

CONCEPT NOTE

Strengthening Africa's Pharmaceutical Eco-system for Health Security

Background

Africa's pharmaceutical sector has the potential to transform health outcomes, strengthen health security, and power economic growth.



Despite this, the continent continues to rely on imports for **70–90%** of its pharmaceutical needs and manufactures less than **1%** of the vaccines they administer. ^[1]

This dependency leaves health systems vulnerable to global supply chain disruptions, volatile prices, and inequitable access.

The COVID-19 pandemic and other public health emergencies exposed the risks of external dependence and underscored the urgent need to scale up local manufacturing, advance regulatory harmonization, and foster regional integration. Beyond emergency response, building a robust pharmaceutical ecosystem is a long-term investment in resilience—one that drives self-reliance, creates jobs, stimulates innovation, and positions health as a catalyst for sustainable economic development. In line with this vision, the Africa CDC has set an ambitious target of producing 60% of the continent's routine immunization needs locally by 2040, marking a bold step toward self-sufficiency and health security. ^[2]

Insights from the 2025 symposium highlighted persistent barriers:



Fragmented procurement systems



High production costs due to reliance on imported Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs)



Foreign exchange constraints



Lengthy regulatory approval processes



Heavy taxation

These challenges continue to limit the competitiveness of local manufacturers.

The pathway forward is clear. Sustainable investment in pharmaceutical manufacturing anchored in predictability and strategic clarity can strengthen resilience and ensure equitable access to medicines. Regional pooled procurement and long-term purchasing commitments will reduce costs and create predictable markets for manufacturers. Streamlined regulatory frameworks, including full implementation of the African Medicines Agency (AMA), will harmonize standards and accelerate approvals. New facilities will require incubation and targeted support to become competitive and sustainable.

Above all, collaboration between governments, local manufacturers, academia, and multinational companies will be essential to foster innovation, advance research, and build the skills needed to integrate Africa's pharmaceutical sector into global value chains.

Session Objectives

This session will bring together government and policy leaders, private sector actors, development finance institutions, global health partners, civil society, and the research and academic community to engage in discussions that deepen insights and chart opportunities for expanding Africa's pharmaceutical ecosystem. Focus areas will include:

- **Exploring strategies** for expanding local production of medicines and vaccines that create lasting impact and reduce reliance on imports.
- **Highlighting the role of regulatory harmonization**, including the African Medicines Agency (AMA), in strengthening competitiveness and accelerating product access.
- **Examining incentives for research and development** that drive pharmaceutical innovation and align with Africa's health priorities.
- **To identify opportunities** for building resilient regional supply chains that ensure sustainability and equitable access to essential medicines.
- **To foster collaboration** between governments, manufacturers, academia, investors, and multinational partners to advance skills, technology transfer, and integration into global value chains.

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Expected Outcomes

- » **A clear understanding of actionable pathways** to scale up pharmaceutical manufacturing across the continent.
- » **Consensus on priority policy reforms** and regulatory measures that can accelerate local production and market access.
- » **Recommendations** on financing models, incentives, and partnerships that can attract investment and reduce production costs.
- » **Identification of mechanisms** to strengthen R&D capacity and foster innovation tailored to Africa's health needs.
- » **Commitment from stakeholders** to pursue collaborative approaches that enhance self-sufficiency, resilience, and long-term health security.

References

- [1] D. A. a. Y. Ayele, "The AfCFTA and the procurement of pharmaceuticals and vaccines," 2024.
- [2] O. J. K. N. K. T. C. A. F. L. Mulumba M, "Decolonizing global health: Africa's pursuit of pharmaceutical sovereignty," BMC Health Serv Res., vol. 25,no. 1, p. 1015, 2025.

