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Study Validates Impact of International Teams in Africa's Outbreak Response

Addis Ababa, 4 July 2025

A new study carried out by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) and the UK Public Health Rapid Support Team (UK-PHRST) confirms the critical role international health teams have played in strengthening outbreak response across the African continent. The study also highlights the need for more strategic and locally tailored support models to ensure long-term sustainability and effectiveness.

Presented and validated during a high-level virtual workshop held from 23 to 24 June 2025, the study offers one of the most comprehensive assessments to date of international technical deployments and their impact on national outbreak preparedness and response systems in African Union (AU) Member States between 2020 and 2023.

The findings show that international teams provided crucial short-term surge capacity across several public health domains, including surveillance, laboratory systems, epidemiology, infection prevention and control, clinical care, and risk communication. Notably, nearly half of all deployments supported two or more of these areas, underscoring their value in addressing multifaceted outbreak challenges.

Beyond emergency response, the study details how international teams supported countries through the provision of equipment and infrastructure, the development of operational systems and protocols, the transfer of skills through training, the enhancement of coordination structures, and rapid deployment of human resources during critical capacity gaps.

"These deployments have delivered vital expertise, resources, and rapid response capacity at crucial moments," said Dr Radjabu Bigirimana, Programme Lead for Africa CDC's African Volunteers Health Corps (AVoHC). "However, they also raise important questions about sustainability, coordination, and how we strengthen long-term national preparedness systems."

While national stakeholders widely appreciated the contributions of international teams, the study also captured reflections from international partners on the importance of aligning deployments with local needs, existing national capacities, and longer-term health security goals. Effectiveness, the study found, often depended on the expertise of deployed personnel and their integration into existing national response systems.

"This workshop reinforces the need for global partnerships to evolve—where international deployments are not just reactive measures, but deliberate investments in national systems, tailored to local realities and long-term goals," said Dr Edmund Newman, Director of the UK-PHRST.

"Evidence-informed learning must guide how we improve emergency public health deployments," added Dr Femi Nzegwu, Assistant Professor at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine and Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning lead at UK-PHRST. "The findings of the report validate experiences across Africa but also point to what must change to ensure deployments are more effective, context-specific, equitable, and empowering for Member States."

The workshop resulted in the collaborative development of a roadmap to operationalise the report's recommendations, serving as a good practice guide on how to enable sustainable solutions in outbreak management among AU Member States. In turn, the report lays a foundation for reducing long-term reliance on external surge capacity by strengthening national health systems.

Africa CDC

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) is the autonomous continental public health agency of the African Union, mandated to support Member States in strengthening health systems, and enhancing disease surveillance, prevention, and emergency response capabilities. Learn more at:

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About UK-PHRST

The UK Public Health Rapid Support Team partners with low- and middle-income countries to prevent disease outbreaks from escalating into global health emergencies.

UK-PHRST works closely with international organizations, partner country governments and non-governmental organizations to:

- Rapidly investigate and respond to disease outbreaks at their source in LMICs eligible for UK Official Development Assistance, with the aim of stopping a public health threat from becoming a broader health emergency.
- Conduct research to generate an evidence base for best practice in epidemic preparedness and response.
- Strengthen capacity for improved national response to disease outbreaks in LMICs.

They are an innovative partnership between the UK Health Security Agency and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, funded with UK aid by the UK Department of Health and Social Care.

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The views expressed in this press release are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Department of Health and Social Care