

REPORT OF THE AUDITOR-GENERAL ON REGIONAL CENTRE ON GROUNDWATER RESOURCE EDUCATION, TRAINING AND RESEARCH IN EAST AFRICA (RCGWRET&REA) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE, 2023

PREAMBLE

I draw your attention to the contents of my report which is in three parts:

- A. Report on the Financial Statements that considers whether the financial statements are fairly presented in accordance with the applicable financial reporting framework, accounting standards and the relevant laws and regulations that have a direct effect on the financial statements.
- B. Report on Lawfulness and Effectiveness in Use of Public Resources which considers compliance with applicable laws, regulations, policies, gazette notices, circulars, guidelines and manuals and whether public resources are applied in a prudent, efficient, economic, transparent and accountable manner to ensure the Government achieves value for money and that such funds are applied for the intended purpose.
- C. Report on the Effectiveness of Internal Controls, Risk Management and Governance which considers how the entity has instituted checks and balances to guide internal operations. This responds to the effectiveness of the governance structure, risk management environment and internal controls, developed and implemented by those charged with governance for orderly, efficient and effective operations of the entity.

An unmodified opinion does not necessarily mean that an entity has complied with all relevant laws and regulations and that its internal controls, risk management and governance systems are properly designed and were working effectively in the financial year under review.

The three parts of the report are aimed at addressing the statutory roles and responsibilities of the Auditor-General as provided by Article 229 of the Constitution, the Public Finance Management Act, 2012 and the Public Audit Act, 2015. The three parts of the report when read together constitute the report of the Auditor-General.

REPORT ON THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Opinion

I have audited the accompanying financial statements of Regional Centre on Ground Water Resources Education Training and Research in Eastern Africa set out on pages 1 to 30, which comprise of the statement of financial position, as at 30 June, 2023 and the statement of financial performance, statement of changes in net assets, statement of cash flows and statement of comparison of budget and actual amounts for the year then ended and a summary of significant accounting policies and other explanatory information in accordance with the provisions of Article 229 of the Constitution of Kenya and Section 35 of the Public Audit Act, 2015. I have obtained all the information and explanations which to the best of my knowledge and belief, were necessary for the purpose of the audit.

In my opinion, the financial statements present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Regional Centre on Ground Water Resources Education Training and Research in Eastern Africa as at 30 June, 2023 and of its financial performance and its cash flows for the year then ended, in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (Accruals Basis) and comply with the Legal Notice No. 252 of 18 December, 2015 and the Public Finance Management Act, 2012.

Basis for Opinion

The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAIs). I am independent of the Regional Centre on Ground Water Resources Education Training and Research in Eastern Africa Management in accordance with ISSAI 130 on the Code of Ethics. I have fulfilled other ethical responsibilities in accordance with the ISSAI and in accordance with other ethical requirements applicable to performing audits of financial statements in Kenya. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion.

Key Audit Matters

Key audit matters are those matters that, in my professional judgement, are of most significance in the audit of the financial statements. There were no key audit matters to report in the year under review.

Other Matter

Unresolved Prior Year Audit Matters

There were issues raised in the audit report for 2021/2022 financial year of which no report or recommendations from the oversight bodies were submitted for audit verification and clearance. Further, the issues remain unresolved contrary to Section 68(2)(l) of the Public Finance Management Act, 2012 which require accounting officers designated for national government entities to try to resolve any issues resulting from an audit that remain outstanding.

REPORT ON LAWFULNESS AND EFFECTIVENESS IN USE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES

Conclusion

As required by Article 229(6) of the Constitution and based on the audit procedures performed, except for the matters described in the Basis for Conclusion on Lawfulness and Effectiveness in Use of Public Resources section of my report, I confirm that nothing else has come to my attention to cause me to believe that public resources have not been applied lawfully and in an effective way.

Basis for Conclusion

Lack of a Pension Scheme

During the year under review, the full board meeting held on 11 January, 2023 approved the procurement of an individual pension scheme with a fund administrator, fund manager and a custodian in line with The National Treasury circular 2010. As at the time of audit in the month of December 2023, Management had not provided evidence of existence of a pension scheme yet it had proceeded to deduct pension from salaries. Failure by the Management to operationalize the management of Pension Fund by the Fund Manager is contrary to Section 32 of the Retirement Benefits Act No. 3 of 1997.

In the circumstances, Management was in breach of the law.

The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAIs) 4000. The Standard requires that I comply with ethical requirements and plan and perform the audit to obtain assurance about whether the activities, financial transactions and information reflected in the financial statements comply in all material respects, with the authorities that govern them. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my conclusion.

REPORT ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF INTERNAL CONTROLS, RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

Conclusion

As required by Section 7(1)(a) of the Public Audit Act, 2015 and based on the audit procedures performed, except for the matters described in the Basis for Conclusion on the Effectiveness of Internal Controls, Risk Management and Governance section of my report I confirm that nothing else has come to my attention to cause me to believe that internal controls, risk management and governance were not effective.

Basis for Conclusion

1. Lack of approved Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Policy

As previously reported, review of the Centre's information technology systems revealed that the Centre did not have an approved IT Policy in place for the governance and management of its ICT resources. In addition, there is no ICT steering committee in place to assist in the development of ICT policy framework to enable the Centre realize long term ICT strategic goals. Lack of an approved IT policy may result in an unclear direction regarding maintenance of information security across the organization and safeguarding the Centre's ICT assets.

Further, without a sound and approved framework, users do not have any rules and procedures to follow in order to minimize risk of errors, fraud and loss of data confidentiality, integrity and availability.

In the circumstances, existence of effective ICT controls could not be confirmed.

2. Lack of approved Risk Management Policy and Disaster Recovery Plan

During the year under review, the Centre had no approved Risk Management Policy, strategies and risk register to mitigate against risk. It was therefore, not explained how the Management manages risk exposures. This is contrary to the provisions of Regulation 165(1) of Public Finance Management (National Government) Regulations, 2015 which requires an Accounting Officer of National Government entity to develop risk management strategies which include fraud prevention mechanisms and a system of risk management and internal control that build robust business operations.

In the circumstances, existence of effective risk management measures could not be confirmed.

3. Weak Internal Controls in Assets and Inventory Management

Review of assets and inventory management revealed the following unsatisfactory issues;

i. Lack of Segregation of Duties

Review of stores management practices of the Centre revealed lack of clear segregation of duties and responsibilities. The head of procurement assumed multiple roles, serving as the procuring officer, receiving officer, and issuing officer. This lack of separation of duties creates a vulnerability for the organization, increasing the risk of theft, fraud and potential errors in records management.

ii. Lack of Fundamental Safety Equipment

The laboratory lacked safety equipment such as fire extinguishers which raised serious concerns about the laboratory's ability to address potential fire hazards promptly and effectively. In the absence of proper internal control systems on assets and inventory management, there is a significant risk as it hinders the ability to monitor, control, and prevent misuse, potential theft, and unauthorized usage of assets within the organization.

In the circumstances, effective management of assets and inventory and controls in place could not be confirmed.

The audit was conducted in accordance with the International Standards for Supreme Audit Institutions (ISSAIs) 2315 and 2330. The Standards require that I plan and perform the audit to obtain assurance about whether effective processes and systems of internal controls, risk Management and overall governance were operating effectively in all material respects. I believe that the audit evidence I have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my conclusion.

Responsibilities of Management and those Charged with Governance

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of these financial statements in accordance with International Public Sector Accounting Standards (Cash Basis) and for maintaining effective internal controls as Management determines is

necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error and for its assessment of the effectiveness of internal controls, risk management and overall governance.

In preparing the financial statements, Management is responsible for assessing the Centre's ability to continue to sustain its services, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to sustainability of services and using the applicable basis of accounting unless Management is aware of the intention to terminate the Centre or to cease operations.

Management is also responsible for the submission of the financial statements to the Auditor-General in accordance with the provisions of Section 47 of the Public Audit Act, 2015.

In addition to the responsibility for the preparation and presentation of the financial statements described above, Management is also responsible for ensuring that the activities, financial transactions and information reflected in the financial statements are in compliance with the authorities which govern them, and that public resources are applied in an effective way.

Those charged with governance are responsible for overseeing the Centre's financial reporting process, reviewing the effectiveness of how Management monitors compliance with relevant legislative and regulatory requirements, ensuring that effective processes and systems are in place to address key roles and responsibilities in relation to governance and risk management, and ensuring the adequacy and effectiveness of the control environment.

Auditor-General's Responsibilities for the Audit

The audit objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes my opinion in accordance with the provisions of Section 48 of the Public Audit Act, 2015 and submit the audit report in compliance with Article 229(7) of the Constitution. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISSAIs will always detect a material misstatement and weakness when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

In addition to the audit of the financial statements, a compliance audit is planned and performed to express a conclusion about whether, in all material respects, the activities, financial transactions and information reflected in the financial statements are in compliance with the authorities that govern them and that public resources are applied in an effective way, in accordance with the provisions of Article 229(6) of the Constitution and submit the audit report in compliance with Article 229(7) of the Constitution.

Further, in planning and performing the audit of the financial statements and audit of compliance, I consider internal controls in order to give an assurance on the effectiveness of internal controls, risk management and overall governance processes and systems in accordance with the provisions of Section 7(1)(a) of the Public Audit Act, 2015 and submit

the audit report in compliance with Article 229(7) of the Constitution. My consideration of the internal controls would not necessarily disclose all matters in the internal controls that might be material weaknesses under the ISSAIs. A material weakness is a condition in which the design or operation of one or more of the internal control components does not reduce to a relatively low level the risk that misstatements caused by error or fraud in amounts that would be material in relation to the financial statements being audited may occur and not be detected within a timely period by employees in the normal course of performing their assigned functions.

Because of its inherent limitations, internal controls may not prevent or detect misstatements and instances of non-compliance. Also, projections of any evaluation of effectiveness to future periods are subject to the risk that controls may become inadequate because of changes in conditions, or that the degree of compliance with the Centre's policies and procedures may deteriorate.

As part of an audit conducted in accordance with ISSAIs, I exercise professional judgement and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit. I also:

- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statements, whether due to fraud or error, design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks, and obtain audit evidence that is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for my opinion. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of accounting estimates and related disclosures made by the Management.
- Conclude on the appropriateness of the Management's use of the applicable basis of accounting and, based on the audit evidence obtained, whether a material uncertainty exists related to events or conditions that may cast significant doubt on the Centre's ability to continue to sustain its services. If I conclude that a material uncertainty exists, I am required to draw attention in the auditor's report to the related disclosures in the financial statements or, if such disclosures are inadequate, to modify my opinion. My conclusions are based on the audit evidence obtained up to the date of my audit report. However, future events or conditions may cause the Centre to cease to continue to sustain its services.
- Evaluate the overall presentation, structure and content of the financial statements, including the disclosures, and whether the financial statements represent the underlying transactions and events in a manner that achieves fair presentation.
- Obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding the financial information and business activities of the Centre to express an opinion on the financial statements.
- Perform such other procedures as I consider necessary in the circumstances.

I communicate with the Management regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit and significant audit findings, including any significant deficiencies in internal controls that are identified during the audit.

I also provide Management with a statement that I have complied with relevant ethical requirements regarding independence and communicate with them all relationships and other matters that may reasonably be thought to bear on my independence and where applicable, related safeguards.



FCPA Nancy Gathungu, CBS
AUDITOR-GENERAL

Nairobi

30 January, 2024