

Saving Lives and Livelihoods

In partnership with the Mastercard Foundation



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Newsletter

March 2022



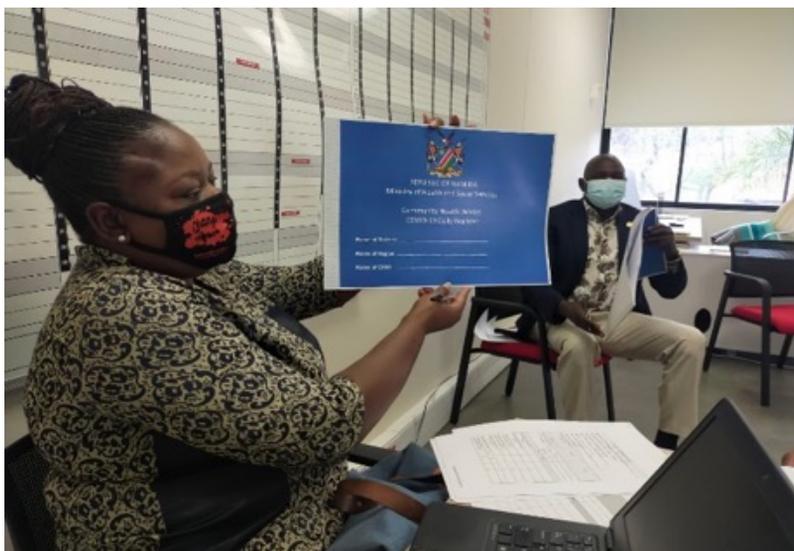
In June 2021, the Mastercard Foundation partnered with the [Africa CDC](#) to launch a \$1.5 billion initiative called [Saving Lives and Livelihoods](#). Together, we are purchasing vaccines for more than 65 million people, deploying vaccines to millions more across the continent, enabling vaccine manufacturing in Africa by developing the workforce, and strengthening the Africa CDC's capacity.

Africa CDC and the Mastercard Foundation salute the work of so many women around the continent who are at the forefront of strengthening public health. We celebrate their contributions in this edition as we mark International Women's Month.

Women driving impact at the Africa CDC



Agnes Asele from Uganda is on the frontlines of the battle against COVID-19. Serving as Project and Grants Management Technical Officer she plays a crucial role in providing oversight for various initiatives of the Africa CDC. Agnes joined the African Union in 2014 to support the Ebola outbreak response in West Africa, helped establish the Africa CDC, and coordinated various management activities before joining the Africa CDC on a full-time basis. [Read more about Agnes](#)



Dr. Herilinda Temba is part of the team leading the continent's efforts against the COVID-19 pandemic. An epidemiologist from Tanzania, she draws lessons from the several medical assignments she has been part of during her career, from emergency medicine and preparedness to occupational health and preventing and tackling epidemics like AIDS and Ebola. [Read more about Dr. Herilinda](#)

Impact of COVID-19 on African women



Two years on, the COVID-19 burden still weighs heavily on women. A new analysis by WHO Africa finds that women's health services are far from being fully restored, with 40 percent of African countries reporting disruptions to sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child, and adolescent health services. [Read more](#)

What next for Africa CDC after becoming an autonomous agency of the AU?



According to Dr. John Nkengasong, Africa CDC's Director, the agency aims to upgrade its status from a specialized technical institution to a public health agency by July 2022. At the 35th ordinary session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the Africa CDC was granted full licence to operate as an autonomous agency of the AU. This better positions the Africa CDC in its efforts to strengthen national health systems in Africa, which is aligned with its mandate. [Read more](#)

Partnering to accelerate self-testing for COVID-19 in Africa



Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing (PACT) in Africa

#TestTraceTreat



to diagnose cases



to identify cases and their contacts

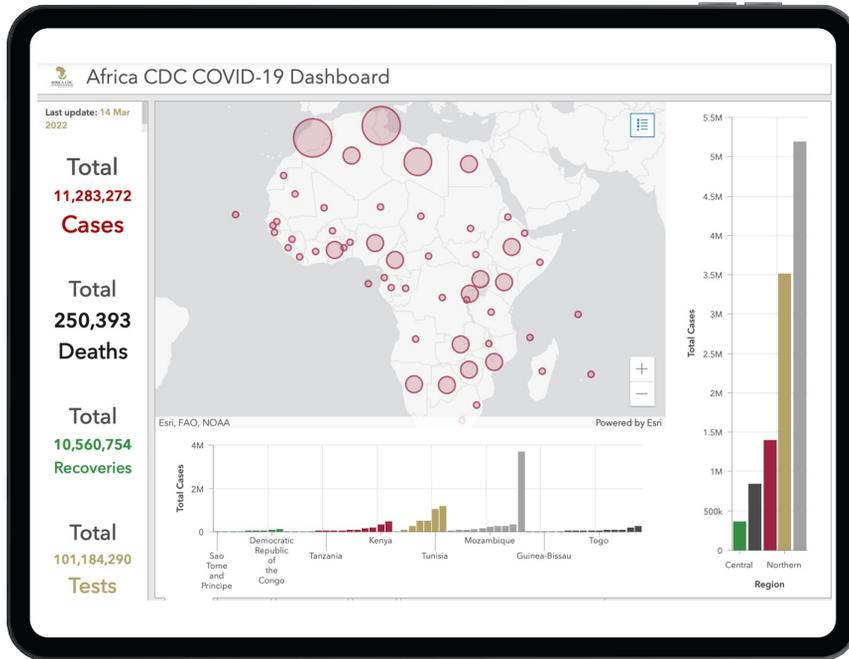


to provide supportive care for cases

The AU/Africa CDC is launching the "Know your COVID-19 Status Initiative" as part of the Partnership to Accelerate COVID-19 Testing (PACT) by scaling up rapid antigen self-testing. To continue combatting COVID-19 in Africa, where up to 85 percent of the cases remain undetected, the Africa CDC has pledged to focus its support to member states in four priority areas, including: a) scaling up vaccination; b) advancing COVID-19 rapid antigen self-testing; c) ensuring access to COVID-19 treatment; and d) promoting public health and social measures. [Read more](#)

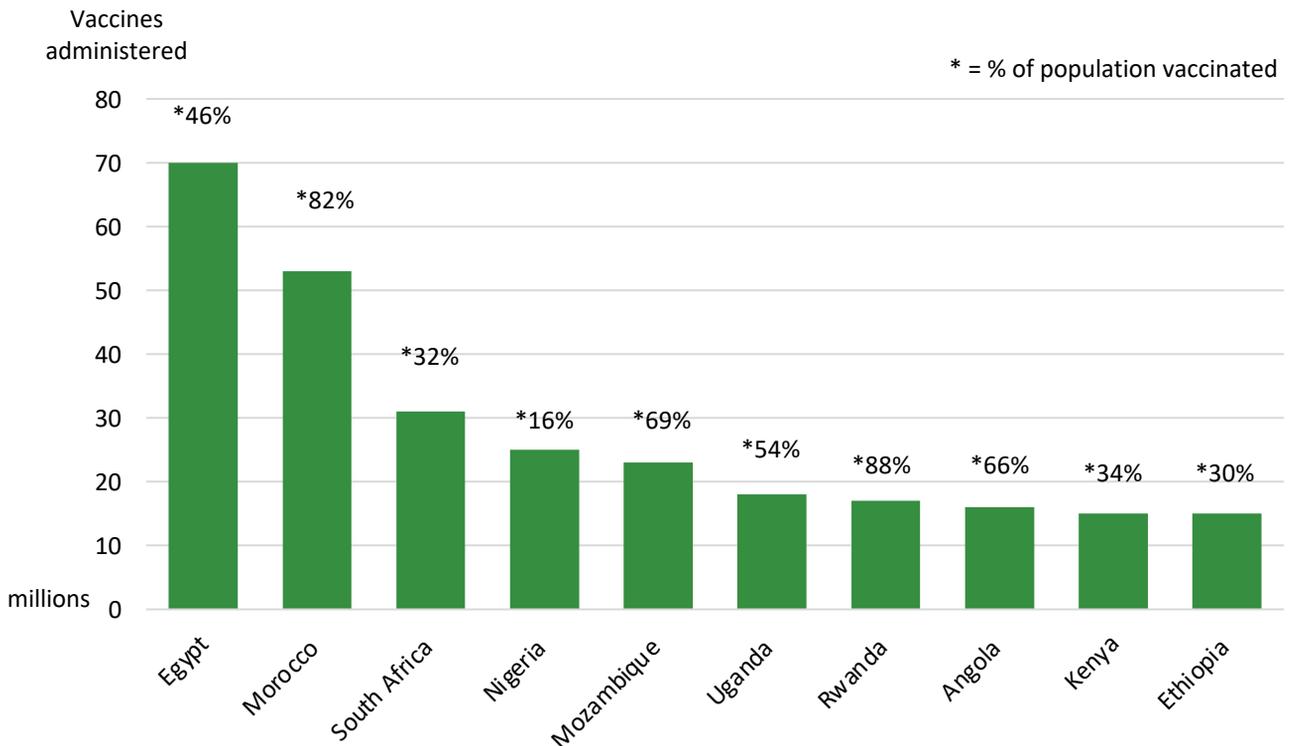
COVID-19 in Africa: Where we are today

Africa has registered more than 11 million COVID-19 cases since the start of the pandemic. Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, Morocco, South Africa, and Tunisia are among the countries with the highest number of cases on the continent. Only 13 percent of the continent's population is fully vaccinated. [Read more](#)



Vaccines administered

Latest data from the Africa CDC indicates that the following 10 countries have administered the most vaccines:



According to the WHO Africa, countries are reporting a significant rise in vaccinations. During a two-week mass vaccination campaign in early February, Kenya tripled the number of vaccines administered compared to the two weeks before the start of the campaign. In Guinea Bissau, about 125,000 doses were administered during a similar two-week campaign in February, compared to 11,000 in the whole of January. [Read more](#)

From Vision to Action: Making Good on a \$1.5 billion initiative



One-on-one with Dr. Raji Tajudeen, Head of Public Health Institutes and Research at the Africa CDC

Dr. Raji Tajudeen is responsible for coordinating the establishment and strengthening of national public health institutes across the 55 African Union Member States, and coordinating the Africa CDC Institute for Workforce Development and the broader public health research agenda. He also heads the health care preparedness and counter-measures section of the Africa CDC COVID-19 Response and co-chairs the Case Management Technical Working Group of the Africa Taskforce on COVID-19. Dr. Taudeen coordinates the Programme Management Unit of the Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative, supporting vaccine delivery to millions across the continent. He discusses how to safeguard Africa's health in light of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1

We are approaching a year since the Mastercard Foundation and Africa CDC launched a \$1.5 billion partnership to enable COVID-19 vaccination and long-term health security. What have been some of the key milestones of the Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative?

First, the Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative is in itself, an unprecedented milestone. It was launched on June 8, 2021, with an initial commitment of USD 1.3 billion which was later revised to USD 1.5 billion.

Secondly, the political buy-in has been immense. We had Heads of State and Government attending the launch of this initiative; and to date it continues to receive high-level support. It also enjoys the support of the African Union (AU) policy organs including the AU Commission, the Executive Council, and the Committee of Permanent Representatives.

Thirdly, within three weeks of launching, we reached out to Ministers of Health from Member States to enlist their support and the response was positive.

At the moment, we have 44 member states who have expressed support for the Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative. This represents approximately 80 per cent of AU membership, which I would consider our fourth milestone.

Fifth, as we speak, we are developing country support plans with 35 of these AU member states, jointly developing budgets and working on the respective rollout plans.

A sixth milestone is the fact that we have managed to carefully, and transparently, select implementing partners to move this initiative forward with our member states.

I could go on but let me highlight the seventh milestone which has to do with the first pillar of the Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative: procuring vaccines for over 65 million Africans. This has been incorporated into the African Vaccine Acquisition Task Team, our Heads of State and Government-led initiative to procure vaccines for the continent.

Finally, we have provided emergency support to approximately ten Member States including averting vaccine expiry, managing adverse events following immunization, vaccine deployment and handling demand generation.

2

What are some of the challenges the Africa CDC and Mastercard Foundation have faced in implementing this initiative – and how are you addressing them?

The biggest challenge is addressing numerous needs from member states. Some require support in setting up COVID-19 vaccination centres and developing capacity so as not to undermine routine immunization programmes, which also needs relevant training such as risk communication and documentation. Other Member States need capacity building to support in vaccine manufacturing, genomic sequencing, and logistical support in handling cold chain facilities.

With a population of approximately 1.5 billion, only about 15% of Africa's population is fully vaccinated. This means that there is a lot to be done to meet the 70% vaccination target by end of this year. However, working with strong partners such as the Mastercard Foundation, and with the support of Heads of State and Government, we can achieve this target through coordinated and collaborative efforts.

3

What impact has this partnership had on communities across the continent?

Critically, the initiative has strengthened the position of the Africa CDC through COVID-19 vaccine distribution to over 65 million Africans. Our goal is to fully integrate the Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative into operations of the Africa CDC. This will in turn strengthen our capacity to deliver on other initiatives such as genomic sequencing and scale up support to member states.

Another area that the initiative is focused on is human capital development for vaccine manufacturing, which has significant impact on our operations.

4

The Africa CDC was recently elevated to an autonomous agency of the AU. Does that have any implications for the Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative?

With the elevation of Africa CDC into Africa's foremost public health agency, the initiative will enjoy shorter decision delivery times due to the now reduced layers of bureaucracy. As a result, we expect that programme delivery will be more flexible.

5

This being International Women's Month, could you share with us whether you feel the public health response to COVID-19 globally and in Africa has adequately reflected, considered, and responded to the needs of women in Africa?

The global healthcare workforce is heavily supported by women. During this pandemic, we have enlisted the support of more women including community health workers and rapid responders.

Close to 80% of Africa's population works in the informal sector, majority of whom are women. We have seen an increase in gender-based violence targeting women, which was one of the consequences of lockdowns. Additionally, with schools shut, there was an upsurge of teenage pregnancies and early marriages. By guiding our member states through policy to ease their lockdowns, we have helped to reverse this trend and make it safer for women to return to work and school respectively.

The Africa CDC is also looking at the differential impact of COVID-19 on women and girls to generate evidence-informed policies that will help manage future pandemics.

6

How is the Africa CDC, as an institution, striving for gender equality—both internally and in its work across the continent?

Africa CDC works to ensure gender balance from policy, recruitment, and support to member states in line with the AU Policy on Gender and Agenda 2063.

7

As a parting shot, please share with us your thoughts on what we expect the future of the pandemic response in Africa to look like as the world appears to 'move on' from COVID-19. What is the Africa CDC calling for?

We would like to see the African continent coming out of this pandemic better, stronger, and bolder in terms of health systems. In that regard, we are rallying political support for a New Public Health Order under four main pillars: strengthening our public health institutions; investing in health workforce development including scaling up training of health experts; and enhancing local manufacturing capacity. Currently, Africa only manufactures one per cent of all its vaccines. Technology transfer and waivers on patents are some of the ways we can boost and guarantee our local manufacturing capabilities. We are also calling for respectful and action-oriented partnerships that will enable us to co-create, as is the case with our engagement with the Mastercard Foundation. Going forward, we need to decolonise global health.

Shots in arms: Update on Saving Lives and Livelihoods

Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative key highlights over the last couple of months:



Female Afropop artist Yemi Alade joins the charge against COVID-19: Global Afropop star Yemi Alade was appointed Global Ambassador for *It's Up to Us*— a pan-African campaign driven by the Africa CDC and Mastercard Foundation. The campaign encourages Africans to unite and get vaccinated against COVID-19. The announcement was marked by the release of a [campaign video featuring the singer](#).

“

I'm delighted to be a part of #ItsUpToUs, a movement that encourages Africans to take up the responsibility of making the world safe again.

”

Yemi Alade – Afropop star and Global Ambassador for "#ItsUpToUs campaign.

Strengthening the Africa CDC: The Africa CDC launched a massive recruitment effort to fill 106 positions, as it expands its capacity to oversee continental COVID-19 vaccination efforts. As of February 2022, only three positions were yet to be filled. To view open positions, visit <http://www.afenet.net/index.php/careers>

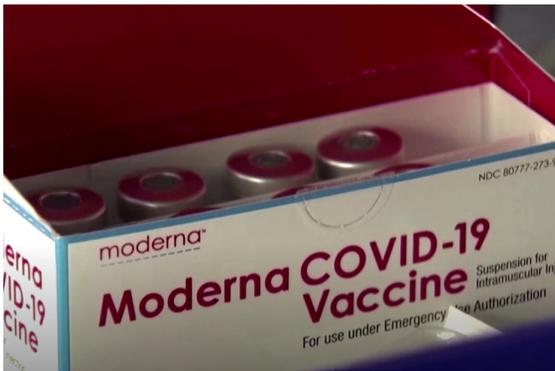
Other important developments

Marking a year of COVID-19 vaccine delivery: According to Dr. Matshidiso Moeti, WHO's Regional Director for Africa, the continent has administered nearly 400 million doses, its most extensive vaccine roll-out for a single disease in a single year. To help bolster uptake, WHO, UNICEF, Gavi (the Vaccine Alliance), and other partners are supporting mass vaccination campaigns in 10 priority countries to reach 100 million people by the end of April 2022. [Read more](#)



Biovac, a biopharmaceutical company and established vaccine manufacturer, is part of a consortium of organizations partnering with the WHO and its COVAX partners to develop the first COVID-19 mRNA vaccine technology transfer hub in South Africa. This supports South Africa and the continent in increasing vaccine manufacturing capacity and reducing reliance on imports. Biovac also entered into an agreement with Pfizer in July 2021 with the goal of manufacturing up to 100 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine for exclusive use in Africa. [Read more](#)

The Gambia has launched an ultra-cold chain store to help the country handle the safe storage of COVID-19 vaccines with support from the WHO and UNICEF. [Read more](#)



Kenya becomes the first messenger RNA (mRNA) hub in Africa after agreeing to host a biotechnology company, Moderna. Moderna says it plans to invest about \$500 million in the Kenyan facility and will supply as many as 500 million doses of mRNA vaccines to the continent each year. It also has plans to start filling doses of its COVID-19 vaccine in Africa as early as 2023. [Read more](#)



Kenya has also lifted all its COVID-19 restrictions, including a ban on large indoor gatherings and a requirement to present a negative COVID-19 certificate for arriving air travellers. Making the announcement, Health Minister Mutahi Kagwe urged Kenyans to continue heeding public health measures, such as handwashing and social distancing. [Read more](#)



Rwanda has lifted the night curfew that has been in place for two years since the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020. The decision comes as COVID-19 cases drop and after Rwanda reached its COVID-19 vaccination target of fully vaccinating 60 percent of the population or 7.8 million out of 12.9 million population on March 4. [Read more](#)



Africa CDC has urged COVID-19 vaccine donors to stagger deliveries to align with take-up. Dr. John Nkengasong, the Africa CDC Director, said he was confident in the decision to delay shipments to mid-year even as the focus shifts to getting doses into arms. [Read more](#)

Africa CDC
**Saving Lives
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Nigeria has begun to administer Johnson & Johnson's single-dose COVID-19 vaccine. In November 2021, the Mastercard Foundation, in partnership with the Africa CDC, delivered more than 3.3 million doses of Johnson & Johnson vaccines to Nigeria through the Saving Lives and Livelihoods initiative. [Read more](#)