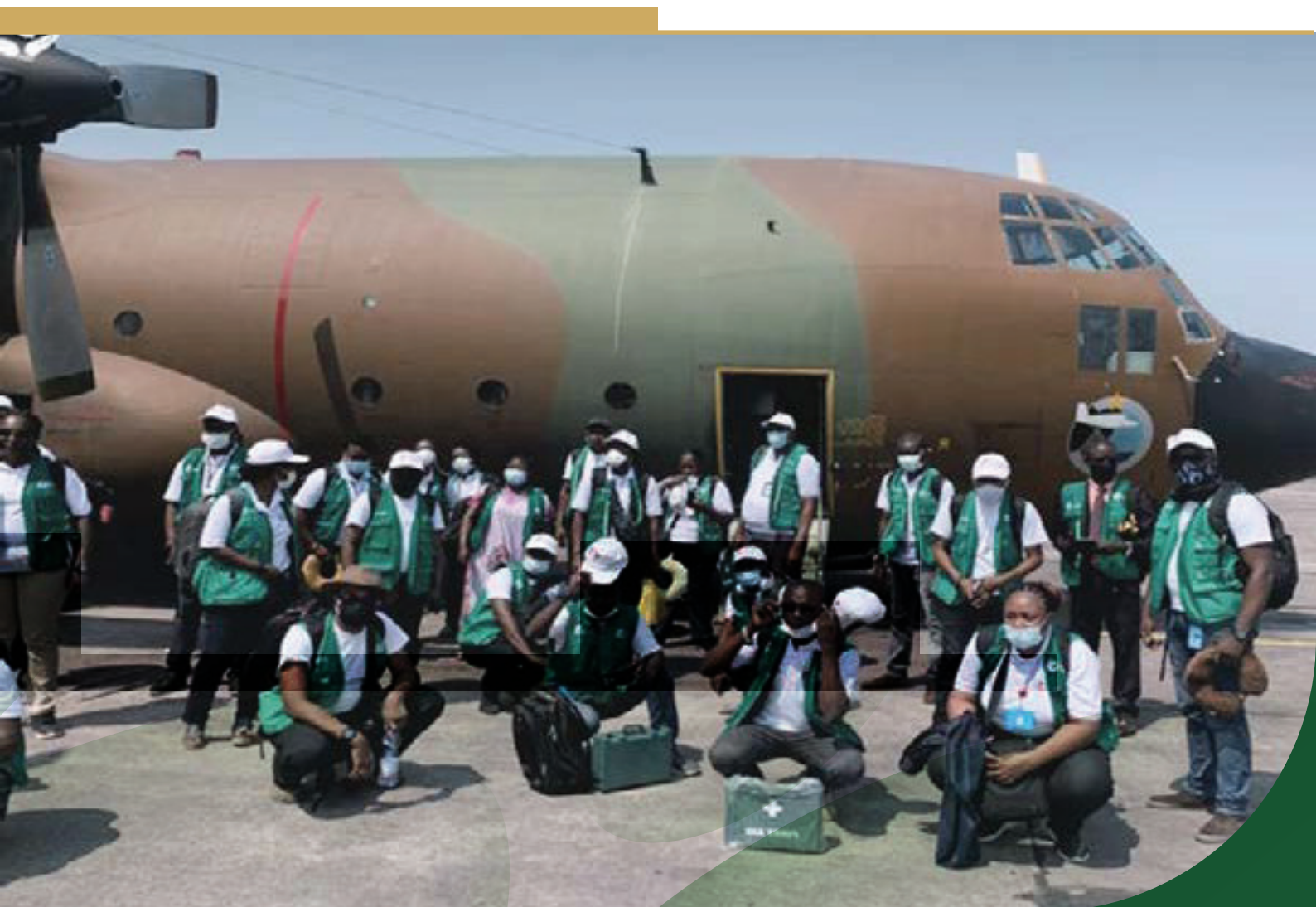


# AFRICAN VOLUNTEERS HEALTH CORPS

A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE PATH FORWARD





# WHAT IS THE AFRICAN VOLUNTEERS HEALTH CORPS?

The African Volunteers Health Corps (AVoHC) is a network of African public health professionals established by the African Union (AU) to support public health emergency response efforts across Africa.

AVoHC provides a mechanism for rapidly deploying a wide range of African experts to AU member states to respond to public health threats that necessitate surge capacity. The profiles of the experts include Epidemiologists, Laboratory

Scientists, Communications professionals, Logisticians, Data Managers, Physicians, and Social Scientists.

Experts receive specialist training in emergency response and work within countries' existing emergency response structures. Deployments are coordinated by the Emergency Preparedness and Response Division, with support from the Africa CDC Regional Collaborating Centers.

## WHY DOES AVoHC EXIST?

Over 150 disease outbreaks occur annually in Africa. These are erratic and unpredictable, occurring in different locations and with different severity each time. Compound this with high population size, urbanization, climate change, and weak and vulnerable health systems, and it becomes clear how public health emergencies can have huge macroeconomic and socioeconomic impact on the continent. There is therefore a need to strengthen Africa's capacity to respond to recurrent epidemics and other public health emergencies in a timely and effective manner.

Following the 2014 West Africa Ebola outbreak, and in keeping with the notion that African problems require African solutions, the AU Heads of State and Governments requested the AU Commission, in collaboration with Member States

and development partners, to establish Africa volunteer health corps to be deployed during disease outbreaks and other health emergencies, and to report regularly to the Assembly on progress<sup>1</sup>.

AVoHC has proven its importance as an African solution to African problems by providing support to countries when it is most needed. To date, AVoHC has been key to the responses of multiple outbreaks, including the 2018–2020 Democratic Republic of the Congo Ebola outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the number of disease outbreaks across the continent, and the variety of types of support required by these emergencies demands a coordinated, strong and responsive network of highly trained rapid responders.

<sup>1</sup> Decision taken during the 25th Assembly Ordinary Session in June 2015 in Johannesburg, South Africa - Assembly/AU/Dec.570(XXV)

# WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT?

In this document, we describe the internal transformation that AVoHC will need to undertake in order to develop the institutional capacity it needs to carry out its mission.

Looking forward, AVoHC wants to build a roster of over 2500 rapid responders with the capacity to support response efforts for at least 10 public health emergencies/events across different countries at any given time.



# WHAT IS THE AFRICAN VOLUNTEERS HEALTH CORPS?

## VISION



"Reduced morbidity, mortality and socio-economic harm from public health emergencies across Africa."

## MISSION



"Provide efficient and effective technical support for public health emergencies across Africa and strengthen the capacity of Member States to mount state-led responses to these public health threats."

## AVoHC's GUIDING PRINCIPLES

AVoHC's five guiding principles define what AVoHC believes in and how people within its organization are expected to behave in relation to each other and other stakeholders. These guiding principles provide a moral compass for decision making and establish a standard for assessing actions

### VALUE ADDITION



AVoHC should always be able to demonstrate how its initiatives add value to Member State's public health emergency response efforts and the work experience of rapid responders

### EQUITY



AVoHC is an African led mechanism established primarily to support all members of the African Union. It will impartially review all requests for technical support considering the risk to the health of the population and the capacity of the Member states to respond.

### ACCOUNTABILITY



AVoHC is accountable to Member States and Africa CDC in its approach to governance and financial administration.

### TRANSPARENCY



AVoHC will maintain open lines of communication and information exchange between itself, Member States, and rapid responders.

### CREDIBILITY



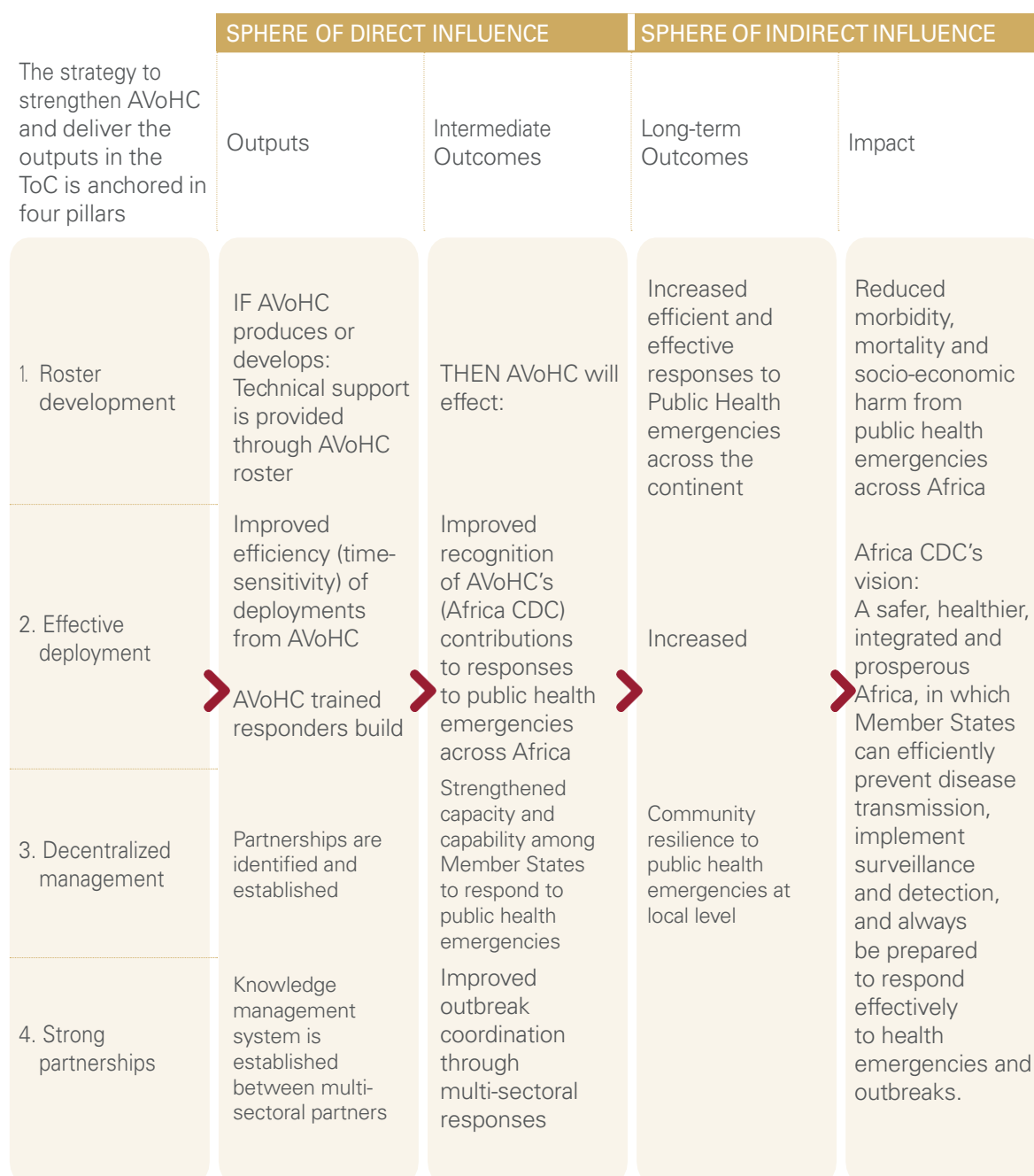
AVoHC is a credible and reliable partner in public health emergency response, and plays an important role in providing and using the most accurate information on public health emergency response efforts



# HOW DOES AVoHC's WORK LEAD TO ITS VISION?

## AFRICAN VOLUNTEER HEALTH CORPS (AVoHC) THEORY OF CHANGE

A Theory of Change has been developed to articulate how select outputs of AVoHC's work will have impact on the management of public health threats in Africa. It is a high-level visual representation of how the specific activities and outputs of AVoHC's work are expected to lead to fundamental change in responding to public health emergencies on the African continent.



### ASSUMPTIONS

Multi-sectoral partnerships are developed with mutual respect Governance systems are established at all levels. Response includes all phases of the response cycle: prevention, preparedness, detection, response and recovery Public health emergencies include epidemics as well as other public health emergencies

The majority of AVoHC volunteers come from Member States' government sector (MoH, PHIs, etc)

# HOW WILL AVoHC FULFILL ITS MISSION?

To fulfill its mission, the AVoHC team will need to transform its current operations and build its institutional capacity to deliver results. AVoHC's plan for transformation is anchored in four strategic pillars:

## AVoHC STRATEGIC PILLARS



For each pillar, AVoHC has defined a clear objective and identified the workstreams (groups of activities) needed to achieve that objective.



### TIMELINE

AVoHC expects to achieve these objectives over the next 5 years. The plan for doing this is detailed in its 5-year strategic plan.



### COST

The cost of the 5-year strategic plan is estimated at approximately US \$5,250,000.

# FOUR STRATEGIC PILLARS

## 1

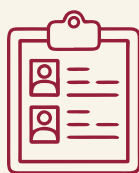
### ROSTER DEVELOPMENT

**OBJECTIVE:** Build and maintain a multi-disciplinary roster of well-trained experts that are readily available for deployment.

AVoHC plans to increase the number of well-trained rapid responders across different areas of expertise and all regions of Africa. AVoHC will target both experienced and entry-level professionals, and offer training, mentoring and capacity building to ensure all rapid responders reach AVoHC's expected minimum standard of performance, as defined by AVoHC's professional development framework. Work will have implications beyond the AVoHC program, as AVoHC will also play a role in providing attractive Africa-based exit opportunities for roster members.

To achieve this objective, this pillar has been broken down into 3 workstreams:

- Recruit the right mix of emergency response professionals to AVoHC roster
- Develop continuous training and education program for rapid responders on the roster
- Develop an exit program to support rapid responders on their transition out of AVoHC



## 2

### EFFECTIVE DEPLOYMENT

**OBJECTIVE:** Develop and implement a deployment management system for delivery of timely and high-quality technical assistance.

AVoHC will establish efficient operations to support the timely deployment of rapid responders and the delivery of high-quality technical assistance to Member States. AVoHC will adopt best-practice processes and evidence-backed tools for public health emergency response to improve its operations. It will also focus on creating a supportive environment for rapid responders to perform well.

To achieve this objective, this pillar has been broken down into 3 workstreams:

- Simplify and standardize the process for requesting and deploying rapid responders
- Develop mechanisms to ensure the quality of technical assistance during deployment
- Establish robust risk management system for RR deployment





# 3

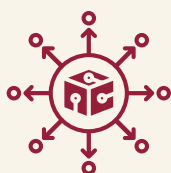
## DECENTRALIZED MANAGEMENT

**OBJECTIVE:** Build a strong decentralized system for results-based management, governance and accountability.

To ensure that it delivers the value promised to Member States and roster members, AVoHC will set up effective management, governance, and accountability systems that are decentralized to Africa CDC's regional collaborating centers (RCCs). Its Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) framework will lay out measurable targets for each area of AVoHC's expected outcomes and provide a mechanism to monitor progress toward these targets and learn from the implementation of activities.

To achieve this objective, this pillar has been broken down into 3 workstreams:

- Develop and implement MEL plan
- Decentralize and strengthen the organizational structure of the AVoHC management team
- Improve internal financing and financial management of AVoHC operations



# 4

## STRONG PARTNERSHIPS

**OBJECTIVE:** Build strong partnerships with stakeholders involved in public health emergency response efforts.

AVoHC will build mutually beneficial and long-lasting partnerships with Member States as well as technical and financial partners involved in public health emergency response. AVoHC will raise its profile among these different stakeholders and develop partnership frameworks with each stakeholder that ensure effective collaboration and efficient use of resources.

To achieve this objective, this pillar has been broken down into 3 workstreams:

- Develop a communications strategy to raise AVoHC's profile among potential partners
- Establish trust-based and effective partnerships with Member States
- Form strategic partnerships with donors and technical partners







## AFRICAN VOLUNTEERS HEALTH CORPS (AVoHC)

