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The role of the private sector in Africa's New Public Health Order

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EVENT REPORT

Executive Summary

Enhancing the Impact of the Private Sector on Africa's Health Systems through Embracing the New Public Health Order

In response to the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, Africa is on a path to strengthen its health systems and make them more resilient. The private sector is an important player in achieving this transformation. Agenda 2063 of the African Union aspires to ensure the health and well-being of Africans, and the Africa CDC has introduced Africa's New Public Health Order with a focus on five key pillars. These pillars emphasize strengthening African institutions for public health, expanding vaccine and therapeutic manufacturing, investing in the health workforce and leadership, increasing domestic health investment, and fostering action-oriented partnerships.

The private sector's role across Africa's health systems contributes significantly to essential areas like access to medicines, health information systems, leadership, governance, service delivery, healthcare financing, and health workforce development. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) hold immense significance in healthcare and consequently, respectful and action-oriented partnerships between the public and private sectors are essential for improving healthcare systems. Strong policy and legal frameworks, political will, and resource allocation for health are vital for successful PPPs. The private sector can address disease outbreaks and their economic implications, as well as the underlying causes of diseases.

The vision is a future where the private sector collaborates with regional institutions and stakeholders to create a thriving healthcare landscape across the continent, driving positive change and ensuring a healthier and prosperous Africa for all.

The Role of Regional Institutions as a Steward for Continental Unity in the New Public Health Order

The pursuit of continental unity and integration in Africa is realized through cooperation and collaboration among all its countries. Regional organizations are important in fostering this unity by promoting coordination, cooperation, and shared objectives. This integration aims to address common challenges, stimulate equitable economic growth, reduce conflict, and enhance trade liberalization. The private sector is a vital player in the healthcare landscape and can significantly contribute to regional unity by participating in common goal-sharing, policy development, and

Effective collaboration within regional health institutions is essential for promoting health sovereignty in Africa. Customized policies that resonate with each region's unique needs enable the continent to address specific health issues while capitalizing on regional strengths. By pooling resources, sharing best practices, and learning from one another, Africa strengthens its regional unity and capacity to address shared health challenges.

The private sector's readiness for innovation is an asset for regional institutions, as it brings opportunities for positive change in healthcare. Embracing automation and skill transfer can improve efficiency and output in healthcare services. Collaboration and seamless integration between the private sector and regional institutions can streamline healthcare delivery.

The partnership between the private health sector and regional institutions is a driving force for transformative change in Africa. By addressing common challenges, sharing expertise, and fostering innovation, this collaboration promotes improved healthcare outcomes. Africa's collaborative spirit empowers the continent to shape its own destiny and create a healthier, united future.

The Role of Digital Health in Advancing the New Public Health Order- Health Services

Digital health can revolutionize healthcare delivery and improve health outcomes. It enhances access to healthcare in remote areas, empowers individuals to manage their health, and strengthens health systems through efficient and coordinated care. Digital health services have become essential in addressing resource disparities and workforce shortages in Africa's healthcare sector. They empower healthcare professionals, engage clients, and improve healthcare access and delivery. By actively involving clients and prioritizing their needs, digital health services play a key role in enhancing healthcare delivery and coordination, ultimately strengthening human resources for health.

While Africa faces challenges in internet access, digital health services offer efficiency gains through innovations like AI, imaging algorithms, and genetic sequencing. Policies, regulations, and privacy concerns need to be addressed collaboratively. Notable projects like Mom-Connect in South Africa illustrate the significant impact of digital health on healthcare.

Digital education, exemplified by initiatives like Lecturio, enhances learning and training in the healthcare sector. It provides healthcare professionals with access to high-quality educational resources and interactive modules, facilitating knowledge and skill acquisition. Digital education also offers specialized training in equipment maintenance and data tracking, contributing to efficient healthcare systems.

Pharmaccess Foundation's initiatives promote equitable healthcare distribution, cost reduction, and evidence-based decision-making by utilizing cloud-based platforms, mobile and digital solutions, and real-time data sharing to enhance transparency and care quality. The foundation provides technical support to governments, stimulates investments in the health sector, and offers digital loans for health SMEs. Their focus on patient empowerment through digitization leads to better health outcomes and increased patient satisfaction.

The role of digital solutions in health to advance the New Public Health Order -data sharing and informatics.

Africa CDC recognizes the immense potential of digital health to revolutionize healthcare and public health in Africa. With a focus on data sharing and informatics, the CDC's digital strategy aims to become a digitally savvy organization and build interoperable digital health systems. The strategy is guided by key pillars, including the Africa Union Agenda 2063, the New Public Health Order and the Africa CDC Strategic Plan. The vision for 2030 is to have accessible, affordable, and qualitative digital health systems contributing to sustainable health outcomes.

To maximize the potential of technology in healthcare, a human-centered approach is essential. It involves comprehensive training and education programs for healthcare professionals, user-centric design of technology solutions, and adaptive management practices. A patient retention solution, such as Vantage Technologies, exemplifies how technology can drive human-centered impact and prioritize efforts effectively.

Digital transformation in healthcare, particularly in diagnostics and infrastructure, enhances efficiency and patient care. Standardizing medical equipment and developing national infrastructure programs are essential. Talent shifting, exemplified by GE Healthcare in Ghana and Ethiopia, empowers countries to manage health workforce shortages.

Digital health innovations, such as Health Information Management Systems (HIMS), transform healthcare access and outcomes. VillageReach's achievements in sub-Saharan Africa demonstrate the impact of digital health in increasing access to quality healthcare. The Health Centre by Phone project empowers individuals to access healthcare services easily. The HIMS platform provides valuable data and feedback to governments to make informed decisions.

As Africa integrates digital solutions in healthcare, data accessibility is necessary for informed decision-making and streamlined healthcare services. The private sector plays a pivotal role in supporting equity and leadership for transformative change.

The Role of Partnership in Disease Prevention and Care in the New Public Health Order

In the context of the New Public Health Order for Africa, partnerships play a significant role in strengthening the continent's public health systems and addressing global health imbalances. These collaborations involve various stakeholders, including governments, international organizations, civil society, and the private sector. The United Nations has launched initiatives like the 2030 agenda partnership accelerator to accelerate the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Successful partnerships, such as the Global

Polio Eradication Initiative, demonstrate the impact of multistakeholder cooperation in disease prevention and management.

The private sector contributes significantly to disease prevention in Africa through resource mobilization, healthcare financing, and data-driven innovations. Companies like Vitality Health International and Roche partner with various stakeholders to promote preventive healthcare, reduce risk factors for NCDs, and enhance access to diagnostics.

Collaboration between the private and public sectors can improve healthcare delivery and preventive services. Companies like Discovery Limited and Organon work with governments to provide expertise and support for healthcare initiatives.

The private sector can make significant contributions through resource mobilization, innovation, and collaboration with the public sector. Successful partnerships are built on mutual respect, a patient-centred approach, and data-sharing to address the specific needs of different patient groups in African countries. To tackle the continent's health challenges, multilateral efforts must be underpinned by funding, collective thinking, political will, and technical rigor to mobilize resources and engage multiple partners in government-led programming.

An enabling environment for local production of vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics

The African continent has massive potential for growth and development of local manufacturing of health and medical products. This is both in terms of the existing demand and growing supply of medical products provided by its 1.4 billion inhabitants. The proper application of market aggregation strategies in the entire supply chain is paramount for health investments to make business sense and for the targets of the New Public Health Order to be realized. Harmonization and standardization as they relate to reliance networks between organizations in the continent should continue to inform advocacy for the localization agenda with the objective of strengthening the supply chain and improving patient access to health and medical products in Africa.

Currently, only 1% of Africa's medical needs are manufactured on the continent, leading to significant supply challenges. Several African countries are making efforts to establish local vaccine manufacturing facilities, signalling a positive shift. However, challenges unique to the local context must be addressed to create an enabling environment for local production.

The localization agenda in Africa faces a dilemma between expanding access, supply chain sustainability, and immediate cost reduction. It's essential to recognize that local production may initially incur higher costs for setting up effective systems. Governments and stakeholders must commit to long-term investment in building sustainable manufacturing systems, with a focus on improving access to medical products for the population. Effective

regulation mechanisms play a vital role in promoting an enabling environment for local production. Initiatives like the African Medicines Agency regulatory harmonization (AMA) are improving the regulatory landscape in Africa, reducing approval timelines and increasing trust in local institutions. An emphasis on reliance on African regulators and aligning with global standards is vital for successful local manufacturing.

The private sector's role in disease surveillance and pandemic response

The private health sector plays an important role in disease surveillance and pandemic response in Africa. Their complementary services, timely detection and reporting, rapid response, community engagement, and healthcare innovation are valuable assets. By fostering strong partnerships, creating an enabling environment, and investing in private sector capabilities, Africa can harness the potential of the private sector and maximize the effectiveness of disease surveillance and pandemic response efforts.

Pandemics have significant socioeconomic implications, with COVID-19 alone estimated to have caused global losses of 11 trillion dollars. The aftermath extends beyond the immediate economic consequences. Preparedness investments lag far behind the losses incurred during pandemics, emphasizing the need for an effective response.

Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) are important in improving disease surveillance and response, and selecting the right PPP model is essential. Political will, prioritizing public sector needs, ethical considerations, and competition law should guide successful PPPs, enhancing coordination between the public and private sectors.

Epidemics and pandemics have far-reaching socioeconomic implications, with COVID-19 alone estimated to cost the world \$11 trillion. Beyond immediate health consequences, pandemics disrupt education and have long-term economic ramifications. In South Africa, the COVID-19 pandemic exposed challenges in data collection for health products and highlighted the need for collaboration between the private sector, government, and civil society to streamline information gathering. Manufacturing, syringe production, and regulatory compliance were essential aspects of pandemic response in South Africa. In Nigeria, the private sector played a key role in addressing the inadequacies in the government's response to COVID-19 through the Coalition Against COVID-19 (CACOVID). They contributed to manufacturing disinfectants, personal protective equipment, and supporting healthcare infrastructure. The private sector's contributions extend to strengthening healthcare systems across Africa, with their involvement in complementary services, timely detection and reporting, rapid response, data sharing, community engagement, healthcare innovation, vaccine production, and policymaking.

While governments have made efforts to reduce costs and risks in pandemic response, the private sector's contributions in Research and Development (R&D) have been significant. Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) can address these challenges by prioritizing public sector needs, patient interests, and ethical considerations while improving coordination between the two sectors. By fostering strong partnerships, creating an enabling environment, and investing in private sector capabilities, Africa can harness the potential of the private sector and maximize the effectiveness of disease surveillance and pandemic response efforts.

Human Resources for Health integration - Partnerships to close the gap

Africa grapples with the dual challenge of infectious and chronic diseases, with infectious diseases responsible for the majority of deaths. Maternal mortality, despite a 30% reduction in Sub-Saharan Africa over two decades, remains unacceptably high, contributing to 70% of global maternal deaths. To make a significant positive impact, increasing the healthcare provider-to-population ratio in Africa from 1:4,000 to the recommended 1:1,000 is urgently required.

The continent faces a significant shortage of healthcare professionals, with projections indicating a need for six million healthcare workers in Africa by 2030. A study across 47 African countries identified uneven distribution and low densities of healthcare workers, with the majority concentrated in the public sector and urban areas. Adequate infrastructure alone is insufficient without a commensurate number of skilled healthcare professionals.

Ensuring universal access to health services requires a workforce that is sufficiently staffed, competent, equitably dispersed, and motivated. Despite the substantial endeavours at both regional and national levels, significant obstacles persist in ensuring that there are enough skilled healthcare professionals to effectively cater to the requirements of UHC. Collaborative HRH integration between the private and public sector emerges as one of the most practical remedies, particularly in low and middle-income countries, considering the substantial HRH deficiency that requires urgent attention.



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