

Response to an African-driven health agenda

There is no question that Africa faces a myriad of health challenges and *The Lancet* Editorial (July 8, p 96)¹ captured it well in the statement that “health is much more than just health care,” which reflects the absence of systems for health.

Although health is a challenge across the world, Africa’s health challenges are unique in the global context. Close to 80% of mortality arises from preventable conditions and the burden of non-communicable diseases is rising,² and less than 2% of the population has health insurance coverage,³ while the population with a high dependency ratio is rapidly growing. Altogether, there is no doubt that an African Health Agenda exists, unique but integrated into the Global Health Agenda, which led us to start the Biennial Africa Health Agenda International Conference, hosted with WHO Africa Region.

Although the Editorial details the challenges, it does not highlight the vast potential for African-led solutions that African-based organisations, like ours, are already pursuing: paid community health workers as the backbone of stronger primary health care; African-created technical innovations, particularly mobile-based solutions, that lead to improved health outcomes; meaningful engagement and partnerships between governments, the private sector, and communities to solve recurring health challenges; and strong and visionary leadership at political, technical, and community levels. Most importantly, we are ensuring that young people are directly involved and leading approaches to health that are youth-centred. Changes to the future of health care cannot be made without the active and meaningful participation of the next generation.

These are just a few of the solutions included in the Communiqué of the Africa Health Agenda International

Conference,⁴ which brought together over 1000 global-health experts, government officials, non-governmental organisations, community-based groups, local leaders and advocates, and private sector representatives in Nairobi, Kenya, from March 7 to 9, 2017.

We look forward to *The Lancet’s* African-led Commission on the future of health in sub-Saharan Africa joining with us as we continue to make progress towards lasting health change in Africa.

I declare no competing interests.

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- 1 The Lancet. An African-driven health agenda. *Lancet* 2017; **390**: 96.
- 2 Africa check. Factsheet: The leading causes of death in Africa in 2012. Oct 31, 2014. <https://africacheck.org/factsheets/factsheet-the-leading-causes-of-death-in-africa/> (accessed Sept 12, 2017).
- 3 Del Hierro E, Lambert A. How to expand health insurance coverage in Sub-Saharan Africa? *Ideas for Development*. Jan 26, 2017. <http://ideas4development.org/en/expanding-health-insurance/> (accessed Sept 12, 2017).
- 4 Africa Health Agenda. Africa Health Agenda International Conference Communiqué. March 14, 2017. <http://ahaic.org/africa-health-agenda-international-conference-communique/> (accessed Sept 12, 2017).



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For **The Lancet’s African-led Commission on the future of health in sub-Saharan Africa** see <http://www.thelancet.com/commissions/future-health-Africa>