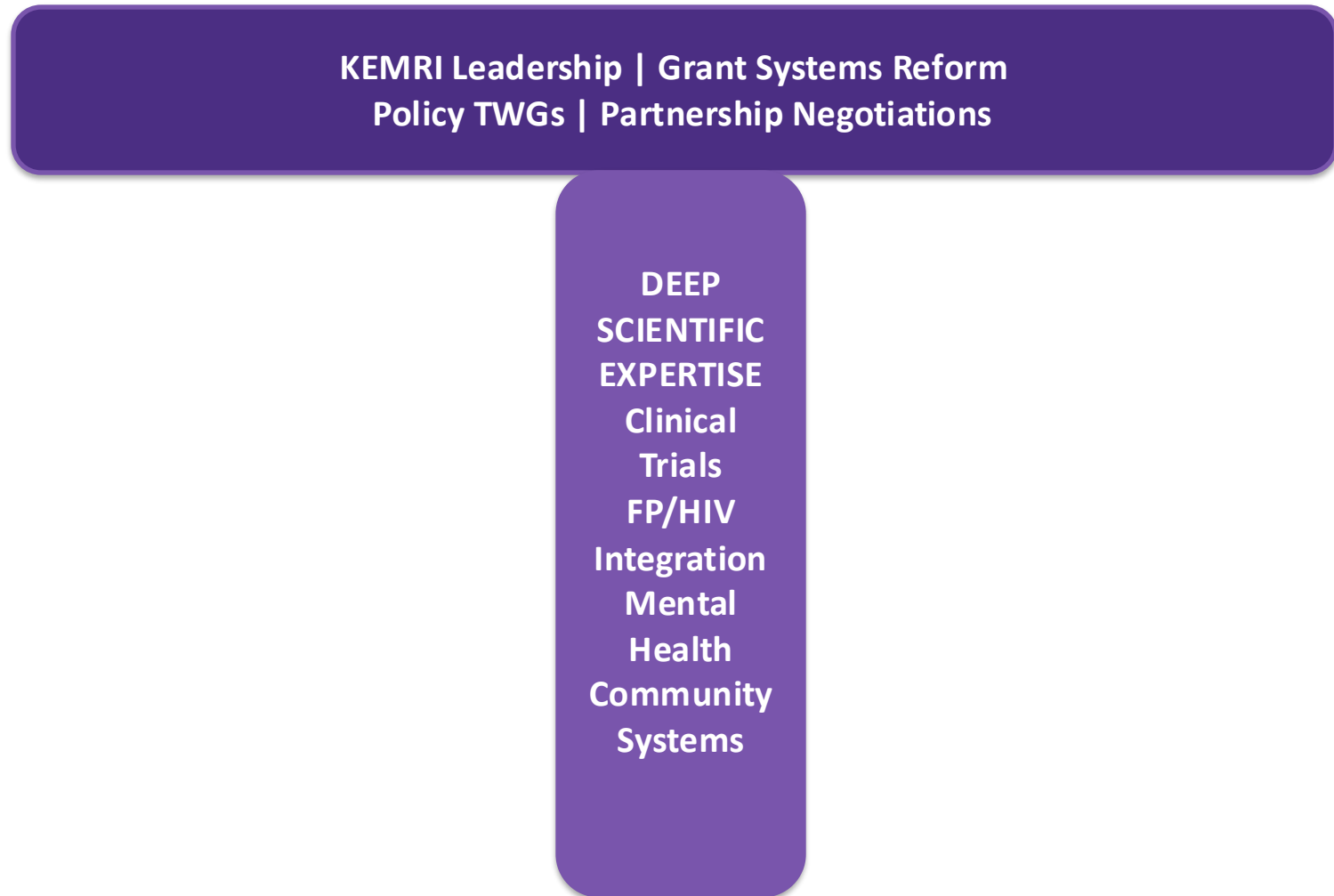
## Contribution 4: Understanding the Political Landscape



- Used political science frameworks to analyze adolescent health prioritization
- Applied Public Arenas Model to understand policy gaps
- Examined competing definitions of adolescent pregnancy in Kenya

**Impact: Research doesn't just identify health problems - it analyzes the system to find solutions**

# Bringing It All Together: The T-Shaped Leader



Result: Both scientific excellence AND institutional impact

# Framing Your Story for the Next Role

## *Job search & Preparation*

Your CV is a narrative of increasing impact:

### • THEN

I conducted a study on FP/HIV integration

### • NOW

I generated evidence that shaped the national FP/HIV integration toolkit and trained providers across 47 counties

**For Interviews:** Have stories ready that demonstrate both depth and breadth

# Your Toolkit for a Resilient Career



## Be Strategically Curious

Understand the ecosystem beyond your project



## Diversify Your Portfolio

Cultivate multiple funders and skills



## Lead from Where You Are

Ownership, mentorship, and systems thinking are leadership



## Protect Your Purpose

Ruthlessly prioritize what aligns with your 'why'

**“A resilient career is built not on a single grant,  
but on a reputation for scientific excellence,  
operational integrity, and the ability to bring  
evidence to action.”**

# Acknowledgement

I come as one, but I stand as 10,000

-Maya Angelou





**Thank You**