

Box 19.2: The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) was established by the African Union in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2016. Inspired by its namesake in the USA, the Africa CDC serves as an information-sharing platform for member states.

Five regional collaborating centres, one for each of central, eastern northern, southern and western Africa, co-ordinate regional public health initiatives taken by member states. They also serve as hubs for Africa CDC surveillance, preparedness and emergency response.

This infrastructure has been a boon for co-ordinating the response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020. The Africa CDC is tracking research and related information through policy briefs and updates, including a caseload dashboard for Africa. It also provides

links to partners such as the African Academy of Sciences and World Health Organization.

Africa is experiencing 'frequent outbreaks of diseases and these continue to be magnified as the continent moves towards greater integration', observes Dr John Nkengasong, Director of the Africa CDC. 'The *Africa Health Strategy 2016–2030* [...] provides strategic direction to member states in their efforts to create better-performing health systems.'

Tools to sequence pathogens' genes

In October 2020, a public–private consortium* led by the African Union Commission through the Africa CDC launched the Africa Pathogen Genomics Initiative. This partnership is investing US\$ 100 million over the next four years to expand access to next-generation genomic sequencing tools and expertise.

Partners Illumina and Oxford Nanopore are providing machines and training, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are providing funding and technical assistance and Microsoft is providing technical assistance in designing the Africa Pathogen Genomics Initiative's digital architecture.

The Africa Pathogen Genomics Initiative will build a continent-wide disease surveillance and laboratory network to help identify and inform research and public health responses to Covid-19 and other epidemic threats, as well as endemic infectious diseases such as AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and cholera.

Source: www.africacdc.org

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