

AFRICA CENTRES FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION

COMMENTS

Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of health systems globally, including in the lack of preparedness of global, regional and national governance and financing systems to adequately absorb shocks from public health emergencies. In low and middle-income countries (LMICs) in particular, the pandemic has exposed the chronic under-investments in critical health infrastructure, human resources, surveillance, laboratory and diagnostic systems, as well as in the primary health care systems that could help countries to better handle ongoing and new epidemics as they emerge. With the context of resource constraints understood, countries have still not prioritized investments in such critical areas of the health systems, making them vulnerable to any health shocks.

The global health system has successfully been mobilized to initiate financing arrangements to support the COVID-19 response, with rapid and massive mobilization of financing by all governments and international financial institutions (IFIs). However, this mobilization has underscored the lack of preparedness of global financing institutions as well as national governments to adequately respond to health emergencies that have occurred over the past decades. While significant contributions from official development assistance went into purchasing diagnostics and vaccines through charity, direct donations to countries or through the COVAX initiative hosted by Gavi, the vaccine alliance, among others, there is still little focus on strengthening national and regional health systems to make them resilient, sustainably withstanding ongoing and new health threats. Additionally, there is little focus on how such international financing has encouraged (and not crowded out) domestic and private investments in public health systems. It is critical for any international financing efforts to motivate increases in domestic spending on public health systems, not crowd them out.

The proposed FIF

The Africa Centres of Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) congratulates the G20 and all partners for the proposal to establish a Financial Intermediary Fund for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. The Africa CDC is of the view that this Fund is timely and has the potential to support the global community, particularly LMICs to better prepare for public health threats. The Africa CDC has reviewed the proposed framework for the establishment of the FIF and makes the following comments:

It is critical that this opportunity is directed at closing critical gaps in financing public health, particularly,

1. It is crucial to clearly allocate funds to strengthen **national and subnational public health institutions** as well as **regional public health institutions such as regional centres for disease control and prevention**, which we believe produce national, regional and global public goods.
1. The financing facility needs to **leverage rather than crowd out domestic and international financing** through incentivizing domestic financing (including from public development banks).

What Does the FIF need to finance

The Africa CDC aligns with the World Health Organization’s framework for common goods for health (CGH) and believes that the FIF presents an opportunity to finance CHG at country and regional levels. In Table 1 below, we reproduce the categories of CGH that should be prioritized by the FIF:

	Examples of what needs to be financed in practice	Implementing partners
Policy and coordination	National Disasters Preparedness agencies National Health Security agencies	Governments Regional Economic communities (eg ECOWAS, SADEC etc)
Taxes and subsidies	Health and Environmental taxes units in IRS agencies (eg tobacco, alcohol, sugar, fossil fuels taxes)	Governments
Regulation and Legislation	Food and Drugs Administration/ National and Regional Medicine agencies Accreditation agencies	National Agencies, Regional Agencies (AMA)
Information, analysis and communication	Surveillance agencies, National Public Health Institutes, National Health Information agencies	National and Regional CDCs (Africa CDC)
Public Health programs	One Health programs, Animal Health programs, Environmental Health programs, Sanitation programs, Public Health Training Schools	National Agencies, Training schools

How should the FIF finance

We have reviewed the proposed governance architecture of the FIF and make the following comments:

- 1. The Africa CDC firmly believes that this is an opportunity to strengthen global health institutions (such as the WHO) to adequately prepare them to play a critical role in helping the global community and countries prepare for health threats. Therefore, we commend the proposal to clearly outline support for these institutions.
 - 1. **In addition**, the Africa CDC is also of the view that there should be clear and direct allocation of funds to regional public health institutions (such as regional centres for disease control and prevention). Such allocation would not need to go through other global institutions. These direct allocations would enable regional CDCs to promptly and efficiently respond to health threats.
 - 1. The Africa CDC commends the proposal to provide additional financing to incentivize the IDA, ADF and AfDF allocations to public health systems and recommends that such a plan could be extended to other multilateral banks to support a common public health investment framework, which the WHO and CDCs could work to develop.

Furthermore, the Africa CDC is of the view that clearly identifying the roles of all partners within the governance framework is crucial to ensuring good governance. The Africa CDC’s view is that having different advisory groups (such as technical, civil society platform and another that has representative of countries) will be crucial. For instance, a Technical Advisory Group that has representations of the World

Bank as well as regional CDCs (such as the Africa CDC) will be important in giving a voice to such key stakeholders. Again, a civil society platform will also be crucial in giving a voice to the people, as well as another one that brings country representatives together to share their views on the implementation of the FIF would be important.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Africa CDC is of the view that the FIF is a much-needed and timely intervention by the G20 and stakeholders to realign investments in public health infrastructure, particularly in LMICs. Africa CDC believes the World Bank would be a good host of this facility. Notwithstanding, the recommendations made by the Africa CDC in this document could improve the implementation and functioning of the proposed FIF and lead to better outcomes.

Academic and WHO references

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