CONCEPT NOTE

Introduction

Africa's health sector is in a phase of dynamic transition, marked by steady gains in health outcomes, stronger governance, and growing investment from both public and private stakeholders. Over the past two decades, life expectancy has risen by more than 10 years, maternal and child mortality rates have seen notable declines, and HIV-related deaths have dropped by over 55%. [1] [2] [3] Several countries are increasing domestic health budgets, investing in primary care, and building more resilient systems to respond to emerging health threats.

The private sector continues to play a pivotal role in driving this progress. From expanding access to digital health platforms and strengthening supply chains, to growing local pharmaceutical production and innovative insurance models that reach underserved populations, public–private collaboration is improving service delivery and efficiency across the continent. Countries such as Ghana, Kenya, and South Africa are demonstrating how such partnerships can strengthen infrastructure, accelerate diagnostics, and expand access to essential medicines and quality care.

Health as an Engine of Economic Growth in Africa

Investing in health is increasingly seen as an economic imperative. Evidence shows that every $1 invested in maternal and child health yields around $7 in economic returns, while community health programs deliver up to a 10:1 return on investment (ROI). [4][5] Strengthening Africa's health workforce could generate returns of nearly 8:1 by 2063, and nutrition programs offer an estimated $23 return per $1 invested, underscoring health as a key driver of human capital and productivity. [6] [7]

These gains, supported by public initiatives and private-sector innovation from digital health and insurance models to local pharmaceutical production demonstrate health's power to boost resilience, create jobs, and drive inclusive growth.

Nevertheless, these gains remain fragile. Official Development Assistance (ODA) is projected to decline by 70% by 2025, while debt repayments of USD 81 billion are constraining fiscal space across many economies. [8] Most countries remain well below the Abuja target of allocating 15% of national budgets to health, and weak domestic financing frameworks continue to limit progress. [8] Rising health emergencies, climate-related shocks, a 90% reliance on imports for medicines and diagnostics, workforce shortages, and slow digitization further strain systems. [8] Without urgent, coordinated action, the continent risks reversing two decades of progress, with millions of preventable deaths and heightened vulnerability to future pandemics. [8]

Key Objectives:

1. *Catalyse Private and Public Investment in Health as an Economic Driver*
   Position health as a strategic sector for economic growth by showcasing how private sector investment, alongside public financing, drives job creation, boosts productivity, and accelerates GDP growth.
2. *Accelerate Sustainable Financing through Collaboration*
   Explore innovative financing mechanisms such as blended finance, impact investment, and outcome-based models where private investors, financial institutions, and development partners co-create solutions to close funding gaps, reduce donor dependency, and advance health sovereignty across the continent.
3. *Strengthen Innovation and Partnerships for Scalable Impact*
   Promote cross-sector collaboration to expand digital health ecosystems, local pharmaceutical and diagnostics manufacturing, and resilient supply chains.

Session Tracks

- **Ministerial Session-Financing Health Futures: Unlocking Investment for Africa's Growth**

  Ministers, Technical Ministry Representatives and high-level leaders will discuss innovative and sustainable financing models, domestic resource mobilization, and strategies to attract foreign direct investment across the health value chain. Emphasis will be on reducing risk, ensuring accountability, and demonstrating the long-term impact of health as a driver of economic resilience and growth.

- **Strengthening Africa's Pharmaceutical Eco-system for Health Security**

  Exploring opportunities to expand local production of medicines and vaccines in ways that create lasting impact, enhance self-sufficiency, and reduce dependency on imports. The session will highlight regulatory harmonization, R&D incentives, and resilient supply chains that ensure sustainability and long-term health security.

- **Access for All: Scaling Comprehensive Quality Healthcare Services Across Africa**

  Examining models for universal health coverage that generate measurable impact while ensuring sustainability. Discussions will focus on integrating preventive and specialized care, building resilient health workforces, and adopting innovative delivery approaches that reach underserved populations equitably.

- **Detect Early, Treat Better: Accelerating Diagnostics for Stronger Health Systems**

  Identifying scalable and sustainable pathways to expand access to affordable diagnostics, strengthen laboratory networks, and foster innovation in rapid testing. The session will emphasize how improved diagnostics deliver long-term impact through better disease prevention, early detection, and resilient emergency response systems.

- **Digital Health Revolution: Harnessing Technology for Impact**

  Showcasing how AI, telemedicine, big data, and digital platforms can sustainably transform healthcare delivery. Emphasis will be placed on scaling innovations that improve efficiency, equity, and patient-centered care while ensuring data security and resilience of systems.

Anticipated Participants

- Government leaders (Health, Finance, Trade ministries)
- Donors, multilateral organizations and NGOs
- Private (non-health) sector
- Health investors and fund managers
- Private health sector
- Development finance institutions
- Health startups and entrepreneurs
- Civil society, community health actors and FBOs
- Academia, researchers and think tanks

Under the theme "Health as an Investment: Powering Impact, Sustainability, and Economic Growth in Africa," the 10th AHB Symposium will unite leaders from across the continent and beyond to position health at the center of Africa's economic transformation. As the longest-running African-led public-private health dialogue platform, and building on a decade of convening policymakers, private sector leaders, development partners, and investors, the 2026 Symposium in Nairobi will catalyze partnerships that drive impact, resilience, and inclusive growth across Africa's health sector.

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