



Division of Disease Control and Prevention

One year and Half Journey:
The Africa CDC's Program
on Non-Communicable Diseases
(NCDs), Injuries and Mental Health

In the second strategic plan (2023-2027), one of the priorities of Africa CDC is to strengthen integrated health systems to prevent and control high-burden diseases in Member States.



42 Member States and 6 Ministers of Health present in Addis Ababa to validate and launch the strategy, April 2022

Link to the Africa CDC strategic plan (2023-2027): <https://africacdc.org/download/africa-cdc-strategic-plan-2023-2027/>

In April 2022, Africa CDC developed the continental strategic priorities on NCDs, Injuries and Mental health including enhancing capacity to develop and implement policies to prevent, protect and manage them; political advocacy for better financing; workforce development; and increased access to essential technologies, medicines and diagnostics in Africa.

Link to the strategy document: <https://africacdc.org/download/africa-cdc-non-communicable-diseases-injuries-prevention-and-control-and-mental-health-promotion-strategy-2022-26/>

The role of Africa CDC to address the high burden non-communicable diseases, injuries and mental health has been recognized within the Africa CDC partners, donors and the strategy has been an important tool to mobilize resources to support Member States in this area guided by our priorities and the new public health order.

Link to the publication: [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X\(23\)00054-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/langlo/article/PIIS2214-109X(23)00054-2/fulltext)

Remarkable progress has been made to support Member States and notable successes include:

- **Establishment of the high-level advisory committee made of prominent experts in Africa on NCDs, injuries and mental health to guide implementation of the strategy**
- **Establishment of the African Union Multisectoral Taskforce on NCDs, Injuries and Mental Health**

Through the implementation of the strategy, Africa CDC is working to align Member States, Regional Economic Communities and partners to establish, strengthen and coordinate multi-sectoral action on NCDs, injuries and mental health. A Taskforce has been established to coordinate and lead the multisectoral action on NCDs, Injuries and Mental health across sectors at the African Union and provide support to Member States on prioritized policy areas.

With partners, we conducted a series of webinars attended by 100 NCDs Leads in Ministries of health on the role of investment cases, advocacy strategies and engagement of sectors beyond health.

- **Strengthening surveillance systems for NCDs, Injuries and Mental health**

Link for the press release on the Launch of the Taskforce: <https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20231104/first-ever-african-union-taskforce-non-communicable-diseases-injuries-and>



Annual planning meeting of the Advisory Committee; Kenya, Nairobi in March 2023

Member States expressed a strong need for support to get reliable and real-time data on NCDs, Injuries and Mental health to inform policies and actions. We have developed a continental guidance for strengthening NCDs, Injuries and Mental health (NCDIMH) surveillance systems which provides a set of recommendations to Member States in four important components of NCDIMH surveillance: indicators, data sources and data types, surveillance system capacities, surveillance integration with existing systems, and data use.

- **Developing workforce for NCDs, Injuries and Mental health prevention and Control**

Strengthening workforce for NCDs, injuries and mental health and link them in continent-wide networks of practitioners and researchers is a paramount priority for Africa CDC. Africa CDC conducted two high-level capacity building seminars in Tanzania and Morocco bringing together NCDs, Mental health and NPHI Directors from 46 Member States to discuss challenges and opportunities in the implementation of evidence-based NCDs, Injuries and Mental health programs in Member States. A continental network of NCDs Leads and experts has been established to advance Member States peer-review, peer-learning and peer-support in preventing and controlling NCDs, Injuries and Mental health.

- **Africa CDC Mental Health Leadership Programme (AMHLP)**

There are critical gaps in mental health provision in Africa. Africa has a ratio of 1.4 mental health workers per 100,000 people, compared with a global average of 9.0 per 100,000, and an annual rate of visits to mental health outpatient facilities of 14 per 100,000 compared to the global annual rate of 1,051 per 100,000. In addition, challenges such as poor and badly targeted funding of services, high unmet need for mental health services and low political

prioritization for mental health planning persist on the continent. As a consequence, a high treatment gap of mental health conditions has been reported. Strengthening integrated systems and increasing mental health prioritisation across the continent, requires enhancing skills and building a critical mass of well-positioned public mental health professionals, and a well-informed advocacy community to drive change.

In 2024, Africa CDC will launch a mental health leadership program to build capacity of 750 mental health leaders, strengthen public mental health systems in Member States and empower communities to influence public mental health in Africa.



Field visit to the Muhimbili tertiary hospital in Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania; September 2022



Country assessment and peer learning workshop on NCDIMH surveillance system strengthening, July 2023 Zambia / Lusaka



Field visit to the National Cancer Institute in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco; May 2023



Regional workshop for Western and Central Africa to strengthen MHPSS integration into emergency preparedness and response, Lomé, Togo; September 2023

- **Integration of Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) into emergency response and preparedness:**

Mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) must be an essential part of emergency preparedness and response across Africa. The continent faces many emergencies, from infectious disease outbreaks to humanitarian crises due to conflicts and climate change. These emergencies have a huge impact on public mental health, causing an increase of mental health conditions while disrupting mental health services and psychosocial support. The severe impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has led to increased attention toward mental health and psychosocial support, making it a system-wide priority in emergency preparedness and response. Working with partners, Africa CDC is building

the capacity for emergency response and mental health personnel to foster regional collaboration, identify lessons learned from past emergencies, sharing best practices, and conduct regional advocacy initiatives to ensure that national incident management plans and structures routinely include MHPSS elements from budget to operations to Monitoring and Evaluation.

Three regional workshops were conducted for the Western, Central and Eastern Africa regions with 80 Mental health leads and emergency response officers trained on MHPSS interventions during public health emergencies and how to build effective coordination to ensure MHPSS is an integral element of emergency preparedness and response in current and future health and humanitarian crises.

Link to the press release for the MHPSS regional workshop in Kenya (November 2022): <https://africadc.org/news-item/africa-cdc-hosts-eastern-africa-member-states-workshop-on-integrating-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-in-emergency-preparedness-and-response/>

Link to the published study on the challenges and opportunities for MHPSS integration during covid-19 in Africa: <https://africadc.org/download/challenges-and-opportunities-for-mental-health-and-psychosocial-support-in-the-covid-19-response-in-africa-a-mixed-methods-study/>

- **Developing MHPSS surge capacity within African Volunteers Health Corps (AVoHC)**

AVoHC has proved to be an important component of the continent's capacity to respond to outbreaks and other health emergencies using regional personnel to rapidly respond to events across countries as needs arise. To date deployments have included experts in epidemiology, laboratory sciences, communications, logistics, data management, social science, and clinicians. Africa CDC identified an important gap in deployment capacity, namely of mental health experts. We built capacity of rapid responders under AVoHC on MHPSS skills to enable them to address their psychological well-being and the psychological needs of affected communities.



Induction training for 35 AVoHC Volunteers in Yaoundé, Cameroon; August 2023.

- **Mental health legislation review, development and implementation**

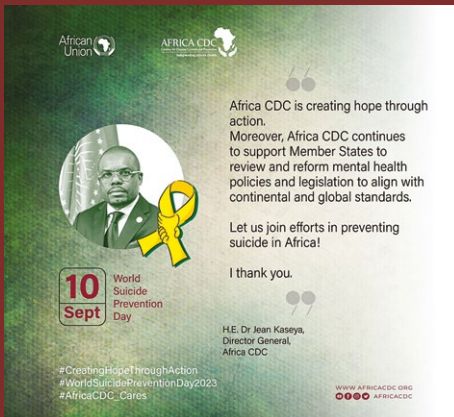
Mental health is an integral part of our general health and well-being and a basic human right. Mental health legislation is a crucial component of good governance and concerns specific legal provisions relating to mental health. Africa CDC is conducting regional advocacy for mental health policies and legislations to be implemented in line with continental and global standards, support Member States to review their mental health policies and legislation through country-to-country peer learning.



Launch of the Presidential Taskforce on Mental Health in Sierra Leone, May 2023.



H.E. Dr Monique Nsanzabaganwa, Deputy Chairperson of the AU Commission, taking part in the mental health awareness campaign; October 2022



H.E. Dr Jean Kaseya, Director-General of Africa CDC, calling everyone to join efforts to prevent suicide during the World Suicide Day; September 2023

Key Contacts

Dr Mohammed Abdulaziz:

mohammedab@africacdc.org

Head of Disease Control and Prevention Division, Africa CDC

Dr Adelard Kakunze:

Kakunzea@africacdc.org

Non-Communicable Diseases and Mental Health Programme Lead, Africa CDC

Betty Kabarega Ingabire:

kabaregab@africacdc.org

Non-communicable Diseases technical Officer, Africa CDC

Dumsani Njobo. Mamba:

Mambad@africacdc.org

Mental Health Technical Officer, Africa CDC