

# National Public Health Institutes in Africa

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Africa CDC is a continental autonomous health agency of the African Union established to support public health initiatives of Member States and strengthen the capacity of their public health institutions to detect, prevent, control and respond quickly and effectively to disease threats.

## **Safeguarding Africa's Health**

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# ACRONYMS

<b>Africa CDC</b>	Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention
<b>AMR</b>	Antimicrobial Resistance
<b>AU</b>	African Union
<b>CoE</b>	Centre of Excellence
<b>COMESA</b>	Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa
<b>CPHIA</b>	Conference of Public Health in Africa
<b>EAC</b>	East African Community
<b>ECCAS</b>	Economic Community of Central African States
<b>ECSA-HC</b>	East, Central and Southern Africa Health Community
<b>EMT</b>	emergency medical team
<b>EPHI</b>	Ethiopian Public Health Institute
<b>EPRR</b>	Emergency Preparedness, Response and Recovery
<b>FETP</b>	Field Epidemiology Training Programme
<b>IANPHI</b>	International Association of National Public Health Institutes
<b>IHME</b>	Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation
<b>IOC</b>	Indian Ocean Commission
<b>IGAD</b>	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
<b>JEAP</b>	Joint Emergency Action Plans
<b>PHEOC</b>	Public Health Emergency Operations Centre
<b>NPHIs</b>	National Public Health Institutes
<b>PHIR</b>	Public Health Institutes and Research
<b>RCCs</b>	Regional Coordinating Centres
<b>ReSCO</b>	Regional Steering Committee
<b>ReTAC</b>	Regional Technical Committee
<b>RISLNET</b>	Regional Integrated Surveillance and Laboratory Network
<b>RRT</b>	rapid response team
<b>SADC</b>	Southern African Development Community
<b>SOPs</b>	Standard Operating Procedures
<b>TWGs</b>	Technical Working Groups
<b>WAHO</b>	West African Health Organization

# FOREWORD

National Public Health Institutes (NPHIs) are the cornerstone of national health security, playing a critical role in safeguarding populations from health threats and ensuring effective cross-border collaboration in the fight against emerging diseases. Across Africa, the importance of strong, resilient, and well-equipped NPHIs has never been more evident. Yet, despite their centrality to health security, there remain significant gaps in the establishment and operational capacity of NPHIs across the continent.

In 2022, a comprehensive assessment conducted by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) revealed that only 19 of the 55 African Union (AU) Member States had fully operational NPHIs. With 21 Member States still in the process of setting up NPHIs and 15 yet to initiate their establishment, the landscape of public health institutes in Africa reflects the disparities in capacity and readiness to address public health challenges. Even among the established NPHIs, there are notable gaps—only 14 are empowered by legal frameworks, and fewer still have current strategic plans to guide their work.

While progress has been made, with four additional Member States achieving full NPHI status by 2023, the need to address these gaps is more urgent than ever. Inadequate infrastructure, inconsistent policies, a lack of political commitment, and insufficient technical capacity have hindered the development of effective NPHIs across much of the continent. These challenges underscore the critical need for a unified, strategic approach to strengthening these institutions.

Recognizing the importance of NPHIs in achieving health security and improving public health outcomes, the Africa CDC has placed their strengthening at the heart of its strategic agenda for 2023-2027. To this end, the Africa CDC is pleased to present the plan for the development of NPHIs in Africa 2025-2027, a comprehensive framework aimed at accelerating the establishment, empowerment and operational functionality of NPHIs across the continent.

This Plan envisions a future where every AU Member State has a fully functional NPHI, empowered with the legal, technical, and financial resources necessary to lead and coordinate national health efforts.

The Plan for the Development of National Public Health Institutes in Africa 2025-2027 is a vital step towards addressing the persistent public health challenges faced by the continent. By establishing and strengthening NPHIs, this plan will empower Africa to manage health crises with greater efficiency and resilience, contributing to the long-term vision of the Africa CDC Strategic Plan 2023-2027 and the African Union Agenda 2063. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that these plans come to fruition, and that Africa's public health systems are strengthened for the benefit of all its people.

The implementation of this plan will help transform Africa's public health landscape by ensuring that each Member State has a robust NPHI capable of carrying out critical public health functions, such as disease surveillance, outbreak response, health data management, and policy development. Strengthened NPHIs will facilitate improved coordination, more timely responses to health threats, and more effective disease prevention, ultimately contributing to a healthier, more secure Africa.

I thank you.

**H.E Dr Jean Kaseya**  
Director General, Africa CDC



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Strong national public health institutes (NPHIs) are vital for ensuring national health security as well as effective cross-border collaboration and coordination in addressing health threats. Despite their critical role, the landscape of NPHIs across Africa shows significant gaps. In 2022, an Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) assessment revealed that only 19 of the 55 African Union (AU) Member States had fully established NPHIs, with 21 Member States still in the process of setting up NPHIs and 15 yet to initiate the establishment. Of the 19 established NPHIs, 14 were empowered with corresponding legal instruments, and only nine had a current strategic plan. By 2023, four additional Member States achieved full NPHI status, increasing the total number of NPHIs to 23.

The establishment of NPHIs on the continent is also fraught with challenges such as inconsistent policies, a lack of political commitment, inadequate infrastructure and insufficient technical capacity, among others. This highlights the pressing need for a concerted effort and strategy to enhance the development and operational functionality of NPHIs across Africa to ensure better prevention and response to public health threats.

Recognizing this need and the role of NPHIs in ensuring health security across the continent, the Africa CDC has prioritized the strengthening of NPHIs as a critical pillar of both the New Public Health Order and the Africa CDC Strategic Plan 2023-2027. To aid the realization of this goal, the Africa CDC has developed a Plan for the Development of National Public Health Institutes in Africa 2025-2027. The goal is to ensure that NPHIs are not only present in every Member State but are also empowered with the necessary legal frameworks, resources and expertise to effectively lead Africa's health security efforts. This will be achieved through four strategic prongs:

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1

**Support the establishment of NPHIs in all African Union Member States** by providing technical assistance, legal guidance and set-up support to build robust national health systems.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2

**Bolster the operational and programmatic functionality of NPHIs to a common and high standard** by standardising operational and programmatic practices through capacity building, best practices and performance evaluations.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3

**Designate and strengthen NPHI regional Centres of Excellence (CoEs)** to lead advanced public health initiatives and foster regional collaboration through targeted resources and specialised training.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4

**Strengthen governance, partnerships and collaboration** to enhance NPHI development. This includes creating effective collaboration frameworks, supporting joint initiatives and engaging stakeholders across sectors.

The plan aims to create a robust network of NPHIs with legal and operational frameworks; enhance their capabilities through targeted technical assistance and capacity-building initiatives; and establish regional CoEs that can serve as benchmarks and support systems for other NPHIs. A detailed implementation plan will follow.

This document outlines the Africa CDC Plan for the Development of National Public Health Institutes in Africa 2025-2027, including goals, core values, the theory of change and a detailed description of the strategic objectives. It identifies key actions and milestones that will drive the achievement of these objectives. The implementation of this plan will significantly improve public health outcomes by ensuring each Member State has a functional NPHI capable of carrying out core public health functions. Strengthened NPHIs will lead to effective responses to health emergencies, better coordination of health initiatives, and improved disease surveillance and prevention. Through this strategic plan, the Africa CDC aims to create a cohesive and resilient public health infrastructure across the continent by consolidating essential public health functions within a single institution.

In conclusion, the Plan for the Development of National Public Health Institutes in Africa 2025-2027 is crucial for addressing the persistent public health challenges faced by the continent. By establishing and strengthening NPHIs, the plan will enhance the continent's ability to manage health crises and improve overall health security. It will ultimately contribute to more integrated and resilient public health systems, aligned with the vision of the Africa CDC Strategic Plan 2023-2027 and the African Union Agenda 2063.



## BACKGROUND

The African Union Agenda 2063 lays out a 50-year roadmap from 2013 to 2063 that envisions the rededication to and attainment of an enduring Pan-African vision: “An integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its citizens, representing a dynamic force in the international arena.”

As part of this vision, in January 2017 the AU officially launched the Africa CDC as a specialized health agency of the AU. The establishment of the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) was driven by the African Union’s recognition of the need for a continental body to address pressing health challenges, conduct life-saving research, and enhance responses to public health emergencies. Following declarations made at key summits from 2013 to 2014, including the urgency highlighted during the Ebola outbreak, African leaders emphasized the creation of the Africa CDC to strengthen health systems, improve coordination, and share knowledge across the continent. The formal establishment of the Africa CDC was endorsed in 2015, with a coordination office located in Addis Ababa, and subsequent efforts to strengthen its legal, structural, and financial framework continued through the 35th Ordinary Session of the African Union in 2022.

As part of this vision, in January 2017 the AU officially launched the Africa CDC as a specialized health agency of the AU. Its mission is to strengthen the capacity, capability and partnerships of Africa’s public health institutions to prevent, detect and respond effectively and efficiently to disease threats and outbreaks through science, policy and data.

The International Health Regulations (IHR) 2005 and the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA) are two critical frameworks that focus on strengthening global health systems, with the goal of improving countries’ preparedness and response capabilities to health emergencies. Both initiatives emphasize the importance of building and enhancing public health capacity across several key areas to ensure that countries can effectively prevent, detect, and respond to public health threats. The International Health Regulations (IHR) are a legally binding instrument of the World Health Organization (WHO) that was adopted by member states in 1969 and revised in 2005. The IHR are designed to provide a framework for

managing the spread of diseases across borders and to improve international cooperation in the event of public health emergencies. The effective implementation of the new public health order helps to ensure the health and wellbeing of African citizen and comply with the International Health Regulations and Global Health Security Agenda.

Cognizant of the need for resilient health systems that cope up with emerging and reemerging public health emergencies in Africa, the AU called for a New Public Health Order for health security on the continent. The New Public Health Order is underpinned by five critical pillars: strengthening public health institutions on the continent; strengthening the public health workforce; expanding the local manufacturing of vaccines, diagnostics and therapeutics; promoting respectful, action-oriented partnerships; and increasing domestic resources for health security.

This will empower Member States to take control and responsibility for the health and wellness of their populations. Further, the Africa CDC Strategic Plan 2023-2027 recognises NPHIs as a one of six priority programmes, essential for ensuring health security across the continent. This acknowledgement underscores the critical role these institutes play in strengthening health systems, detecting and responding to outbreaks, and promoting continental cooperation. The establishment of NPHIs aligns with the global goals of strengthening such systems and enhancing global health security.

The Africa CDC prioritises NPHIs as key strategic conduits for achieving public health objectives within Member States. NPHIs are critical players in strengthening health systems, acting as guardians of national health security, and are essential to Africa’s overall health architecture.

The Strategic Plan for the Development of National Public Health Institutes (NPHIs) in Africa 2025-2027 aims to address the continent’s public health challenges by strengthening NPHIs, enhancing Africa’s capacity to manage health crises, and improving overall health security. This initiative will help build more integrated and resilient public health systems, aligning with the Africa CDC Strategic Plan 2023-2027 and the African Union Agenda 2063, contributing to a healthier, more sustainable future for Africa.

## CONTINENTAL NPHI SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

A fully functional NPHI is an institution established through a legal framework by an Act of Parliament, a Cabinet decision or a presidential decree, depending on the country's legal system, to lead and coordinate critical public health functions and exercise operational and technical independence. An Act of Parliament is the more desirable option to guarantee the sustainability of NPHIs, ensuring independence and shielding them from future policy changes.

In 2022, the Africa CDC assessed the establishment status of NPHIs in Africa. The data generated showed that 19 (35%) of the 55 Member States assessed have established NPHIs, while 21 (38%) have no NPHIs but are in the process of establishing one. The remaining 15 (27%) have no NPHIs and have not initiated any process. The data also showed that only 14 (74%) of the 19 established NPHIs are empowered with corresponding legal instruments. Of the 19 fully established NPHIs, only nine (47%) have a current strategic plan. It is important to note that in 2023, four additional Member States attained fully established NPHI status.

Following this assessment, Africa CDC, in collaboration with partners, has prioritised strengthening NPHIs in Africa in line with its five-year strategic plan. This vision aligns with the broader ambition of ensuring that fully functional NPHIs, underpinned by legal frameworks, are present in every Member State. The African continent has seen a marked improvement in NPHIs' capacity development over the last decade, with the number of Member States with established NPHIs increasing from 14 in 2017 to 23 in 2024.

While several factors could have contributed to this improvement, the establishment and operationalisation of the Africa CDC in 2017 and the development of the framework for the establishment of NPHIs in 2018 are key milestones in Africa that may have driven such marked progress.

## NPHI DEVELOPMENT SWOT ANALYSIS

It is critical to understand the operational landscape in the establishment of NPHIs. To this end, the SWOT framework is used to assess factors that have facilitated the development of NPHIs on the continent.

### STRENGTHS

**Convening power:** The Africa CDC's strength lies in its convening power, enabling it to bring together African Heads of State, governments, and key stakeholders to address critical health challenges across the continent. This allows Africa CDC to set and influence the continental health agenda, such as the "New Public Health Order," which focuses on strengthening health systems, disease prevention, and equity. It also facilitates regional collaboration, ensuring coordinated responses to health issues, and fosters global

partnerships to secure resources and support. By providing technical guidance and policy advice to governments, Africa CDC helps ensure evidence-based decision-making and a unified, effective approach to improving public health across Africa.

**Expertise and partnerships:** NPHIs benefit from a vast pool of skilled public health experts, ensuring the capacity to effectively address health challenges. A strong collaboration with global health bodies like the WHO, US CDC, UKHSA, China CDC, RKI, GIZ, World Bank and UNICEF provide NPHIs with technical support, resources and international best practices.

**Infrastructure:** Public Health Emergency Operations Centres (PHEOCs) enhance NPHIs' ability to efficiently manage and coordinate responses to health emergencies, including

improved MS molecular diagnosis capacity for better disease surveillance and response, especially for emerging pathogens; increased infrastructure for isolation and treatment, which improves the management of infectious diseases and outbreak containment; centralised knowledge hubs that facilitate knowledge sharing, training and research among public health professionals; and synthesis of evidence-based research findings to inform policies.

**Government commitment:** increasing political will and support for public health initiatives, as exemplified by agreements like the pandemic accord, bolster the establishment and strengthening of NPHIs. Additionally, the Africa CDC's convening authority and mandate in advocating for NPHIs through various statutory channels enhances government support and prioritisation of public health.

**Policies and frameworks:** policy documents and frameworks developed by the Africa CDC to aid NPHI development include the Africa CDC Strategic Plan; a framework for the establishment of NPHIs; health information exchange guidelines and standards; the One Health programme; and Event-Based Surveillance (EBS) Frameworks, PHEOC Legal Framework Guide, Strategic Plan for Biosecurity and Biosafety.

**Networks and mentorship programmes:** there are existing networks and mentorship programmes that enhance the capacity of NPHIs, including an African network of NPHIs that promotes peer-to-peer support and the sharing of best practices, fostering a collaborative approach to public health challenges. Further, identifying and leveraging NPHI champions by Africa CDC for mentorship and exchange programmes facilitates knowledge transfer and capacity building among NPHIs.

## WEAKNESSES

- **Inadequate infrastructure:** gaps in healthcare facilities, diagnostic laboratories and communication networks hinder effective disease surveillance, timely diagnostics and comprehensive health services, limiting research and innovation capacity.
- **Resource constraints:** Insufficient financial resources affect all aspects of public health operations, leading to dependency on international donors and a lack of long-term sustainability.
- **Inadequate laboratory systems:** outdated equipment, a lack of standardisation, inadequate supply chains and insufficiently trained personnel undermine accurate and timely disease diagnosis, surveillance and research.
- **Human resource challenges:** shortages of trained healthcare professionals, high turnover rates and inadequate professional development opportunities hinder the effective functioning of NPHIs.
- **Data management:** inadequate data collection, storage, analysis and sharing systems lead to fragmented and unreliable data, making it difficult to monitor health trends and plan effectively.
- **Fragmented health systems:** limited coordination between different levels of government, partners, healthcare providers and sectors result in inefficiencies and gaps in service delivery, reducing the effectiveness of NPHIs.
- **Inadequate political commitment:** insufficient political will to prioritise public health, allocate resources and implement reforms hinders the establishment and functioning of NPHIs.
- **Change management:** before the establishment of an NPHI, most essential public health functions in a country are conducted and coordinated by departments within Ministries of Health or other technical agencies. Resistance starts when change is instituted to bring these functions under the newly established NPHI. These change challenges emanate from various sources including conflicting roles of Ministries of Health and NPHIs.
- **Inadequate technical capacity:** even well-established NPHIs may face difficulties in delivering key roles and functions at the desired levels of quality and effectiveness.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- **Global health initiatives:** Increased focus on global health security and pandemic preparedness opens avenues for support, funding and collaboration, strengthening NPHIs. The Pandemic Treaty and review of IHR frameworks provide opportunities for Africa's NPHIs to align with global standards, enhance their capabilities and secure international partnerships. Access to financial resources from global health programmes and initiatives like that of African leaders to accelerate health financing in Africa can bolster NPHI development, ensuring sustainability and capacity building. The existence of the International Association of National Public Health Institutes offers a platform for African NPHIs to network, share knowledge and receive technical assistance.
- **Workforce development:** Field Epidemiology Training Programmes (FETPs) and the Africa Epidemic Service (AES) provide specialised training to build a skilled public health workforce. Various fellowship programmes (e.g., the Kofi Annan Global Health Leadership Programme, the Public Health Emergency Management Fellowship and the Public Health Informatics Fellowship Programme) offer advanced training and professional development opportunities for public health professionals. Expanding Community health workers (CHW) programmes can enhance primary healthcare delivery and community-level disease surveillance. Further, the African Volunteer Health Corps for Health (AVoHC) fosters volunteerism, enhancing workforce capacity during health emergencies.
- **Technological advancements:** the adoption of digital tools and mobile technologies can improve health service delivery, disease surveillance and patient engagement while advanced data analytics and surveillance systems enable better detection, monitoring and response to health threats.
- **Public Health Emergency Operation Centres (PHEOCs):** leveraging the Lusaka Call to Action highlights the commitment to support 24 Member States with state-of-the-art equipment and capacity building for PHEOCs. Implementation of robust incident management systems can enhance coordinated responses to public health emergencies.
- **Continental and regional cooperation and collaboration:** existing regional collaborations and partnerships such as the peer-to-peer NPHI exchange and mentorship programme, the Regional Integrated Surveillance and Laboratory Network (RISLNET) and Joint External Evaluation and Action Plans (JEAP) facilitate the sharing of successful regional strategies and innovations in public health. Likewise, regional bodies (e.g., WAHO, COMESA, IOC, SADC, EAC, IGAD, ECCAS and ECSA-HC) and governing structures (the Africa CDC's RCC, ReTAC and ReSCO) support coordination and cooperation in public health initiatives.
- **Civil society engagement:** leveraging support from civil society organisations can amplify advocacy efforts, garner public support and drive policy change.
- **Data centres:** centralised data management systems improve data collection, analysis and sharing, enhancing decision-making and responses to health threats.

## THREATS

- **Multiple outbreaks and public health emergencies overwhelming health systems:** Africa frequently experiences outbreaks of infectious and non-communicable diseases, straining limited health resources and infrastructure. This constant demand for emergency response diverts attention from long-term health initiatives, limiting NPHIs' capacity to focus on prevention and system strengthening.
- **Political instability:** Political instability, including conflicts and changes in government, disrupts public health programmes and policies. It leads to displacement, infrastructure destruction and interrupted health services, making it difficult for NPHIs to operate effectively and implement sustained health initiatives.

- **Climate change with its devastating consequences:** Climate change exacerbates health challenges through extreme weather events like floods and droughts, leading to food and water shortages and increased vulnerability to diseases. Emerging climate-sensitive diseases further burden health systems, requiring significant resources for adaptation and strategic planning.
- **Continental brain drain and institutional attrition:** The migration of skilled healthcare professionals to other regions or sectors results in a loss of talent and expertise, weakening NPHIs' capacity. Institutional attrition due to poor working conditions and inadequate compensation further depletes essential human resources.
- **Inadequate budget allocation and inappropriate budget prioritisation:** Insufficient funding for public health, coupled with competing national needs, leads to inadequate financial support for NPHIs. This underfunding affects their ability to maintain operations, develop infrastructure and implement programmes, limiting their effectiveness in safeguarding public health.
- **Competing priorities:** governments face multiple pressing priorities that compete for limited resources. Public health often does not receive the necessary attention and funding, leading to underinvestment in health infrastructure and services. This weakens the health system and the capacity of NPHIs to respond to health challenges.
- **Cost of technological advancements:** public health systems often operate within constrained budgets, and the expense of integrating new technologies can strain limited resources. This may lead to trade-offs in funding for other essential healthcare services, potentially compromising overall healthcare quality. In addition, implementing new technologies requires ongoing training for healthcare professionals and maintenance of equipment or software systems. These additional costs can further burden public health systems already facing financial challenges.

## GOALS AND CORE VALUES

### GOALS

The overarching goal of this strategic plan is to see empowered and functional NPHIs that are capable of coordinating and implementing essential public health functions in all African Union Member States'.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Africa CDC is guided by a set of core values that underpin its mission to improve public health across the continent. Here's an elaboration on each of these values:

**Professionalism:** Professionalism at Africa CDC refers to the high standards of competence, accountability, and ethical conduct expected from all its staff and stakeholders. This means consistently delivering quality health solutions, adhering to global best practices, and demonstrating respect and dedication in every action. Professionalism ensures that

Africa CDC can effectively collaborate with governments, international organizations, and other health entities while maintaining a reputation of reliability, trustworthiness, and respect.

**Equity:** Equity is a core value that ensures fair access to health resources, services, and opportunities for all populations, particularly vulnerable groups across Africa. Africa CDC strives to eliminate disparities in health outcomes by addressing social determinants of health, advocating for policies that ensure equal treatment, and focusing on regions with the most pressing needs. This commitment means that Africa CDC actively works to ensure that no one is left behind in terms of health access, regardless of geography, socioeconomic status, or other factors.

**Evidence-based Decision-making:** Africa CDC places a strong emphasis on data-driven,



scientific approaches in shaping health policies and responses. This means decisions are made based on the best available evidence, from surveillance data to research findings, to ensure that interventions are effective and appropriate for the African context. By relying on evidence, Africa CDC ensures that health initiatives are both relevant and impactful, reducing uncertainty and enhancing the likelihood of positive outcomes.

**Integrity:** Integrity at Africa CDC is about maintaining the highest standards of honesty, transparency, and ethical behavior in all activities. It means that the organization consistently follows ethical guidelines, communicates openly about its actions, and holds itself accountable for its commitments. Integrity builds trust among stakeholders, including governments, communities, and international partners, and is fundamental in ensuring that Africa CDC's work is seen as credible and trustworthy.

**Excellence:** Excellence at Africa CDC refers to a relentless commitment to achieving the highest quality in health programs and services. This value drives continuous improvement, innovation, and the pursuit of outstanding results. It is about going beyond the minimum requirements and striving for optimal outcomes in every area of public health, whether in disease prevention, emergency response, or health system strengthening. Excellence is about ensuring that Africa CDC's work has a transformative and lasting impact on the continent's health systems.

**Science and Innovation:** Science and innovation are at the heart of Africa CDC's approach to solving public health challenges. This value underscores the importance of cutting-edge research, new technologies, and innovative solutions in addressing Africa's most pressing health issues. Africa CDC prioritizes scientific research and the adoption of innovations to improve disease prevention, diagnostics, treatment, and overall health outcomes. Whether through leveraging new vaccine technologies or implementing advanced data analytics, Africa CDC seeks to stay at the forefront of public health innovation.

# OVERVIEW OF THE 2025-2027 DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Strategic Plan for the Development of National Public Health Institutes in Africa 2025-2027 details the Africa CDC's blueprint for developing and sustaining NPHIs over the next five years. It includes a presentation of the centre's past and current programmes and what they focus on in the immediate future. This strategic plan describes the goals, objectives, actions, projects and major activities that will be implemented by the Africa CDC in the next five years.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES, ACTIONS AND PROJECTS

To build the capacity of existing NPHIs and support the development of new ones, the Africa CDC will focus on the following four strategic objectives:

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1: SUPPORT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NATIONAL PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTES IN ALL AFRICAN UNION MEMBER STATES

NPHI development is a long journey that requires collaboration and coordination among government agencies and partners who work to improve the public health system and ensure national health security. One of the success factors for NPHI development in a country is the engagement of stakeholders from the planning steps through to full operationalisation. The Africa CDC, in collaboration with partners and stakeholders, will ensure that every Member State has a fully functional and sustainable NPHI established through a legal framework.

The Africa CDC organises public health conferences, including the meeting of NPHIs and senior MoH officials in Africa, every year to create a platform to strengthen the network of institutions, share experiences, learn from each other, and collectively agree on core functions and priorities that each country must implement and be assessed on. In addition, the Africa CDC facilitates peer-to-peer exchange programmes, encourages high-level continental and in-country advocacy for the establishment of NPHIs in Member States, and discusses strategies to fast-track the process of NPHI development. It also

provides technical support to Member States in developing roadmaps and legal frameworks for the institutionalisation of NPHIs.

The Africa CDC uses NPHIs as an entry point to Member States in the execution of its mandates and initiatives. As such, it will continue to collaborate with partners and stakeholders to ensure that every Member State establishes a fully functional and sustainable NPHI.

## ACTIONS

**Create an enabling environment to build stakeholder consensus:** engage in advocacy efforts to garner political will and commitment from MoH leadership and relevant stakeholders for the establishment of new NPHIs; facilitate stakeholder meetings and discussions to address concerns and gather inputs, fostering consensus on the necessity and scope of NPHIs; and commission an investment case for the NPHI in each country's context.

**Support the development of legal instruments, governance and organisational structure:** provide technical assistance and expertise in structuring the legal framework for NPHIs, ensuring alignment with national health policies and legal provisions. Develop governance structures and strategic plans to guide the development and growth of NPHIs. Create partner management and coordination platforms to enable the harmonisation and alignment of an NPHI's strategic goals and objectives.

### STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2: BOLSTER THE OPERATIONAL AND PROGRAMMATIC FUNCTIONALITY OF NPHIS TO A COMMON AND HIGH STANDARD

Some established NPHIs lack the relevant capacity to carry out their public health functions effectively and efficiently. The Africa CDC aims to collaborate with its partners to continuously build the capacity of these NPHIs to perform core public health functions. Moreover, continuous assessment of NPHIs will assist in monitoring the NPHI development progress and maturity level over time.



## ACTIONS

**Reinforce and further develop newly established NPHIs:** Strengthen the operationalisation of newly established NPHIs by conducting capacity assessments using standard checklists. Provide targeted technical assistance and capacity-building initiatives to address identified areas for improvement and enhance the functionality and effectiveness of the NPHIs. Facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration among NPHIs within and across Member States to foster mutual learning and exchange of best practices. Create mechanisms for stakeholder engagement and feedback to ensure alignment with the needs and priorities of key stakeholders, including ongoing clarification of roles and responsibilities and capacity building at the sub-national level. Develop communication and advocacy plans to support NPHIs, including budget advocacy and community engagement.

**Build capacity of established NPHIs:** Enhance sustainable cooperation and knowledge transfer among NPHIs in Africa by facilitating peer-to-peer exchange programmes among Member States and with institutions outside the continent. Conduct periodic capacity assessments, facilitate relevant training programmes, and provide technical assistance for establishing key programmes such as emergency preparedness and response, surveillance, health information and data management, public health research, and laboratory systems and networks.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3: DESIGNATE AND STRENGTHEN NPHI REGIONAL CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

The Africa CDC recently concluded an assessment of fully established NPHIs to designate some as CoEs. The role of CoEs is to support Member States that are currently developing or have expressed an interest in establishing NPHIs. CoEs are recognised for achieving outstanding performance in public health security, allowing them to guide, mentor and set standards for other institutions in their domain. It is acknowledged that not every NPHI will excel across all public health functions, and there will naturally be variations in their development stages. Therefore, establishing a few CoEs with advanced capacity in specialised functions, serving as regional reference centres, is a prudent and feasible approach.

In line with this strategy, the Africa CDC will support the establishment of CoEs in each region to provide guidance and support to other NPHIs in their respective regions. These CoEs will focus on organisational change management, standardised approaches and processes, tools, methodologies and knowledge sharing.

The focus of the Africa CDC in its Strategic Plan 2025-2027 is to support the establishment of CoEs with advanced capacity for specialised public health functions in each of Africa's five geographical regions. This initiative aims to empower NPHIs with the ability to manage national health data repositories, enhance skills in effective analytics and metric sciences, conduct and support operational and translational research on national health and nutrition priorities, and strengthen emergency preparedness and response capabilities, including workforce development. Additionally, the Africa CDC will bolster existing fellowship initiatives such as the Public Health Emergency Management Fellowship, the Africa Epidemic Service Programme and the Kofi Annan Global Health Leadership Programme for the proposed CoEs and other NPHIs.

## ACTIONS

**Assess and designate regional Centres of Excellence:** To designate a regional NPHI CoE, a capacity assessment checklist will be developed taking into consideration assessment tools for NPHI and health security. Capacity assessment of fully established and operational NPHIs will be conducted, focusing on corporate governance; health information management systems; public health workforce development; public health emergency response coordination; and public health research. The selection of regional CoEs will consider organisational capacity, strong leadership and governance, geographic location, language, the population being served and expertise in key priority areas. These regional NPHI CoEs will work to enhance the administrative, human and technical capabilities and the infrastructural capacity of other NPHIs.

**Strengthen health information management and data analytics capacity:** To support NPHIs in establishing and operationalising functional national data and information management systems, the Africa CDC will:

- Provide training on national data management and metrics system

development, covering data repository development, countrywide data acquisition, data management and advanced analytics, data sharing, data warehousing, and data use

- Prepare a guiding policy document or health atlas to promote the use of results for decision-making
- Develop frameworks for information exchange among relevant stakeholders
- Improve burden-of-disease estimates and data sharing across Africa by conducting data landscape analyses and establishing a repository for cross-country sharing of research data and outcomes
- Support the establishment of interoperable data management systems in selected NPHIs
- Create a platform for sustainable cooperation and knowledge transfer among NPHIs in each region to enhance national capacity for early detection and prompt response to public health emergencies

#### **Strengthen public health workforce development:**

To ensure optimal use of human capital and talent management, the Africa CDC will implement a comprehensive workforce development plan. Strengthen public health workforce development: to ensure optimal use of human capital and talent management, the Africa CDC will implement a comprehensive workforce development plan. This includes enhancing regional and national FETPs to improve training quality and expand the number of fellows. Additionally, a coordination and engagement platform will be established with relevant academic and training initiatives to facilitate seamless HR pipeline development, internship placements and access to training opportunities. The goal is to enhance workforce readiness and ensure alignment between academic curricula and real-world public health needs. Key focus areas will include:

- FETPs
- Public health informatics
- Laboratory leadership
- Public health leadership
- One Health
- Public Health Emergency Management (PHEM)

#### **Strengthen emergency preparedness and response capacity and capabilities:**

Systems will be established and maintained across governance, capacity and resources.

Governance will encompass policies and legislation integrating emergency preparedness and response, along with plans for EPRR and coordination mechanisms. Capacity will focus on developing guidelines and SOPs for risk assessment and mapping, with associated training. This also includes supporting the development of contingency plans for public health emergencies, enhancing PHEOC infrastructure and workforce capacity, and fostering networking among sub-national and national Emergency Operations Centres (EOCs).

Additionally, efforts will involve training rapid response teams (RRTs) and emergency medical teams (EMTs); establishing expertise rosters; ensuring mechanisms for medical countermeasures; conducting simulation exercises for PHEOC; and developing standardised EOC handbooks, SOPs and guidelines. Capacity building will also emphasise effective communication during public health events.

Resources will cover financial allocations for emergency preparedness and contingency funding for response, logistics mechanisms, essential health supplies, and dedicated, trained, and equipped human resources for emergencies.

#### **Strengthen institutional capacity for public health research:**

Public health research is crucial for examining health determinants that influence population health. Essential requirements for effective public health research include establishing a research agenda aligned with national priorities; developing operational research guidelines; ensuring adequate infrastructure and resources; maintaining skilled human resources; fostering collaboration with relevant national and international research institutions; effectively communicating and disseminating research findings in scientific journals; and translating research findings into solutions for public health challenges. Research efforts should particularly focus on emergencies, implementation research, operational research, and supporting Research and Development (R&D).

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4: STRENGTHEN GOVERNANCE, PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

NPHIs are expected to establish accountability systems, implement change management processes, and share internal and external audit findings to ensure continuous quality improvement, contingent upon their legal frameworks enabling transparent operations. Strong political commitment, leadership, coordination, oversight and multisectoral collaboration, including a One Health approach, are essential for NPHIs to optimally perform their core functions.

The establishment of a well-functioning NPHI requires robust stakeholder and partner support for scientific and operational autonomy, as well as sustainable financing. To generate evidence on the costs and benefits of establishing NPHIs, the Africa CDC will commission an investment study, identify national champions, assist in developing model structures for NPHIs, support high-level advocacy efforts, and create platforms for stakeholders and partners to engage.

### ACTIONS

**Strengthen institutional governance:** Africa CDC will support organisational development within NPHIs, focusing on strategic planning, coordination, change management, grant management systems, financial management, logistics and human resource management. This includes strengthening capacity in monitoring, evaluation, reporting and learning.

**Strengthen strategic partnerships and collaboration:** partnerships and collaboration entail fostering strong cooperation between various stakeholders, including governments, international organisations, academic institutions, civil society and the private sector. This involves implementing partner mapping, framework agreements, partner coordination forums, resource mobilisation efforts, and joint work plans at both continental and Member State levels.

## KEY MILESTONES

- Designate 10 NPHI CoEs
- Support the establishment of 12 new NPHIs with legal frameworks
- Facilitate peer-to-peer experience exchange programmes for 30 NPHIs in Africa
- Provide mentorship and technical assistance to 50% of AU Member States
- Develop an investment plan for NPHI development
- Conduct capacity assessment of 12 NPHIs using the Africa CDC monitoring scorecard
- Develop/revise a framework for the development of NPHIs in Africa

## KEY OUTCOME INDICATORS

The measurable indicators will be the number of each of the milestones achieved annually over the five-year period:

- Number of new NPHI CoEs established
- Number of staff exchange programmes supported
- Number of new NPHIs established with the legal framework
- Number of conferences organised
- Number of countries provided with mentorship and technical assistance
- Number of NPHIs supported through peer-to-peer experience-sharing visits
- Number of NPHIs assessed using the Africa CDC NPHI scorecard
- Number of frameworks developed/ revised
- NPHI investment plan developed
- Amount and type of resources mobilised to strengthen NPHIs

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