



Africa
Partners
Collective

Platforms for health partnerships

A learning brief on Collaborative Funds established during the pandemic in Africa, from our direct experiences and desk research.

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Executive Summary

To support alignment with national priorities during emergencies, response funds and mechanisms have often been established that channel funding from a cross section of stakeholders.

Different governance frameworks have been used to formalize them and different terms used to describe them: national response funds, multi-stakeholder platforms, extra-budgetary funds and collaborative funds.

Outside of emergencies, such platforms are less commonly used in Africa. As partners plan ways to increase collaboration in service of national health priorities and prepare for future disease outbreaks and threats, it may be prudent to consider establishing the robust partnership infrastructure that enables and augments both African and Global financing.

Emphasis should be given to securing appropriate leadership, governance modalities, legal authority and transparent and effective use of funds that demonstrates results, fosters trust and accountability.

National Response Funds during the COVID-19 pandemic

By mid 2020, 27 funds with links to national governments had been established across Africa with varied funding sources and governing mechanisms(1).

In addition, pan-African platforms and mechanisms for collaboration were established by the African Union (COVID-19 Response Fund, Africa Public Health Foundation) and partners (Africa Donor Collective).

Revenue sources of the national response funds fell into three categories

1. Mostly public: Liberia, Sierra Leone, Zambia.
2. Mostly private: Benin, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Mauritius, Niger, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda, Zimbabwe.
3. Public, private, and external: Botswana, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Cote D'Ivoire, Djibouti, Equatorial Guinea, Kenya, Lesotho, Mauritania, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo.

Of the 27 collaborative funds established nationally across Africa, three of the most notable collaborative responses to the pandemic received 62 percent of the total dollar amount of large African gifts in 2020(2):

- South Africa Solidarity Fund
- Private Sector Coalition Against COVID-19, Nigeria
- Kenya COVID-19 Response Fund

South Africa Solidarity Fund(3): Established in March 2020, the Solidarity Fund raised over R4 billion (US\$208 million) which was used to provide essential equipment, food relief, personal protective equipment (PPE), and other essential items to those in need. The fund has also supported the development of local manufacturing, testing and vaccination capacity. The Solidarity Fund provided food parcels to 290,123 households and 65 million units of PPE to frontline workers across all nine provinces.

Private Sector Coalition Against COVID-19 (CaCOVID), Nigeria(4): Launched in April 2020, CaCOVID raised over \$80 million within three months(5) and has been used to build testing, isolation and treatment centers across the country, including in Lagos, Kano and Rivers, procure medical supplies, and support social welfare programs in Nigeria. The fund played a key role in raising awareness of the pandemic and promoting public health measures. The initiative also sourced and distributed relief materials and food to vulnerable individuals across the country, worth millions of dollars. Within five months of its founding, CACOVID facilitated scaling up of testing capacity in Nigeria from just 38,000 to 600,000 tests.

Kenya COVID-19 Response Fund(6): Launched by then President Uhuru Kenyatta in March 2020 to mobilise resources with the aim of containing the spread, effects and impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya. The seed capital of the Fund was drawn from the Exchequer and sought to raise additional funds from sources including corporations, individuals, development partners and multinational institutions. As of mid-April 2020, the fund had already raised KES 1 billion (\$94 million), thanks to monies mobilised from local individuals and companies and international partners, including NCBA Bank Kenya and the World Bank Group. Funds committed went towards resources and services including medical diagnostics, surveillance and response, capacity building, quarantine, treatment and isolation centres, community engagement and more.

Pan-African initiatives to align funding to continental and national priorities

At a pan-African level, several mechanisms were started or strengthened over the course of the pandemic. These included:

African Union COVID-19 Response Fund(7): Created in March 2020 to strengthen Africa's continental response to the pandemic. The aim of the Fund was to facilitate a whole-of-Africa approach to: a) mitigate the socio-economic and humanitarian impact of COVID-19, b) boost the capacity of Africa CDC to support response to public health emergencies, and c) support the procurement and distribution of essential COVID-19 medical equipment and supplies and mobilise rapid response by Africa's 55 Member States. By October 2020, the Fund had raised \$44 million to support these continental efforts(8).

Africa Public Health Foundation: Launched by Africa CDC in late 2019, during the first 12 months of the pandemic, APHF raised more than \$20 million to accelerate the most urgent public health priorities in Africa(9,10). The Foundation was also successful in creating its first pooled fund, providing a model that can be replicated by coalitions in the future.

Africa Donor Collective (now Africa Partners Collective). Beginning its work at the outset of the coronavirus pandemic and incubated by Virgin Unite, the network expanded to over 100 organisations with a shared goal of supporting African-led initiatives to address the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthen public health systems.

Africa Health Research and Innovation Funders Forum. The South African Medical Research Council, with the support of the New Ventures Fund, and in partnership with the Department of Science and Innovation and the Africa Centres for Disease Control, hosted the first two Funders Forums in Cape Town in 2022 and a third in 2023. The first two meetings were focused on Southern Africa; however, there was overwhelming support from the delegates for an expanded Funders Forum with a broader focus on Africa.

Partnership platforms as a lifeline outside of health emergencies

Globally, it is estimated that over 400 'Collaborative Funds' are active and working in the space between traditional funders (e.g. governments offering development assistance, philanthropies, individual donors and companies) and the non-profit recipients of funds, be they government or non-governmental organisations(11).

Global and African philanthropists believe that such partnership platforms for giving collectively could unlock significant funding(12).

Yet, beyond the pan-African examples above, few partnership platforms have been found to operate outside of emergencies in a way that is designed to align with national priorities. One exception includes in Liberia, where, as early as 2008, then President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf worked with global philanthropists to establish the Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat as a mechanism to coordinate and channel philanthropic support in a way that was aligned to national priorities(13). The SDG Partnership Platforms, including that in Kenya(14), provide another example.

There may, therefore, be an opportunity to establish longer-standing platforms to augment funding for Africa's health priorities, based on country identified needs. In doing so, it's important to understand to reflect on the lessons learned to mitigate against the challenges and criticisms that have been levied at some funds.

More broadly, strengthening the enabling environment for giving and philanthropy might be considered(15). There is a need to develop practicable strategies to make structured giving attractive for individuals, businesses and organizations across Africa(16). This could take the form of tax incentives, infrastructure support for the philanthropy sector, policies that simplify the cost and administrative burden for charities, and legislations that make it easier for local philanthropies to fund initiatives that can achieve sustainable change in health systems rather than only supporting emergency initiatives.

Lessons learned: considerations for the effective establishment of platforms

Reviewing the learning and literature on partnership mechanisms and platforms, five lessons are highlighted here for reflection.

1. Appropriate leadership. Strong, supportive leadership from governments and agencies as a sponsor as well as an effective first board chair(17). This was critical in the case of the Liberia Philanthropy Secretariat(13).

2. Effective governance. As well as one or two members from the public health field, representatives from business, philanthropy, and other sectors should be prioritized. Most of the key stakeholders of CACOVID were key industry players in Nigeria, forming sub-committees to lead on priority areas(4,5).

3. Transparent and effective use of funds. Initiatives benefit from transparency and accountability not just to their initiators, but also to those whom it purports to serve(5). Of all the initiatives highlighted in this case study, only the South Africa Solidarity Fund and the Africa Public Health Foundation have published financial and impact data on their websites(3,10).

4. Fostering trust and mutual accountability. The International Monetary Fund calls out the challenge of working with extra budgetary funds(1), and philanthropic networks note the challenge of working with government agencies(18). Emergencies often mean the challenges are overcome, but perhaps not with sustainability given the closure of most national response funds.

5. Leverage and strengthen existing civil society networks, partnerships and infrastructure. According to a survey by Epic Africa(19), 72% of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) felt that governments failed to recognize and utilize local CSOs' skills, experience, and networks in response to COVID-19. This may have limited the implementation and effectiveness of national responses to the pandemic. Further, CSOs may be able to offer effective platforms for greater coordination and collaboration with government by hosting partnerships initiatives and pooled funds.

Sources and additional resources

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