

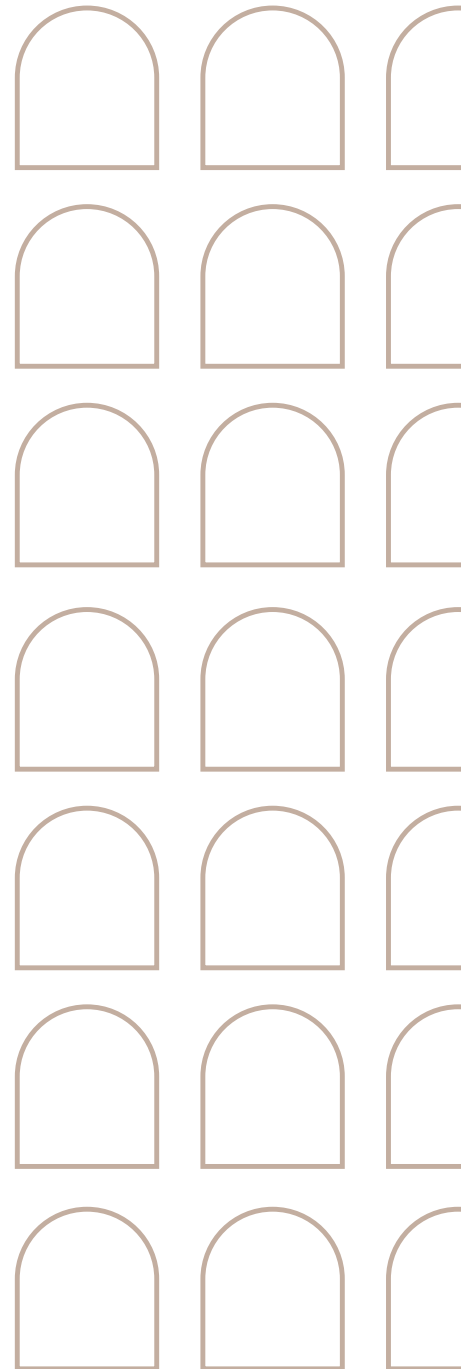
STG Policy Papers

POLICY BRIEF

**TACKLING THE GLOBAL PANDEMIC,
A LOOK AT THE AFRICAN UNION
(AU) - EUROPEAN UNION (EU)
PARTNERSHIP IN THE CONTEXT OF
COVID-19 AND BEYOND**

Author:

Agnes Asele

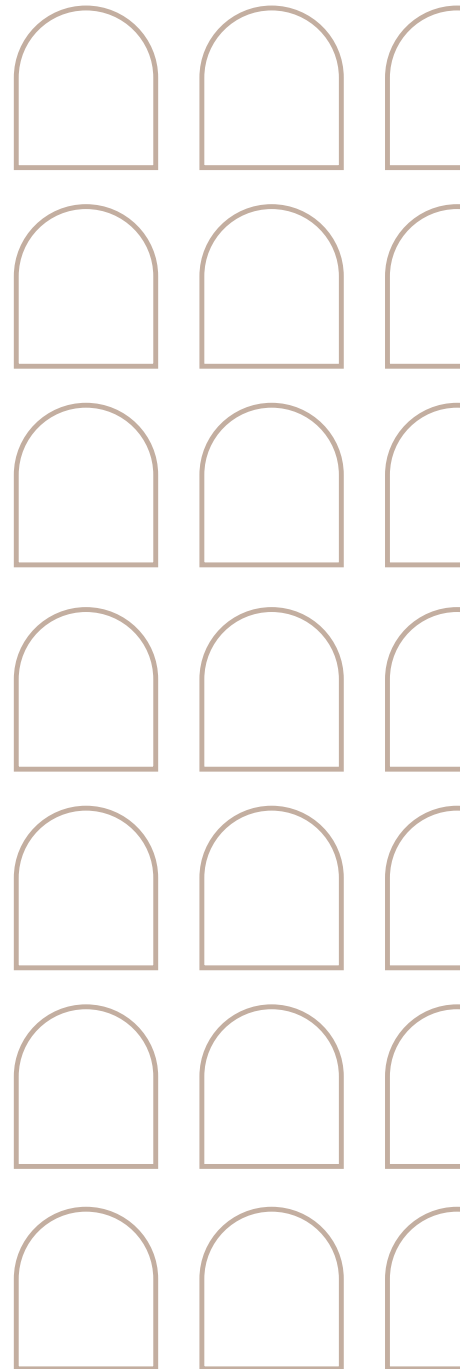


EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The COVID-19 health crisis and its devastating socioeconomic impact has in the past couple of years necessitated stronger partnerships and increased efforts to deepen cooperation among nations. It has brought to the fore the need to pool together and forge more robust and resilient partnerships and cooperation across the world. More than ever, international action and solidarity from development partners, foundations, the private sector, and individual well-wishers were needed to address the human, health, and socioeconomic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. In response to this emergency, the Africa Union and European Union, as traditional partners, have collaborated and cooperated in addressing its impact. Key priority areas of focus include: investing in preparedness and early detection mechanisms, granting equitable access to vaccines, boosting Africa's vaccine manufacturing efforts, enhancing medical Research and Development (R&D), among others, to guarantee recovery and build resilience for similar future emergencies and outbreaks.

Author:

Agnes Asele | Young African Leaders Fellow 2021, School of Transnational Governance, EUI



1. INTRODUCTION

The African Union (AU) is Africa's premier continental organization, the interlocutor that projects Africa's core values in the global arena. The AU engages the world on behalf of the continent and has established strategic partnerships with other countries, continents and international organizations. These strategic partnerships are based on agreed principles such as equality, mutual respect, reciprocity and shared values within the context of a mutually beneficial, 'win-win' cooperation¹. The strategic partnerships are cardinal and an offshoot of the internationalization of the global arena as well as the imperative for cooperation and interaction between and among nations, organizations and agencies². In the context of COVID-19, the AU, through the COVID-19 special Fund, has received massive in-kind support, technical, material and financial support from international developmental organizations, the private sector, philanthropic foundations such as Bill and Melinda Gates Bill, Jack Ma, Mastercard, Susan Buffet and Rockefeller, as well as African member states. Notably, partners such as the European Union (EU), UK Aid, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), African Development Bank (AfDB), and individual partner countries such as China, Korea, Turkey and Japan, among others, have been part of the contributors to over over \$125 million directly received by the AU for COVID-19 support³. Specifically, the Mastercard foundation partnered with Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) to implement a \$1.3 billion to support COVID-19 vaccination for at least [50 million Africans](#).

2. LEVERAGING ON THE EU-AU PARTNERSHIP IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Africa and Europe share close affinity. They are close neighbors and traditional partners, and member states of the two continents

share a rich history, common values and interests. To enhance their relationship, the AU and the EU established a structured and formal arrangement for collaboration and cooperation in 2000. This partnership arrangement commits the two sides to build a more prosperous, more peaceful and more sustainable future for all. To that end, the partnership is guided by the Joint Africa-EU Strategy (JAES) that was adopted at the 2nd EU-Africa Summit that was held in Lisbon, Portugal, in 2007, aimed at strengthening political dialogue and cooperation at all levels while reflecting the consensus on values, interests, and strategic objective of the two parties⁴.

Africa's partnership approach with the Europe, like any other form of partnership, transcend the agelong dependence relationship and now characterized by a "win-win" cooperation that is attracting some level of benefits to the continent, such as bridging the palpable infrastructure deficit, reducing the skills gap, and boosting the state of information communication technology on the continent. AU's partnership with the EU is premised on the Collaboration Theory, a mutually reinforcing cooperation between Africa and Europe as distinct from a donor-recipient relationship⁵. The EU, together with its Member States, are the biggest donors to the African continent. About EUR 20 billion development aid is committed annually to Africa through programs implemented at continental, regional and national levels. Twenty percent of this aid assistance is managed by the European Commission⁶. Investments are people-focused through education, science, technology and skills development, promotion of peace, security and governance, support for Africa's structural and sustainable transformation, as well as migration, mobility and climate change issues.

In 2015, the EU supported the AU with €5million in the fight against Ebola in West Africa (Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone)

1 Gibb, R. (2009). Regional integration and Africa's development trajectory: Meta-theories, expectations and reality. *Third World Quarterly*. 30(4), 701-721
2 Edozie, R. K., & Gottschalk, K. (2014). *The African Union's Africa: New Pan-African initiatives in global governance*. East Lansing, Michigan: Michigan State University Press.
3 Africa CDC 2021 Annual Financial Report
4 Joint Africa-EU Strategy available at; https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/policies/africa-eu-partnership_en#institutional-partnership
5 Adair R, (2014). Collaboration Theory. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 13(14). Page 63-75
6 European Union, 2013-2019. The Africa-EU Partnership: Financing the Partnership. <https://africa-eu-partnership.org>

through the African Union Support for Ebola Outbreak in West Africa (ASEOWA) mission. This assistance contributed in the elimination of the deadly Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) that was unprecedented in its scale, severity and complexity. Although the mission was the first humanitarian mission embarked upon by the AU, it was a remarkable success.

The AU's Ebola response had several positive aspects as well as challenges, all of which provided lessons learned for future readiness, preparedness and the current response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The AU was able to use this experience to set up a functional and effective mechanism to manage the COVID-19 pandemic. Since 2014, the EU has continued to support in Ebola vaccine development, treatment and provision of diagnostic tests amounting to EUR 230 million. Additional support of over EUR 222 million was provided to individual countries such as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) for the period 2014-2020 to support the national health sector, while other high-risk countries (Uganda, South Sudan, Burundi and Rwanda) have benefited from Ebola research funding⁷.

In terms of COVID-19 response, Africa CDC was tasked by the AU through the Incident Management Structure to respond to the pandemic with clear Incident Action Plan (IAP) that identifies priorities ranging from surveillance, counter-measures, healthcare system support and capacity building, laboratory systems, risk communication and liaison. Based on the approval granted to Africa CDC by the AU's Permanent Representative Council (PRC) to receive in-kind materials and financial support in order to effectively respond to the pandemic, the EU made various contributions to the fight against the pandemic in Africa. In 2020, Team Europe was launched to support partner countries in combating the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences. The EU articulated a coordinated response with African partners to address the short-term challenges of the pandemic by accelerating equitable access to vaccines, financing high-

standard infrastructure, scaling-up micro, small and medium-sized companies and improving Africa's business environment⁸. It further authorized the re-allocation of over EUR 10 million that it had provided to the AU to support its annual program budget for COVID-19 response. The main areas of support through the EU funding includes;

- Support to at least forty African countries on regular virtual surveillance and in-country training on surveillance. The virtual trainings were held between February to April of 2021, while the in-person trainings are only picking up now due to opening up of countries.
- Deployment of at least 164 rapid respondents to twenty AU member states who provided support in activities on COVID-19 vaccine roll out, coordinated supply of COVID-19 vaccines in fifty-five member states and supported the implementation of COVID-19 RDT testing in the respective regions.
- Supported activities on Infection Prevention and Control in MS. Other teams deployed supported Africa CDC and all the Regional Collaborating Centers in data collection, analysis, and visualisation.

Countries like Sweden have focused on enhancing the human resource capacity of Africa CDC through recruitment of staff to support COVID-19 coordination and collaboration activities, provided technical expertise. While Austria supported the provision of improved healthcare outcomes in Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Refugee camp settings in five AU member states (Algeria, Burkina Faso, Central Africa Republic, Ethiopia and Mozambique) focusing on capacity building for Health Care Workers (HCWs) working with vulnerable populations in IDP and Refugee camps on Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) practices and COVID-19 case Management, deployment of 10 HCWs for three months to support vulnerable populations in IDP

⁷ https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/countries/factsheets/thematic/wa_ebola_en.pdf

⁸ The European Commission, (2021) Team Europe mobilizes to support African economies, Brussels.

and Refugee camps in the five countries and Procurement of medical supplies, Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) kits, hand hygiene materials to support activities on IPC and COVID-19 case management in the selected IDP/refugee camps. Below is a detailed budget for EU's COVID-19 to AU.

In spite of challenges such as delays in the implementation of some support activities resulting from internal processes at the AU, the EU support has played a significant role leading to;

Team Europe Area of support for AU's COVID-19 Response	Cost estimate, US\$
A. Surveillance	5,250,000
Support 40 Member States in their in-country cascade surveillance trainings	1,800,000
Organize regular virtual surveillance trainings	150,000
Deploy 3,000 community health workers to support contact tracing	3,300,000
B. Deployment of rapid responders	4,770,000
C. Coordination	241,200
Hire of required Technical Expertise	
Total	10,261,200

Source: Africa CDC, 2020

In addition to above support, the Germany government in between September 2020 and early 2021 provided 1.5 million test kits for distribution to different AU member states, as part of an immediate €10 million in-kind support to the AU⁹. This increased the continent's COVID-19 testing capacity. As of May 2022, Africa has recorded a total of 106,013.427 tests for COVID-19¹⁰. Furthermore, the EU played a leading role in setting up the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) Facility, an initiative that allows high-income countries to fund vaccines for low and middle-income countries¹¹. In February 2021, the EU launched a €100 million humanitarian assistance programme, which was mobilized as part of the EU's Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve to support vaccination campaigns in Africa, in cooperation with the Africa CDC. However, this scheme has not yet materialized because Africa CDC was not convinced with the implementation modalities proposed by the EU¹².

- Establishment of over 20 functional networking systems and linkages between Africa CDC and other supporting partners on public health emergency deployments.
- Establishment of a functional platform for training experts from the Southern Africa Region on disaster preparedness, management and response.
- Through the funding, Africa CDC has managed to establish functional platforms in over ten countries for access to country-specific health profiles for risk mapping and vulnerability assessment.
- There has been an improvement on staff capacity in management of COVID-19 pandemic through trainings on Infection Prevention and Control and COVID-19 Case Management.

9 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_20_1514

10 <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/>

11 Chloe Teeyan, Luca Barana, Daniele Fattibeb, Gabriela Iacbuta, Silke Wenlick and Steffen Bauer (2021): *A new Multilateralism for the post COVID-19 World: What role for the EU-Africa Partnership?*

12 https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_21_1816

3. AU-EU POST COVID-19 PRIORITY ACTIONS

Given the devastating impact of the pandemic on the global economies, there is an urgent need for nations to collaborate at different levels in order to forge more robust and resilient partnerships. More than ever, international action and solidarity are needed to address the human, health, and socioeconomic repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU-AU key areas of focus to guarantee sustainable recovery would include:

- Support Africa by investing in preparedness, early detection mechanisms, and deployment of emergency relief measures, for especially informal sectors highly affected by the pandemic.
- Support the recognition of the Indian Covid-shield vaccine manufactured by Astra-Zeneca and distributed through the COVAX facility as this has been the most accessible vaccine to many African countries. Global recognition of the Astra-Zeneca vaccine will help build trust and increase vaccine uptake among the African population.
- The EU together with other developed countries need to support the global COVAX facility efforts to ensure there is equitable access to vaccines for Africa, which has so far vaccinated about 15.85% (fully vaccinated) and about 20.62% (partially vaccinated) population¹³. This would entail fulfilling the pledges made in terms of financing the global COVAX vaccine procurement and distribution, and avoid vaccine nationalism.
- The EU should extend its support to the AU's call for the World Trade Organization (WTO) to waive certain Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) so as to encourage the manufacture of vaccines locally on the continent.
- EU's support for African countries

in building capacity in Research and Development (R&D) in the health and medical sectors through technical expertise and technological support is highly required. This could entail, for example, strengthening partnership focused on R&D between Africa CDC and the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnerships (EDCTP), European CDC. Support of exchange capacity building programs that African researchers can benefit from.

- The need to further leverage on EU's support on digitalization which would accelerate the implementation of Digital Transformation Strategy for Africa aimed at promoting innovation, the application of technology in all sectors and industrialization.
- The EU through its Trade and development Committee needs to leverage on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which has created an avenue for the EU to transcend the traditional donor niche and offers a level playing ground where both parties can elevate their political collaboration and enhance business links.

4. CONCLUSION

There is no doubt that COVID-19 has caused dislocations and imbalance to socioeconomic, cultural and health systems across the world. The pandemic continues to expose the weak socioeconomic structures of most countries in the global system coupled with other global threats such as the Russia-Ukraine war, oil and gas price increases, and rising commodity prices/inflation. Even the developed countries which were believed to have established robust health systems have apparently been overwhelmed and thus struggled to manage the high rate of cases¹⁴.

Conscious of this threat, the AU and EU have positioned themselves as global players in the multilateral and global systems. While the pandemic has created new opportunities

¹³ <https://africacdc.org/covid-19-vaccination/>

¹⁴ African Union Commission (2020), "Socioeconomic impact of Covid-19 in Africa: An Opportunity to build more endogenous and resilient emerging economies." Addis Ababa.

around economic growth and digital transformation, the risks of new inequalities are evident, and would require urgent solutions. Studies have indicated that the divide between wealthy countries and low-income countries with regard to vaccine access could negatively impact economic growth until 2024.

Moving forward, the AU-EU partnership remains a useful platform for Africa's development and transformation trajectory, especially within the COVID-19 setting and beyond. Africa would require the continued support of its closest ally and partner, the EU, to overcome the challenges orchestrated by the pandemic and build a more resilient and sustainable development. It is also imperative for Africa to contribute its own quota in propelling and shaping a more sustainable path to prosperity for all. There is need for both the AU and EU to consolidate their partnership, collaborate closely and act humanely based on principles of solidarity, shared responsibility and partnership, as these are key determinants on how fast and strong both continents are able to recover fully from the pandemic.

The School of Transnational Governance (STG) delivers teaching and high-level training in the methods, knowledge, skills and practice of governance beyond the State. Based within the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence, the School brings the worlds of academia and policy-making together in an effort to navigate a context, both inside and outside Europe, where policy-making increasingly transcends national borders.

The School offers Executive Training Seminars for experienced professionals and a Policy Leaders Fellowship for early- and mid-career innovators. The School also hosts expert Policy Dialogues and distinguished lectures from transnational leaders (to include the STG's Leaders Beyond the State series which recorded the experiences of former European Institution presidents, and the Giorgio La Pira Lecture series which focuses on building bridges between Africa and Europe). In September 2020, the School launched its Master-of-Arts in Transnational Governance (MTnG), which will educate and train a new breed of policy leader able to navigate the unprecedented issues our world will face during the next decade and beyond.

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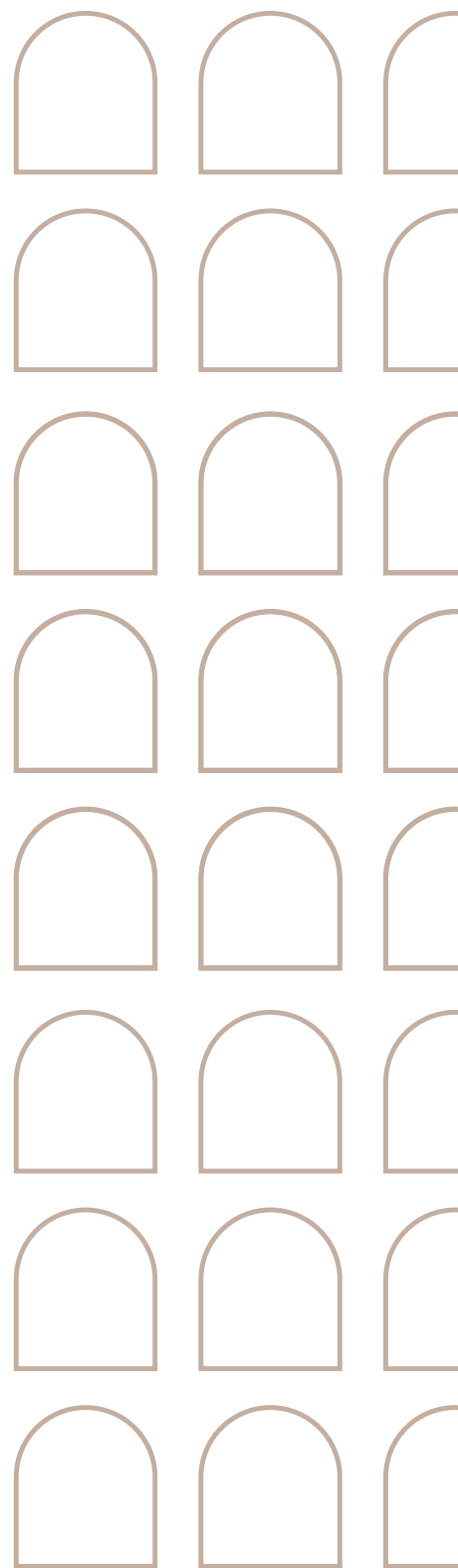
School of Transnational Governance
European University Institute
Via Camillo Cavour 65, Firenze, FI 50129
Email: stg.publications@eui.eu

www.eui.eu/stg



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