



Webinar series 2021

Towards Sustainable
Healthcare Systems in Africa

One year on: What have we learned since news of COVID-19 first broke?

A Webinar Report

Curated by



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Background

Addressing the Pandemic with a Multi-Sectoral Approach: Kenyan Ministry of Health Case Study

Addressing the COVID-19 pandemic has forced Africa to view health from a new perspective. Rather than representing a single, isolated issue, health is now seen as vital and integrated with every other aspect of governments and economies. This highlights the need for a multi-sectoral approach in preventing and addressing future pandemics. Public-private action is essential because both sectors serve the same population and actions on both sides are impacting the other.

In Kenya, for example, there was excellent political commitment, and a structure was formed to spearhead the COVID-19 response. One key factor of this structure was its multi-sectoral nature and, most importantly, significant private sector participation in that structure. Without that participation, the government would have struggled.

The role of partnerships in this process was also key. The Kenyan Ministry of Health (MOH) demonstrated agility and utilised infrastructure beyond the health sector alone, including using schools and private hotels as isolation centres. When it came to resource mobilisation, the Kenyan government found mechanisms through which the private sector (beyond the health sector) could contribute funding and other resources.

Additionally, in the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the MOH partnered with the Ministry of Transportation to rollout passenger manifestos that were used in contact tracing. This was already under development, but it was fast-tracked and deployed within a month when it was really needed.

One of the key challenges for Kenya was the management of the supply chain. Looking back, the government could have better engaged with private health facilities relating to necessary commodities. *Could there have been a consortium of private hospitals to pool resources with the public sector to expand testing capacities, reduce stock-outs, etc.?* Moving forward, countries may need to start considering coming together when it comes to purchasing, in order to leverage on economies of scale, get better prices and make healthcare more affordable.

Event Partners

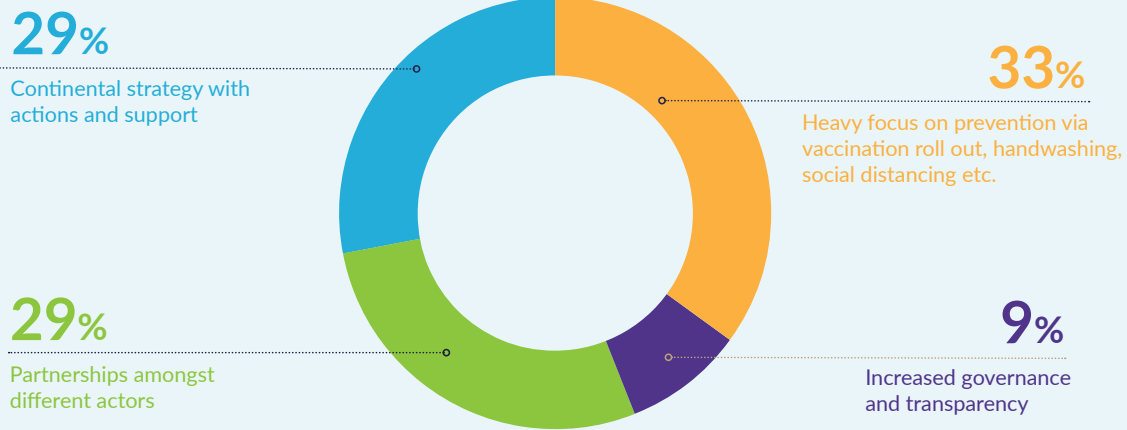


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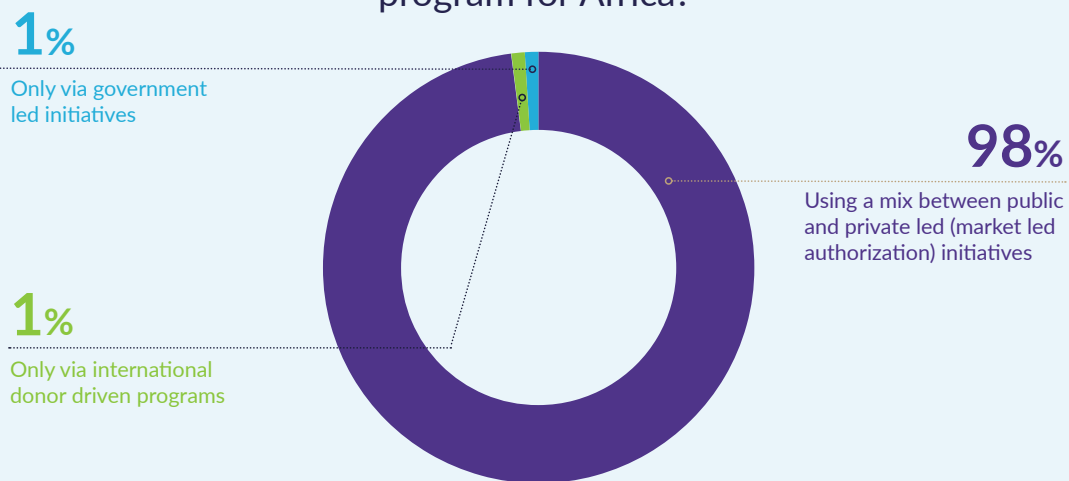
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Poll Results

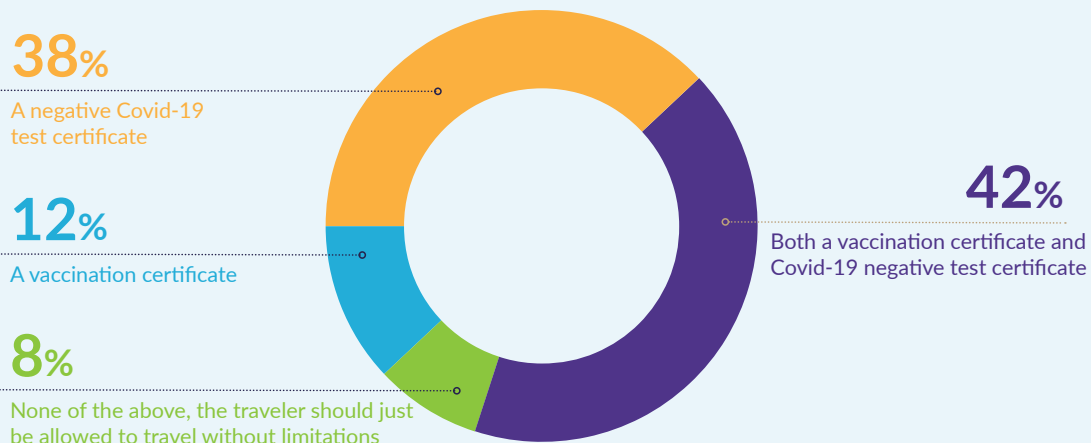
Which of the following lessons learnt is key to overcome the pandemic in Africa?



How should we accelerate the vaccination program for Africa?



To maintain economic resilience of African countries, should the continent allow travel only when the traveller has:



Speakers



MODERATOR

Mrs. Marloes Kibacha

Managing Director,
Africa Health Business



SPEAKER

Dr. Nsenga Ngoy

Team Leader for Emergency Preparedness
and Response (EPR) Cluster,
World Health Organization



SPEAKER

Dr. Ahmed Ogwel Ouma

Deputy Director,
Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention



SPEAKER

Dr. Mercy Mwangangi

Chief Administrative Secretary,
Ministry of Health, Kenya



SPEAKER

Dr. Iain Barton

Chief Executive Officer,
Clinton Health Access Initiative, Inc.



SPEAKER

Ms. Ruth Field

Market Access Director,
AstraZeneca Pharmaceuticals (Pty) Ltd South Africa

Supply Chain Management



One of the immediate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the health sector has been in the area of supply chain.

There was an unprecedented shift in the availability, price point, and service levels within the supply chain space for international freight movement because all passenger aircrafts were grounded. The primary way freight was delivered suddenly halted and the ability to move products was limited across the board. The consequential knock-on was that moving healthcare products became six to eight times more expensive.

This has taught us that Africa needs to be more systems-focused in thinking, rather than focusing on the health sector as if it operates in a vacuum. There are so many aspects of every economy that impact the health sector. We need to be alert, agile and responsive, developing higher levels of collaboration and partnership.

In the health sector specifically, there is a striking lack of harmonisation on importation management. The Africa Medical Supplies Platform (AMSP) was set up, but every product had to jump through different hurdles in different markets, because the quality standards were so different for every country. In order for an aggregated buying platform to be possible, standardisation is required. The old-style procurement logic that many markets operate within (annual procurements of large orders with a six- to nine-month lead time) does not represent the kind of agility needed to respond in this kind of scenario.

African governments also need to build the continental and national institutions that are responsible for addressing health security, early detection and rapid response to outbreaks. If we build the capacity of these institutions at the continental and national levels, we will be able to do the right things, have the correct information and the best experts working on solving problems.

As we talk about health systems strengthening and pandemic preparedness, we need to completely re-gear our thinking about how we manage procurement, movement of goods and inventory tracking.

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Summary of Discussion

Africa has learnt many lessons from the experience of addressing the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these lessons include the importance of resilient health systems, the vital nature of effective communication, and ensuring a multi-sectoral partnership approach in problem solving.

RESILIENT HEALTH SYSTEMS

Emergencies and outbreaks are not spontaneous or without cause. They emerge because of a combination of vulnerabilities and lack of capacity. When high vulnerabilities meet low capacity, like Africa does, there is a perfect storm. COVID-19 reminded us that, rather than solving each health challenge as it arrives, we must build resilient health systems.

A resilient health system is able to continue to provide all health services, even in emergency situations. This is true for both regular services and those needed to address the emergency directly. During Ebola, for example, there were even more deaths related to malaria than to Ebola, which means the health system failed to take care of standard services because of the emergency. Additionally, a resilient health system must consider every sector. Resiliency needs to be built at a holistic level.

If we are better prepared and our health systems are resilient, we'll lose fewer lives and preserve better lives. This pandemic is not going away any time soon and it will not be the last of its kind. Governments need to develop systems and strengthen them as soon as possible.

COMMUNICATION

As soon as there is a gap in information flow, information from unverified sources will fill that gap. Communication with the public has to be constant.

Because the situation is so fluid and the volume of information is overwhelming and unprecedented, communication has become a central issue in the COVID-19 response. The overload of information is not simply at the individual level, but also at the leadership level, with around 200 published items per day. While leadership is struggling to wade through the vast amounts of information, the public (including the population as a whole, but also health practitioners) is waiting for this vital information.

The strict measures that were taken in most African countries at the beginning of the pandemic were incredibly important because it kept numbers low while helpful information was disseminated on how people can protect themselves from the virus. Effective communication can help address pandemic fatigue and empower individuals to continue with their livelihoods in a safe manner. Communication from authoritative sources can ensure that each individual understands the responsibility they have to themselves and to their communities. When they understand, they can continue earning a living while observing certain public health measures that cost nothing. We need to communicate that continuing to do the right thing means protecting the most vulnerable.

To roll out a vaccination plan across a nation requires coordination with everyone from law enforcement to

cleaning services and medical waste management. It's important that information is kept factual, simple, relevant, current, proactive and is communicated in a way that people will listen and through the channels that people are already listening to.

In the absence of information, we jump to the worst conclusions. The only way to combat this is through a high-quality volume of proactive information flow.

MULTI-SECTORAL APPROACH

As the pandemic revealed the health sector's interdependence with other aspects of the economy, it has become clear that a multi-sectoral approach, including both public and private sectors and beyond, is vital to addressing challenges effectively. Much of the success story of Kenya's Ministry of Health can be attributed to their willingness and commitment to working with various sectors. How far can this multi-sectoral approach go? What is required of the public sector? What about the private sector?

For example, all COVID-19 vaccines are currently being purchased centrally through the public health sector. Is there an opportunity for the private sector to get involved in the vaccine rollout in Africa?

The Africa CDC wants to vaccinate at least 60% of the population in order to reach herd immunity efficiently. In order to do this, there is no doubt that the private sector can play an important role. However, broadening who purchases vaccines also increases risk. Unscrupulous individuals may disrupt the processes that governments and Africa CDC have established and adhere to. Since access to vaccines is very difficult and the demand far outstrips supply, there is every opportunity for fake vaccines to masquerade and harm people. Therefore, very close regulatory

supervision by national governments is needed to ensure that what is being brought into the country are safe and efficacious products.

The private sector has its place, but that place needs to be defined and designated by national governments in order to ensure standardisation of quality. Therefore, it's a good idea to have the private sector involved, but the monitoring and regulation needs to be very tight. Additionally, the definition of who gets the vaccine first must be the same case across the board. We don't want a situation where rich people get access before those who actually need it most. Every initiative or action, whether private or public sector, must be within the regulatory framework of a country for safety of the public and efficacy against COVID-19.

The role of government is to ensure political commitment, create structures, leverage what already exists, form partnerships and design frameworks where public and private resources can come together to address a particular issue.

One of the areas that has been identified as a gap when it comes to having multi-stakeholder approach is in the issue of data. The disparate information systems make it very difficult to have numbers on testing, admissions, ICU care and the whole pathway of care. It would be much easier to have an integrated health information system with the private sector. It is important to have conversations with private sectors to ensure we have a holistic picture of the status of health in our nations so that we can make informed decisions moving forward.

What will it take to win the battle against COVID19?
(1) Personal discipline by following public health measures (2) Solidarity as a continent (3) Building our continental & national institutions so that they can build resilient health systems.

Dr. Ahmed Ogwel Ouma

In response to the pandemic, Kenya showed excellent political commitment. A multi-sectoral approach was taken to address COVID-19, which included, importantly, strong private sector participation.

Dr. Mercy Mwangangi


There is a need for us to be more systems focused in our thinking, rather than just healthcare focused in our thinking -- because there are many aspects of our economies that impact the health sector. We need to be alert, agile and responsive, developing levels of collaboration and partnership that we've never seen before.

Dr. Iain Barton

AstraZeneca manufactured the vaccine at scale for broad and equitable access. They partnered with both public and private sectors, but they wanted the public sector to lead. They did this because they want it to make sure it reaches the higher risk people much quicker and also doesn't go to the rich at the expense of those who really need it.

Ms. Ruth Field

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