

Directorate of Communication and Public Information (CPI)

PRESS RELEASE

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Africa CDC and Team Europe Launch Landmark Report Showing Health R&D Could Generate \$668 Billion for African Economies

New analysis positions health research and development as Africa's next major economic growth frontier

Geneva, Switzerland 19 May 2026

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention and Team Europe today launched a landmark new report which demonstrates that investing in health research and development (R&D) could generate \$668 billion in additional GDP across Africa over the next 20 years.

The report, *Investing in Health R&D: Africa's Next Economic Growth Frontier* ([Impact_Investing_R&D_Africa_GHE_ACDC_Enabel_30April_Final_Embargoed.docx](#)), was launched at an official side event of the World Health Assembly in Geneva.

The analysis, developed under the AU-EU Health Partnership with leadership from Africa CDC, financial support from Belgium and Germany, and technical support from Global Health Ecosystems, Enabel, and GIZ, models the macroeconomic impact of increased African investment in health R&D across GDP growth, employment, private investment, trade balances and scientific capacity.

The findings show that if African countries achieve the African Union goal of investing 1% of GDP in research and development, with 15% allocated to health R&D:

- Africa would generate \$668 billion in additional GDP over 20 years
- Every \$1 invested would return \$137 in economic value
- Investments would break even within four years
- 4.56 million jobs would be created by 2044
- Public investment would crowd in billions in private capital (\$5 for every \$1 invested)

The report positions health R&D not simply as a health expenditure, but as a strategic pillar of economic sovereignty, industrial development and regional competitiveness.

"Africa cannot continue importing the technologies that determine the health and economic future of its people," said Dr Raji Tajudeen, Ag. Deputy Director General, Africa CDC. "This report shows that investing in African health R&D is not only a health priority - it is a pathway to economic sovereignty, industrial growth and resilience. If we do not own Africa's health, we do not own Africa's destiny."

Annelies Verstichel, Belgian Ambassador to Ethiopia and Djibouti, Permanent Representative to the African Union, IGAD and UNECA, said: *"The future of health security, economic resilience and innovation will depend on stronger regional capabilities and trusted international partnerships. This report demonstrates the significant economic and societal returns that can be generated through long-term investment in African-led health research*

and innovation and provides an important evidence base for deeper AU-EU cooperation to support Africa-led research, manufacturing and innovation ecosystems.”

The report highlights several African success stories that demonstrate the continent’s growing strength in health R&D and innovation. These include South Africa’s Afrigen mRNA programme, Rwanda’s partnership with BioNTech on vaccine manufacturing, Egypt’s expansion of domestic pharmaceutical production and exports, and Kenya’s growing clinical trials and research ecosystem.

The report further shows that investing in health R&D can help African economies build high-value manufacturing industries, reduce import dependency, strengthen health security, attract private investment, create skilled jobs, and retain scientific talent.

The findings were welcomed by the Hon. Dr Musenero Monica Masanza, Minister for Science, Technology and Innovation, Uganda, who said: *“Health R&D should be viewed as economic infrastructure. Countries that invest in innovation build more competitive economies, create higher-skilled jobs and retain more value domestically. Africa has the scientific talent and market opportunity - now we must match that with long-term investment.”*

Africa carries 25% of the world’s disease burden but captures only a fraction of the economic value created by global health innovation, the report notes, asserting that this is the moment to move from importing solutions to building them.

The report also warns of the cost of inaction. If African health R&D investment falls below current levels, the continent risks losing more than \$1 trillion in GDP over the next two decades, while remaining dependent on external supply chains and imported technologies. Alongside the economic modelling, the report highlights how blended finance structures are already attracting large-scale public and private investment into African health innovation systems, including Rwanda’s BioNTech partnership, which has mobilised more than \$500 million in combined financing.

The report argues that scaling African health R&D will require deeper coordination between governments, regional institutions, development finance institutions and international partners to build sustainable innovation and manufacturing ecosystems.

The report calls on African governments to commit to the African Union goal of investing 1% of GDP in research and development, with 15% allocated to health R&D, while using procurement, incentives and regulatory reform to actively build African health innovation markets. It also positions Africa CDC and partners to develop a continental investment blueprint that aggregates investable opportunities, aligns governments and investors, and mobilises blended finance for clinical trials, manufacturing, translational research and shared innovation infrastructure.

The launch forms part of Africa CDC’s broader agenda to advance health sovereignty and economic transformation through African-led innovation systems.

Africa-led. Africa-financed. Africa-delivered.

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About Africa CDC

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention is the public health agency of the African Union. As an autonomous institution, Africa CDC supports AU Member States to strengthen health systems, improve disease surveillance, and enhance emergency preparedness and response. For more information, visit: <https://africacdc.org/about-us/> and follow Africa CDC on LinkedIn, X, Facebook, and YouTube.

About the AU-EU Health Partnership

The AU-EU Health Partnership is a broad coalition from Africa and Europe working together to strengthen health systems, improve health security, and increase access to pharmaceuticals in Africa. Encompassing myriad projects and partners at the continental, regional, and country levels, the initiative is making critical contributions to ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages (SDG 3). Health is also one of the pillars of the European Union's Global Gateway strategy, which aims to boost smart, clean and secure connections in digital, energy and transport sectors, and to strengthen health, education and research systems across the world.

The partnership benefits from coordinated implementation and focuses on five interconnected themes:

- Manufacturing and access to vaccines, medicines and health technologies (MAV+)
- Sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR)
- Sustainable health security using a "One Health" approach (HSOH)
- Digital health for health systems strengthening and universal health coverage (DH)
- Support for public health institutes (PHI)

Team Europe actors include the European Commission, the European Investment Bank, the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control, as well as EU Member States, including Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and Sweden.

About DGD

The Directorate-General for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (DGD) looks after the various aspects of Belgian Development Cooperation. DGD falls under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Foreign Affairs since 2025. The DGD is integrated into the Federal Public Service (FPS) Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation which is organising and elaborating development cooperation in accordance with the legal and regulatory framework. More info.

About BMZ

About Global Health Ecosystems

Global Health Ecosystems (GHE) is a not-for-profit accelerator and market shaping organisation helping countries and partners turn health priorities into investable opportunities. GHE works across strategy, financing, leadership and partnership design to support more sustainable, country-led approaches to global health. It bridges governments, funders, researchers and the private sector to mobilise investment, strengthen health innovation ecosystems and accelerate impact.

<https://www.globalhealthecosystems.org/>

About the Africa Union goal of investing 1% of GDP in research and development

In 2007, the African Union called upon member states to invest at least 1% of GDP in research and development (United Nations Economic Commission for Africa 2018). Nearly two decades later, the continent's average sits at 0.45%, well below the global average of 1.7% (World Bank 2025).