



**AFRICA HEALTH MEDIA  
TRENDS REPORT 2026**  
GATEWAY TO GLOBAL  
HEALTH INSIGHTS

**FINN**  
PARTNERS





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## LETTER FROM PETER FINN, CEO OF FINN PARTNERS

At FINN Partners, we believe that communication has the power to shape healthier communities, stronger systems, and a more equitable future. The Africa Health Media Trends Report 2026 embodies that belief. It provides a forward-looking view of Africa's evolving health landscape, while underscoring what becomes possible when insight, collaboration, and purpose align.

We commissioned this report with a clear ambition: to identify the issues most likely to shape African and global health conversations in the year ahead, and to better understand how journalists, communicators, and organisations can work together to elevate the stories that matter most. The findings deepen our understanding of what resonates with audiences, what editors and newsrooms need, and how the media environment is transforming. They also sharpen our ability to support partners and clients with strategies that are relevant, credible, and grounded in real-world realities.

Yet this report is more than an analysis of trends; it is a call to action. It urges agencies, NGOs, governments, businesses, and media professionals to reimagine

the role of communication in advancing global health. It invites us to see journalists not simply as information channels, but as essential collaborators in shaping awareness, enabling accountability, and strengthening resilience.

By applying these insights, we can help ensure that health stories told across Africa reflect local realities, elevate African expertise, inspire collective action, and ultimately contribute to better health outcomes for millions. This is the work ahead—and we are proud to play our part.

This report builds on FINN Partners' launch of the [Global Health Impact Group](#) in 2024, which brings together cross-practice policy, advocacy, and media expertise to advance ideas and initiatives that promote improved health outcomes and economic growth worldwide. Spanning nearly 100 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas, the group reflects our conviction that meaningful health progress requires integrated, collaborative approaches across sectors and geographies.



FOREWORD BY  
**SHARON QUNTAI**, MEDIA RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

**Health journalism in Africa has emerged as a critical pillar of public discourse, influencing policy decisions, public trust, and health outcomes at scale.** As its role expands, journalists are increasingly expected to navigate complex science, counter misinformation, and strengthen accountability—responsibilities that place Africa at the forefront of global conversations about the future of health communication.

Yet, this expanded role arrives at a precarious moment. Newsrooms are under-resourced, specialist funding is shrinking, and access to data remains uneven. The consequences of this disconnect have never been clearer: distorted reporting costs lives.

What matters now is better engagement, how institutions share information, who is elevated as an expert, and whether journalists are supported to work independently. This will define what the public understands and how decision-makers act. This report is a contribution to that urgent conversation. Grounded in the realities of 2026, it asserts that a strong media ecosystem is not a “nice to have,” but a public health necessity. By meeting the concrete needs of journalists - from better access to data to resources for investigation - we can build the strategic partnerships necessary to ensure African health stories are accurate, impactful, and told by the experts who know them best.



FOREWORD BY  
**BEN DEIGHTON**, PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD FEDERATION OF SCIENCE JOURNALISTS

**Our profession is facing a time of great uncertainty as business models fail and funding falls away.** However, the need for good health journalism is more important than ever. Global protectionism has weakened international institutions, and readers face a rising deluge of dis- and misinformation.

The global health system relies on good science journalism to highlight research findings, increase public understanding of health research, and drive science-informed policymaking. This creates a virtuous circle where the public and policymakers understand the importance of science, leading to greater investment in science infrastructure, resulting in better research outputs.

Yet the growth of generative artificial intelligence and direct-to-reader dissemination models is challenging this, enabling an increasing variety of actors to put health science directly in front of

audiences, unfiltered. While usually done with the best of intentions, such output often lacks the checks and balances of journalism, and the ultimate motivation can be unclear, whether it be to drive clicks, or to highlight the successes of a particular organisation.

This risks eroding trust in science. The importance of a research finding might be exaggerated, errors may go uncorrected, and failings glossed over. It threatens to turn a virtuous circle into a vicious cycle, as an erosion of trust in science leads to a decline in public support, budget reductions, and lower research outputs. As a result, I thank Finn Partners for this important report on trends in health journalism in Africa, which highlights the essential role that science and health journalists play in the global health system.



**“I think we’re really in a very dangerous situation, like a perfect storm, because on the one hand we have a more interconnected world [...] and greater risk of the next pandemic. But at the same time [...] we’ve got less money to look at it and we’re moving away from preparing for the future.”**

**- Ben Deighton,**  
President, [World Federation of Science Journalists](#) and Former Editor, [SciDev.Net](#)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the rapidly evolving global health landscape, staying ahead of emerging trends and understanding the shifting media dynamics are crucial for organisations aiming to make a significant impact. Innovation—particularly digital health and artificial intelligence—is increasingly redefining how health challenges are addressed worldwide, from disease surveillance to service delivery. Africa is not only becoming an increasingly important hub for global health initiatives, but a testing ground and driver of scalable innovations that influence global health and business models far beyond the continent. The Continent is defined by technological leapfrogging, investment and youthful energy, transforming how the world envisions growth, and positioning Africa as a critical contributor to the future of global health, innovation, and AI-enabled solutions.

The Africa Health Media Trends Report 2026 reveals a health media landscape at a critical turning point, shaped by fiscal instability and the rapid rise of chronic diseases.

Insights from journalists, editors, and advocates across major media hubs in Africa—Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda—as well as reporters from Western legacy media paint a picture of a “perfect storm.”

The most urgent concern is the threat of funding cuts across multiple donor countries. Shifts in US policy and financing—including the recent withdrawal from

the World Health Organization (WHO) and changes to the US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)—remain highly consequential. The “America First” policy in 2025–2026 has resulted in drastic reductions to US foreign health aid to Africa, with approximately 83% to 86% of USAID programmes and contracts terminated. Similar reductions from European donors, including Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, as well as considerable reductions in financing from the UK, are also disrupting HIV, malaria, and maternal health services.

The focus of much of the funding from the US and European countries has shifted from a historical focus on disease-specific programmes to health system strengthening and regional manufacturing, in which recipient countries assume a greater share of the financial burden. In contrast to the reductions from Western countries, both Russia and China have slowly scaled up their own donations, though their contributions are minor compared to the former budget allocated by the US and Europe. China’s focus has shifted from the donation of personal protective equipment (PPE) to investments into major pharmaceutical hubs, while Russia remains focused on high-profile outbreaks such as Ebola.

Together, these changes are accelerating pressure on African countries to fast-track health sovereignty, diversify funding sources, and strengthen endogenous financing models. These debates cannot be separated from the enduring challenge to build

a national health system able to deliver universal and equitable care—a challenge shared, to varying degrees, across the continent.

At the same time, newsrooms are increasingly covering the growing burden of “new silent epidemics”: the surge of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, diabetes, and hypertension, along with rising but still underreported mental health challenges.

This convergence of financial strain and expanding health needs has created what many describe as a “code red for journalism.” The economic model for science reporting is eroding—grants are disappearing, coverage is shrinking, and this contraction comes precisely when rigorous, trusted reporting is essential to counter health misinformation.

The second part of this report addresses these realities directly, providing concrete pathways for collaboration. Media leaders consistently emphasise that health stakeholders must go beyond standard press releases: they need exclusive angles, fast access to researchers, and support for investigative reporting. Above all, elevating African voices as authoritative sources—rather than merely serving as conduits for external narratives—is essential to strengthening public trust.

Taken together, these dynamics point to three defining shifts shaping health coverage in 2026:

- **Key trends shaping 2026:** Coverage will increasingly focus on NCDs and mental health, while the geopolitical story of funding cuts from donor countries will dominate the immediate news cycle. Endemic diseases such as Malaria, along with episodic outbreaks like Cholera, and Mpox, will continue to command attention as weakened surveillance systems struggle under budget pressures.
- **Shifts in narrative practice:** Health journalism is professionalising rapidly. Reporters are moving from reactive event coverage to solutions-focused, data-driven reporting that adds depth and context. The spread of health disinformation on social media reinforces their role as critical verifiers. Emerging technologies, AI, telemedicine and drone delivery are viewed as engines of progress but raise pressing questions around data protection and research ethics.
- **Collaboration and trust:** To secure meaningful coverage, health communicators must treat journalists as strategic partners in public health. Media professionals are clear about their needs: rapid and transparent access to experts (with a preference for African researchers), funding mechanisms for independent investigations, and compelling, newsworthy storylines. Ensuring African voices lead African narratives requires direct investment in local journalism and consistent citation of African experts.

## INTRODUCTION

**Our systematic media monitoring shows that the 2025 and early 2026 media landscape reflects a convergence of both longstanding and emerging global health challenges that are likely to shape priorities throughout 2026.** Coverage continues to be dominated by NCDs, mental health, infectious diseases, and the health impacts of climate change, alongside the enduring effects of COVID-19 on health systems, workforce capacity, and public trust. Shifts in donor country funding and policy—particularly reductions in global health aid—are also expected to significantly influence media narratives and global health priorities.

At the same time, digital health and artificial intelligence are increasingly framed as transformative enablers of progress, with growing attention on their potential to improve diagnostics, administrative efficiency, patient empowerment, and drug discovery. This optimism is tempered by ongoing concerns around equity, data privacy, and trust. Overall, media coverage is evolving toward a more systemic perspective, underscoring the importance of One Health approaches and closer collaboration between health stakeholders and journalists.

Public health interventions have faced challenges in recent years such as public vaccination uptake and hesitancy. Such threats are fueled by a rise of non-traditional threats of mis- and disinformation online, and lack of public trust in traditional health messaging. With that in mind, creating responsible social media content by a trusted voice which delivers authentic storytelling that is consumable, relatable and engaging has become a new frontier in communication strategies.

As such, traditional media have an opportunity to engage active health professionals with social media influence to work collaboratively in both scouting

the latest relevant and engaging public health news stories as well as leveraging big followings and expert health creators to disseminate traditional news coverage to reach wider and new audience groups. To demonstrate this in practice, in the



@doc.ahmedezzat

United Kingdom social media creators engage with top government institutions, ministers and top officials to attend events and deliver the latest news stories, at times, before traditional media have received their briefings. Initiatives such as Health Creator Leaders founded by Dr Ahmed Ezzat, a London surgeon @ doc.ahmedezzat illustrate how an exclusive global community of leading health professionals on social media is delivering global impact at scale.

However, in a rapidly evolving and linguistically diverse media environment, quantitative monitoring tools and desk research alone are insufficient to capture region-specific dynamics. Local realities—such as innovative health financing mechanisms and grassroots responses—often remain underrepresented, highlighting the need for complementary, Africa-led primary research to ensure a more nuanced and locally grounded understanding.

With deep media relations expertise across the continent, FINN Partners therefore conducted in-depth interviews with health editors, journalists and advocates across Africa to better understand their priorities, challenges, and perspectives—and to ground this report in the realities shaping health coverage on the continent.

## OBJECTIVES

# 1

### Mapping the 2026 Media Agenda

A primary objective is to look forward and definitively identify the topics in global health shaping 2026. This mapping helps anticipate media focus by highlighting the issues most likely to dominate coverage and narratives throughout the year. Specifically, the report seeks to understand what editors care about and what stories will resonate with the audience.

# 2

### Improving Collaboration and Trust

Beyond mapping topics, a critical element of the report is dedicated to enhancing the working relationship between health organisations and the media.

The report is viewed as an opportunity to discuss with journalists and reporters how to improve collaboration with communications agencies. Historically, the relationship has often been one-sided, where organisations “would rather write and ask for things”. This report provides the necessary platform to actually “hear back what works, what doesn’t work” and define actionable strategies for enhanced collaboration and trust.

# 3

### Supporting Evidence-Based Journalism that Influences Health Policy and Decision-Making

A further objective of this report is to understand and strengthen the role of journalists as key actors in shaping health policy. Across multiple countries, journalists are no longer passive observers of health systems; they are increasingly driving accountability, elevating neglected issues, and influencing policy agendas through investigative, data-driven, and advocacy-oriented reporting.

By identifying the topics journalists prioritise, the barriers they face, and the conditions under which rigorous reporting can thrive, this report aims to support more effective engagement between media, policymakers, and health stakeholders. In doing so, it provides a practical framework for enabling journalism that informs public debate, strengthens transparency, and contributes to more responsive and equitable health policies.



## METHODOLOGY

The analysis of the report is based on interviews with journalists, editors, and specialised experts across 11 key media hubs in Africa, as well as a selection of Western legacy media.

The African countries covered in the report are: Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.

Africa is of strategic importance to France and the UK due to its rapidly growing healthcare needs, emerging markets, and increasing investment opportunities. Both countries maintain strong economic and diplomatic ties to the continent and play a crucial role in shaping global health policy and funding initiatives. At the same time, 2025 saw the US act as a precursor in health funding cuts and policy changes for Africa, and these developments continue to evolve in 2026, for instance, the withdrawal of the US from the WHO. Likewise, in its 2025 budget, France eliminated the "Solidarity Fund for Development," which previously utilised a tax on airline tickets and financial

transactions to provide stable, "innovative" financing for multilateral health programmes like Unitaaid and the Global Fund. Along with the reduction in funding, the remaining resources are, in many cases, focusing less on specific disease programmes – for example, long-term historical funding for HIV prevention – and are being reallocated to local manufacturing and health system strengthening. This shift is likely to influence media narratives and coverage throughout 2026. For these reasons, the report also includes perspectives from France, the UK, and the US.

A full list of media interviewed is provided at the end of the report, but they represent a diverse mix of outlets, including:

- Major public media
- Consumer health outlets
- Health industry or professional outlets
- Specialist development-focused outlets
- NGOs

# 36 IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Conducted with leading voices in health media and civil society

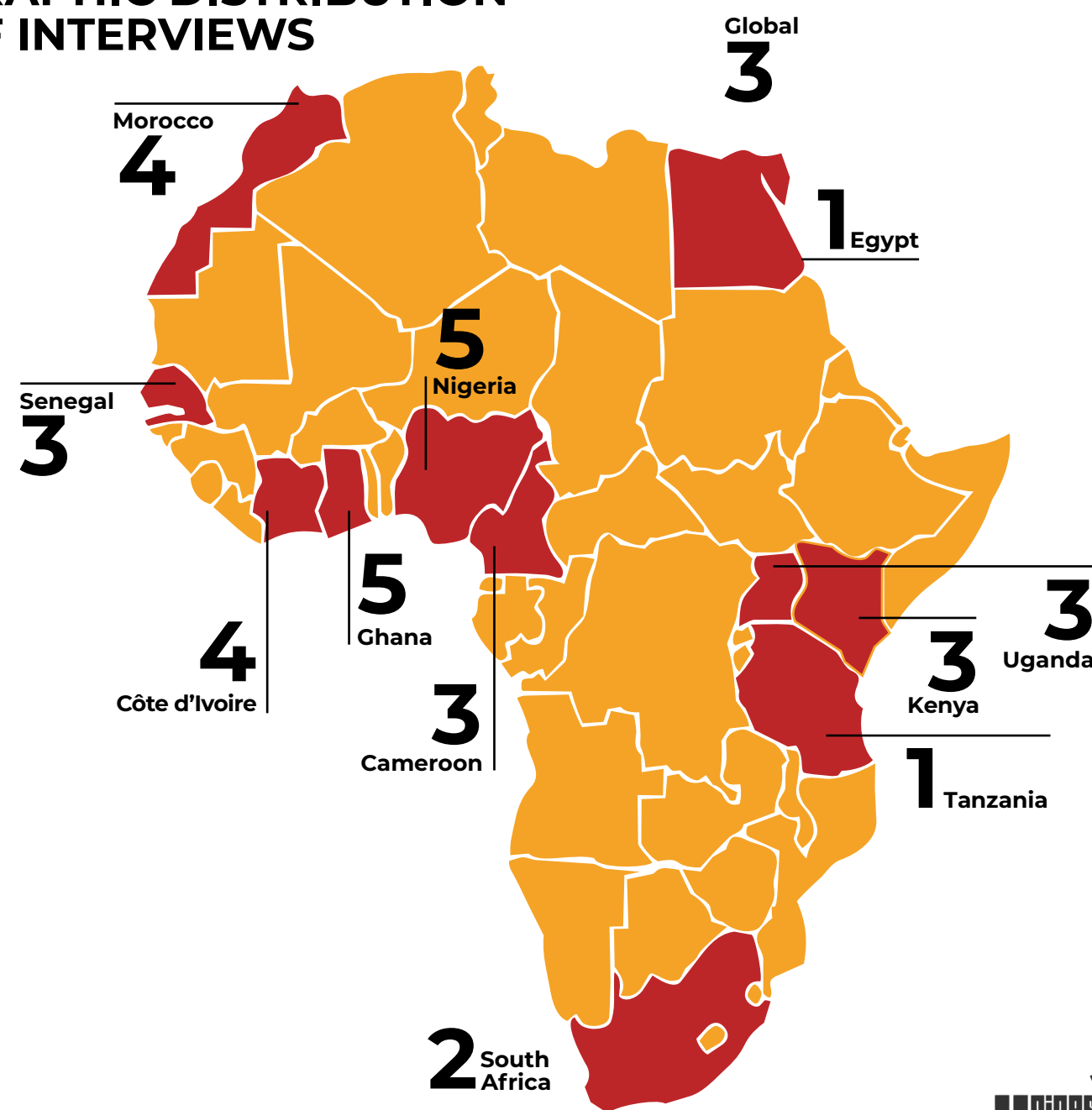
# 11 AFRICAN COUNTRIES SURVEYED

Conducted with leading voices in health media and civil society

# DIVERSE MEDIA REPRESENTATION

Featuring perspectives from print, broadcast, digital media, and NGOs.

## GRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION OF INTERVIEWS



# TOPLINE RESULTS: THE 2026 NARRATIVE LANDSCAPE



## QUESTIONS

The questions focused on

### Global Health in 2026

- What are the biggest health challenges currently capturing media attention?
- Are the biggest hangovers from COVID-19 still affecting us?
- How are shifts in donor countries funding and policy influencing global health priorities?
- What innovations and solutions, e.g digital and AI, are driving the next phase of healthcare progress?
- How are we preparing for future health crises, e.g pandemics, funding cuts, budget restrictions?

### Collaborating with the Media

- What are the key trends shaping global health journalism today?
- How can we better help journalists when working with agencies and organisations?
- How can health stakeholders better engage with the media and build trust?
- How can we ensure stronger representation of African voices and stories in global health coverage?



## GLOBAL HEALTH TOPICS FOR 2026

The 2026 agenda is shaped by two dominant forces: the escalating burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and the persistent threat of communicable diseases—all unfolding against a backdrop of shrinking external funding.

### The Surge of NCDs and Mental Health

Cancers, diabetes, hypertension, strokes, and kidney disease are rising sharply, driven by urbanisation, sedentary lifestyles, and the spread of ultra-processed food. Journalists report growing alarm about the number of young people affected by hypertension, strokes, and diabetes. Mental health conditions— anxiety, depression, and addiction—are recognised as major public health challenges, yet remain heavily stigmatised and severely under-reported compared to their true scale.

### Endemic Disease Pressure

Malaria, TB, and HIV/AIDS continue to dominate public health priorities. Innovations such as the malaria vaccine for children and emerging long-acting HIV options (including PrEP injections) are expected to drive significant media interest. At the same time, recurrent outbreaks—such as Mpox, cholera, measles, Lassa fever, and Rift Valley Fever—regularly expose the fragility of surveillance and response systems.

### Health System Challenges

Across the continent, media attention is repeatedly drawn to structural weaknesses: shortages of skilled health workers due to brain drain, ageing, or insufficient infrastructure, drug stockouts, and the high out-of-pocket cost of care.



## TRENDS SHAPING GLOBAL HEALTH JOURNALISM

Health journalism is undergoing a rapid transformation, shaped by the need to counter misinformation and harness new technologies.

### Solutions and Data-Driven Reporting

Reporters are moving beyond problem-focused coverage toward Solutions Journalism, spotlighting local innovations and community-led breakthroughs. This shift is underpinned by increasing reliance on Data Journalism—using epidemiological and demographic datasets, maps, and visualisations to explain complex issues with precision.

### The Misinformation Battlefield

The speed at which false health information spreads across platforms like Facebook, X, and TikTok has turned journalists into frontline verifiers of public health information. Combating disinformation is now viewed as essential to safeguarding community health.

### Digitalisation and AI

Technologies shaping media coverage include telemedicine, drone delivery of medical supplies, and applications of artificial intelligence in diagnostics, predictive analytics, and drug development. These innovations are seen both as breakthroughs and as sources of ethical concern, particularly around data privacy.



## COLLABORATION, TRUST, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF AFRICAN VOICES

Journalists are calling for a new model of engagement—one built on transparency, access, and meaningful partnership.

### Access and Transparency

Media professionals consistently request easier, quicker access to data, researchers, and project leaders. Bureaucracy—such as the need for such as the obligation to submit official, written request letters and wait for institutional approvals before interviews or data can be shared—remains a major barrier. They emphasise the importance of clear, jargon-free communication and strongly discourage attempts at pre-publication approval.

### Capacity Support

Given limited newsroom budgets, journalists highlight the need for training, grants, and fellowships to pursue long-form investigations and build expertise in specialised fields such as epidemiology, data analysis, and AI.

### Elevating African Expertise

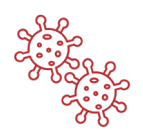
Organisations are encouraged to prioritise African researchers, practitioners, and innovators as primary sources. However, many local experts remain hesitant to speak to the media, often due to institutional constraints. Experts suggest supporting local newsrooms, promoting regional reporting networks, and proactively amplifying African-led innovations to shift control of the narrative.



# AFRICA HEALTH JOURNALISM TRENDS & CHALLENGES FOR 2026

Tackling the dual challenge: critical health priorities and a complex, evolving media landscape define by misinformation and a call for authentic African storytelling.

## AFRICA'S PRESSING HEALTH PRIORITIES



### A "Double Burden" of Disease Captures Media Attention

Journalists report a dual focus on rising non-communicable diseases and persistent infectious diseases.



### Donor Countries Funding Shifts Create Urgency for Self-Reliance

Cuts threaten key programmes (HIV, malaria), pushing countries toward domestic funding and local vaccine manufacturing.



### Digital Health & AI Offer New Hope for Access

Innovations like telemedicine, medical delivery drones, and AI-powered diagnostics are seen as key drivers of progress.

## TRENDS SHAPING HEALTH JOURNALISM



### The New Frontline: Combating Health Misinformation

Journalists identify fighting the "infodemic," fueled by social media and AI, as a primary and resource-intensive challenge.



### Storytelling Evolves Beyond Problems to Data and Solutions

Reporting is shifting to data-driven journalism, multimedia formats (podcasts, video), and highlighting what's working on the ground



### A Unified Call to Amplify African Voices

Journalists urge funders to support local media and prioritise African experts to ensure authentic, context-rich global health coverage



# COUNTRY-BY-COUNTRY ANALYSIS UNDERSTANDING REALITIES ACROSS AFRICAN NATIONS

This section presents a detailed, country-by-country analysis of Africa's evolving health priorities and media dynamics. At a moment defined by shifting global funding, growing disease burdens, and evolving information ecosystems, understanding local conditions is essential for effective engagement.

The insights in the following pages draw from in-depth interviews with journalists, editors, NGO representatives, and media practitioners across key countries - Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.

By examining each country individually, this analysis provides a granular view of the unique challenges, strengths, and emerging trends that shape local health reporting and public health realities. This is followed by a continental synthesis that highlights the powerful themes linking these diverse contexts—shared pressures, converging priorities, and the collective aspirations driving African health journalism forward.

Together, this multi-layered perspective provides both a detailed map of national landscapes and a strategic, pan-African view of the shifts that communicators, policymakers, and partners must understand to strengthen collaboration and impact.



# AFRICA'S HEALTH BEAT 2026

## CHALLENGES & PRIORITIES ACROSS THE CONTINENT

Media landscape at a turning point, defined by the dual pressures of a “double burden” of disease and systemic shocks, fueling a continent-wide push for health sovereignty and authentic, African narratives.

### COMMON CHALLENGES ACROSS THE CONTINENT



#### Facing a “Double Burden” of Disease

- Recurrent epidemics (Malaria, HIV, Cholera)
- Rising non-communicable diseases (Cancer, Diabetes)



#### A Call for Health Sovereignty

- Self reliance through manufacturing
- Domestic funding
- Elevating African expert voices

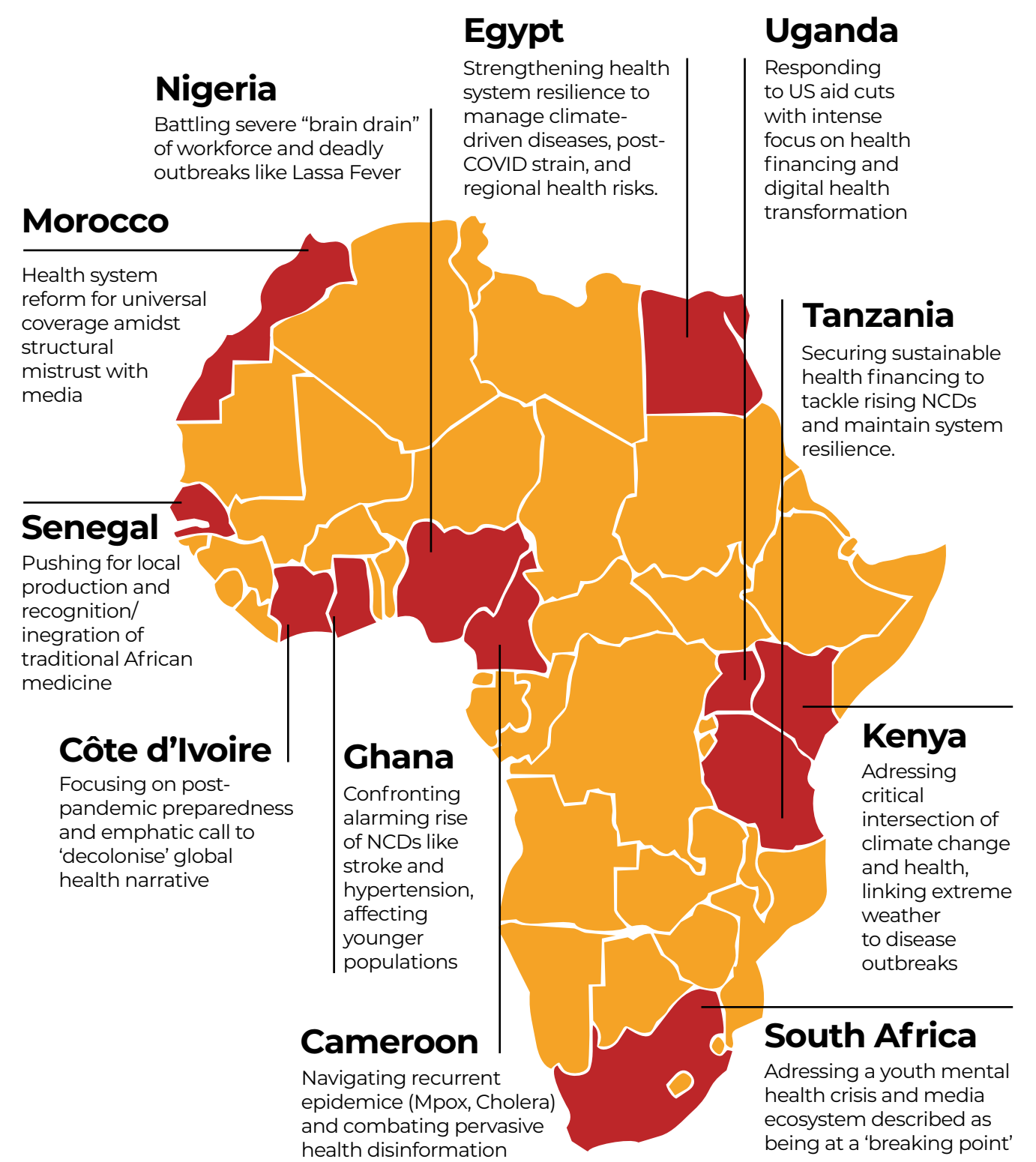


#### Health Systems Under Severe Strain

- Donor countries funding costs
- Brain drain of skilled health workers

Collaboration & Trust  
 Climate Change African Voices  
 Health Sovereignty  
 Youth Data Journalism Malaria & HIV  
**Funding Cuts**  
 Digital Health & AI Brain Drain  
 Non-Communicable Diseases  
 Solutions Journalism  
 Mental Health  
 Misinformation

### ON THE GROUND: COUNTRY SPECIFIC PRIORITIES





# CAMEROON: NAVIGATING EPIDEMICS AND DISINFORMATION



## INTRODUCTION TO THE CAMEROONIAN'S CONTEXT

Understanding Cameroon's health and media environment is of strategic importance, as the nation confronts the dual pressures of recurrent epidemics and a pervasive wave of health disinformation. The country's experience offers a microcosm of the challenges facing much of the continent: a fragile health system tested by repeated outbreaks and a public trust deficit exacerbated by misinformation. The following analysis synthesises the expert perspectives of a journalist from a global media platform focused on science, health, and development, a health and environment journalist at a daily newspaper, and the editor of a weekly health media outlet to provide a clear picture of the Cameroonian landscape.

***"[COVID-19] has greatly affected our mental health. When there are episodes of flu or cold, there is always this fear of being confronted with COVID-19."***

*—Journalist, global media platform focused on science, health, and development*



## ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY HEALTH CHALLENGES

Cameroonian experts identify three interconnected health challenges that expose critical vulnerabilities in the nation's public health infrastructure.

**Recurrent Epidemics:** The media landscape is dominated by coverage of infectious disease outbreaks, including Mpox, cholera, measles, and Lassa fever. Experts note that the spread of these epidemics consistently exposes the deep-seated fragility of the health system, which struggles to mount rapid and appropriate responses, particularly in rural and peri-urban areas.

**Systemic Weaknesses:** Beyond specific diseases, the system itself is a central challenge. This includes an insufficient number of health facilities, technical platforms that are often defective or have low capacity, and a critical shortage of qualified health personnel. These foundational gaps undermine any effective public health response.

**The Dual Burden of Disease:** Cameroon is grappling with the concurrent rise of NCDs—such as cancers, diabetes, and hypertension—which are exploding due to sedentary lifestyles and urbanisation. This "new silent epidemic" is layered on top of the persistent burden of endemic infectious diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS, as well as unresolved issues in maternal/child health and a growing, taboo-laden mental health crisis.



**“This forces us, African countries, to think seriously about endogenous financing and to stop depending almost exclusively on external aid for our health priorities.”**

- Editor, weekly health media outlet

### THE LINGERING IMPACT OF COVID-19

The after-effects of the COVID-19 pandemic continue to be profoundly felt in Cameroon, shaping public psychology, straining the health system, and eroding trust in science.

**Mental Health:** A significant psychological hangover persists. Experts describe a widespread fear and anxiety where any flu-like symptoms trigger the fear of COVID-19. This atmosphere of mistrust and unresolved grief remains a palpable public health issue.

**Health System Strain:** The pandemic necessitated a significant reallocation of budgets to address the COVID-19 emergency. This came at the expense of other critical programmes, such as routine childhood vaccinations and community health initiatives, creating delays and backlogs that the system is still struggling to overcome.

**Erosion of Scientific Trust:** The wave of misinformation that accompanied the pandemic has left a lasting legacy of distrust. A segment of the population remains wary of vaccines, health institutions, and scientific authorities, making future public health campaigns significantly more challenging.

### THE EVOLVING MEDIA LANDSCAPE AND JOURNALIST SUPPORT

Health journalism in Cameroon is adapting to new challenges and demands, while journalists themselves have clear needs for better support.

**Key Journalism Trends:** The fight against health disinformation has become a central mission for journalists. To reach wider audiences, especially young people, there is a clear trend toward utilising online platforms (Facebook, X, TikTok) and adopting multimedia formats, such as podcasts and short videos. Concurrently, there is a growing emphasis on explanatory journalism—contextualising data and fact-checking rumors—to build public understanding.

**Essential Support for Journalists:** To perform their roles effectively, journalists require concrete support. This includes establishing formal collaboration platforms with health agencies for periodic exchanges, which would facilitate better information sharing. They also need easier access to reliable information, specialised training on topics like epidemiology and ethics, and critically, funding for in-depth investigative reporting that newsrooms often cannot afford.

### NAVIGATING FUNDING SHIFTS AND STRENGTHENING AFRICAN NARRATIVES

Cameroon is facing the dual challenge of adapting to a shifting international funding landscape while simultaneously working to amplify authentic local voices in global health conversations.

**Changes in donor countries’ funding policies** have had heavy and direct consequences on key health projects. Experts specifically cite a negative impact on programmes targeting malaria and HIV/AIDS, as well as environmental preservation initiatives, leaving populations in distress. This has forced a national conversation about the need for endogenous financing to avoid dependency on external aid.

**To guarantee better representation of African voices,** experts propose a clear set of strategies. These actions are designed to shift the narrative from one of Africa as a “backdrop of crises” to one of Africa as an “actor of solutions.”

- **Give African experts a voice in articles,** on television panels, and at international conferences.
- **Cite African sources** and promote research carried out by Africans.
- **Involve local actors** by highlighting the results of their research and experiences.



# CÔTE D'IVOIRE: BUILDING RESILIENCE AND "DECOLONISING" THE HEALTH NARRATIVE

## INTRODUCTION TO THE IVORIAN CONTEXT

The health and media landscape in Côte d'Ivoire is defined by two powerful, interconnected themes: a determined focus on strengthening health system resilience in a post-pandemic world, and an emphatic call to "decolonise" the global health narrative. This movement seeks to dismantle outdated power dynamics by prioritising local expertise, funding local storytellers, and centering African solutions. The insights that follow are drawn from the expert perspectives of a coordinator at a national health radio station, a presenter at a national radio station, a journalist at a daily newspaper, and the president of an NGO focusing on health.

***"When Washington changes policy or priority, this is automatically felt everywhere. [...] American decisions often redraw the map of global health priorities. Partners must adapt accordingly, revise budgets, and this is felt in field activities."***

— Coordinator, national health radio station

## ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY HEALTH CHALLENGES



Media coverage in Côte d'Ivoire illuminates a national health agenda focused on future preparedness, chronic diseases, and systemic equity.

**Post-Pandemic Preparedness:** A primary focus for the media is the country's preparedness for future pandemics. This includes coverage of rapid response mechanisms for emerging threats such as Mpox and Lassa fever, as well as ongoing debates around vaccine equity and the strength of primary health systems

**Burden of Non-Communicable Diseases:** There is a dramatic increase in cardiovascular diseases, cancers, and diabetes. Media coverage is centered on prevention, early screening, and the significant challenge of accessing costly treatments, which places a heavy burden on families.

**Mental Health:** Previously a lower-priority topic, mental health has been pushed to the forefront by a resurgence of highly publicised depression and suicide cases. This has made mental well-being a critical issue for public discourse and media attention.

**Universal Health Coverage and Equity:** A recurring theme in media reports is the urgent need to extend social protection and ensure equitable access to quality care for all citizens. This includes a sharp focus on bridging the persistent divide in healthcare access between rural and urban areas.



## THE LINGERING IMPACT OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has left a multifaceted and enduring impact on the health system, economy, and public consciousness of Côte d'Ivoire.

**Systemic Disruptions:** The pandemic led to significant delays in routine vaccination programmes, increasing the risk of other infectious disease outbreaks. It also severely tested the resilience of supply chains for essential medicines and consumables.

**Socio-Economic Vulnerability:** The crisis exacerbated the economic vulnerability of households, directly affecting their ability to afford and access healthcare services. Lockdown measures and trade disruptions slowed progress towards economic stability.

**Mental Health Consequences:** Persistent stress, anxiety, and isolation linked to the pandemic continue to affect the population's mental well-being, an area that experts note remains under-covered by the media relative to the scale of the need.

**Shift in Health Communication:** The pandemic, and the "infodemic" of misinformation that spread across social networks has fundamentally changed how the public engages with health information. People are now more attentive but also more wary, creating a complex communication environment.

***"It is imperative to 'decolonise' the narrative of global health. [...] National expertise must be prioritised, ensuring that Ivorian and African experts, researchers, innovators are the main and most cited sources [...] African stories must reflect the continent's capacity to act, not only its vulnerability."***

— Presenter and reporter, national radio station

## THE MEDIA'S EVOLVING ROLE: FROM RELAY TO ADVOCATE

A significant transformation is underway in Ivorian health journalism. Journalists are moving beyond their traditional role as simple relays for information from health authorities to become powerful advocates for social justice and accountability. Media outlets are now actively denouncing failures in the health system, pointing out infrastructure gaps, and highlighting the weakness of technical platforms. Their reporting increasingly calls for concrete actions to improve equitable access to quality care, positioning them as a critical force for change and a voice for the population.

## STRATEGIES FOR MEDIA COLLABORATION AND AUTHENTIC REPRESENTATION

Ivorian experts have articulated concrete strategies for building trust between health actors and the media, alongside a powerful vision for ensuring authentic African representation.

**Improving Collaboration:** To build a relationship of trust, health actors are urged to:

- **Be transparent** and consistently available to journalists, not just in times of crisis.
- **Simplify technical jargon** to make complex health information accessible to the public.

- **Facilitate easy access to information** without imposing excessive bureaucratic protocols.
- **View journalists as strategic partners** in public health, not as inquisitors.

**"Decolonising" the Narrative:** The call to decolonise global health coverage is a central theme, with clear recommendations for action:

- **Fund local African newsrooms** to conduct their own investigations and set their own coverage agendas.
- **Prioritise and cite Ivorian and African experts**, researchers, and innovators as the primary sources in stories about the continent.
- **Cover local solutions and successful policies**, not just problems and vulnerabilities, to show the continent's capacity to act.
- **Cite African media platforms as primary sources of information**, moving away from a reliance on foreign press agencies.



# EGYPT: HEALTH PRESSURES AT THE CROSSROADS OF CLIMATE, CONFLICT, AND SYSTEMIC STRAIN



## INTRODUCTION TO THE EGYPTIAN CONTEXT

Egypt's health landscape reflects wider North African dynamics shaped by climate change, regional instability, and post-COVID system fatigue. With a rapidly growing population concentrated along the Nile, the country faces rising health demand while adapting to shifting disease patterns and constrained resources. Media coverage increasingly positions Egypt within a regional risk environment influenced by conflict in neighbouring countries and cross-border health threats.

***“We are having dengue fever in Egypt now, which wasn’t an issue before. Diseases that used to be in Sub-Saharan Africa are now present in North Africa because the climate is changing.”***

*— Editor, global media platform focused on science, health, and development*

## ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY HEALTH CHALLENGES



Egypt faces a layered and evolving disease burden, driven by environmental, demographic, and systemic factors.

**Climate-Driven Disease Shifts:** One of the most striking developments is the emergence of diseases previously uncommon in Egypt and North Africa. Dengue fever, once largely absent, is now reported in Egypt, reflecting broader regional trends linked to rising temperatures and changing ecological conditions. Diseases historically associated with Sub-Saharan Africa—such as malaria and tuberculosis—are increasingly appearing further north, reshaping national and regional risk profiles.

**Persistent Burden of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs):** Alongside these emerging infectious threats, Egypt continues to grapple with high levels of non-communicable diseases, including diabetes, cancer, and cardiovascular conditions. These NCDs place sustained pressure on an already stretched health system, particularly as resources remain constrained following the pandemic.

**Population Pressure and Primary Care Gaps:** Egypt's dense population—largely concentrated along the Nile corridor—creates intense demand for health services. While urban areas retain relatively strong access to physicians, shortages persist in rural and remote regions, such as the Western Desert, exposing gaps in primary care coverage and continuity. Unresolved issues in maternal/child health and a growing, taboo-laden mental health crisis.



**“There is a real lack of science communication in our region. Training journalists and researchers together is important to break the wall between them and improve how health issues are covered.”**

— Editor, global media platform focused on science, health, and development

## THE LINGERING IMPACT OF COVID-19

The pandemic’s aftershocks continue to shape Egypt’s health system and policy environment.

**Health System Fatigue:** COVID-19 led to deep budget reallocations and long-term strain on workforce capacity. The system is still contending with shortages in health personnel, weakened surveillance mechanisms, and disruptions to routine services, including vaccination programmes.

### Reduced Vaccine Uptake and Surveillance

**Weaknesses:** Post-COVID challenges include lower vaccine uptake and fragile disease monitoring systems, making early detection and outbreak response more difficult, particularly concerning given the rise of climate-sensitive infectious diseases.

**Long-Term Structural Consequences:** Rather than a short-term crisis, COVID-19 has left enduring structural gaps, limiting the system’s ability to simultaneously manage infectious outbreaks and the growing burden of chronic disease.

## THE EVOLVING MEDIA LANDSCAPE AND JOURNALIST SUPPORT

Health journalism in Egypt and the wider region is undergoing a clear transformation, driven by data availability, digital tools, and audience expectations.

**Key Journalism Trends:** There is a strong shift toward data-driven health reporting, including the use of dashboards, real-time outbreak tracking, and epidemiological data visualisation. At the same time, journalists are increasingly prioritising human-centred storytelling, amplifying community voices and exploring how health crises affect people on the ground—not just institutions.

**Equity-Focused Narratives:** Coverage increasingly frames health through the lenses of equity, access, and vulnerability, reflecting public concern over who is most affected by system failures and funding cuts.

**Critical Support Needs:** Journalists highlight persistent barriers, including limited access to timely, transparent data and restricted direct access to local experts. Too often, reporters are referred to press releases rather than granted interviews with scientists or clinicians, weakening depth and trust in reporting. There is also a pronounced need for science communication training for both journalists and researchers. Joint training initiatives are seen as essential to break down mistrust, improve mutual understanding of timelines and constraints, and strengthen the quality of health coverage.

## DIGITAL INNOVATION, AI, AND NEW MODELS OF CARE

Digital health tools are increasingly filling system gaps in Egypt and the region.

### Telemedicine for Underserved Areas:

Telemedicine is playing a growing role in extending care to rural and remote areas, including parts of western Egypt where physician shortages persist. This model is helping to partially offset geographic inequalities in access.

**AI-Supported Diagnostics:** While more prominent in conflict-affected settings such as Sudan, AI-based diagnostic tools are part of a broader regional trend toward technology-enabled care, particularly where specialist expertise is scarce.

## NAVIGATING FUNDING SHIFTS AND BUILDING RESILIENCE

Shifts in donor countries’ funding have had direct and indirect consequences for Egypt and neighbouring countries.

**Impact on Core Health Services:** Funding cuts have affected vaccination programmes, immunisation coverage, and disease-specific responses (including HIV and malaria), particularly in fragile and conflict-affected settings that influence regional health security.

### A Push Toward Regional Cooperation:

Paradoxically, these constraints are catalysing greater regional collaboration, with countries exploring shared frameworks for vaccination, outbreak response, and surveillance. This marks a gradual shift away from dependency toward more coordinated, locally anchored solutions.

**Reducing Reliance on External Aid:** Experts emphasise the need to strengthen local capacity, invest in domestic resources, and reinforce primary care systems to build resilience against future funding shocks.

## STRENGTHENING AFRICAN VOICES AND HEALTH NARRATIVES

Ensuring stronger representation of African perspectives is a recurring priority. Key strategies include:

- **Prioritising African and Egyptian experts** in media coverage and global health discussions.
- **Increasing reliance on local journalists** and reporters, who bring cultural context, trust, and depth to health storytelling.
- **Reframing Africa—and Egypt specifically—** not as passive recipients of science, but as producers of research, innovation, and policy leadership.

Building the capacity of local reporters is seen as essential for long-term preparedness: without sustained investment in training, countries risk being unprepared for the next major health crisis.



# GHANA: CONFRONTING NCDs AND DRIVING TOWARDS HEALTH SOVEREIGNTY



## INTRODUCTION TO THE GHANAIAN CONTEXT

Ghana's health sector is at a pivotal moment, defined by the alarming rise of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and a determined national push towards health sovereignty through domestic funding and self-reliance. This strategic pivot, catalysed by shifts in international aid, highlights a broader continental ambition to take ownership of health priorities. The following analysis consolidates insights from a diverse panel of Ghanaian experts: the health editor from a national daily newspaper, the health news editor from the national news agency, a health and education journalist from a national television network, a coordinator from a pan-African network of journalists and researchers, and a program officer from an international NGO.

*“Rising cases of non-communicable diseases are a growing concern. stroke, hypertension and diabetes are now topping the charts. Even more worrying is the fact that an increasing number of young people are being affected.”*

— Health and education journalist, national television network

## ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY HEALTH CHALLENGES



Ghana's health leaders and media are focusing on a spectrum of interconnected challenges that demand both immediate attention and long-term strategic planning.

**The Rise of NCDs:** This is consistently cited as a top challenge. Stroke, hypertension, and diabetes are on the rise, affecting younger populations more frequently. These trends are closely linked to rapid urbanisation, sedentary lifestyles, and the proliferation of unhealthy diets characterised by fast food and sugary drinks.

**Persistent Infectious Diseases:** Despite progress, communicable diseases like malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis remain major public health concerns, continuing to be leading causes of illness and death, particularly among children.

**Systemic and Structural Issues:** The Ghanaian health system is hampered by chronic problems, including significant human resource shortages, infrastructure gaps, and inadequate funding. Maternal and child health continues to be a challenge, with uneven access to quality care, especially in rural areas.

**Mental Health:** There is a growing recognition of mental health disorders as a critical issue. However, widespread stigma, limited funding, and a shortage of trained professionals create significant barriers to care.



## THE AFTERMATH OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has left a complex and multifaceted legacy in Ghana, with both negative and surprisingly positive consequences.

**Economic Strain:** The pandemic strained Ghana's economy, leading to reduced government revenue and household incomes. This has directly impacted health funding and made it harder for many people to afford essential health services.

**Disrupted Health Services:** The crisis caused major interruptions to essential services, like routine immunisations and treatment for chronic diseases. Health facilities are still working through a backlog of untreated cases that are presented in more advanced stages.

**Increased Health Awareness:** On a positive note, experts observe that the pandemic has made people more conscious of their health needs, leading to greater personal health awareness and engagement.

**Mental Health Strain & Workforce Burnout:** The pandemic increased stress and anxiety across the population, exposing the country's limited mental health support systems. Frontline health workers are also experiencing significant burnout and fatigue from the intense workload and personal risk they faced.

**“Agencies can ensure stronger representation of African voices and stories in global health coverage by ensuring that Africans tell their own stories the African way”**

— Health editor, national daily newspaper

## INNOVATIONS DRIVING HEALTHCARE PROGRESS

Ghana is actively leveraging technology and digital solutions to build a more resilient and accessible healthcare system.

**Digital Health Systems:** The District Health Information Management System (DHIMS), based on the DHIS2 platform, is transforming how health data is collected, managed, and used for real-time monitoring and evidence-based decision-making.

**Telemedicine and mHealth:** Remote consultations and mobile health apps are improving access to care, particularly for patients in rural and remote areas who can now connect with doctors from the comfort of their own homes.

**AI and Advanced Tech:** Ghana is piloting the use of advanced technologies, including AI-powered diagnostics for disease prediction, robotic surgery, and the use of drones to deliver essential medicines, vaccines, and blood to remote locations.

**Local Production:** In a strategic move toward self-reliance, Ghana has established a national vaccine institute with the goal of manufacturing its own vaccines, reducing dependence on international supply chains.

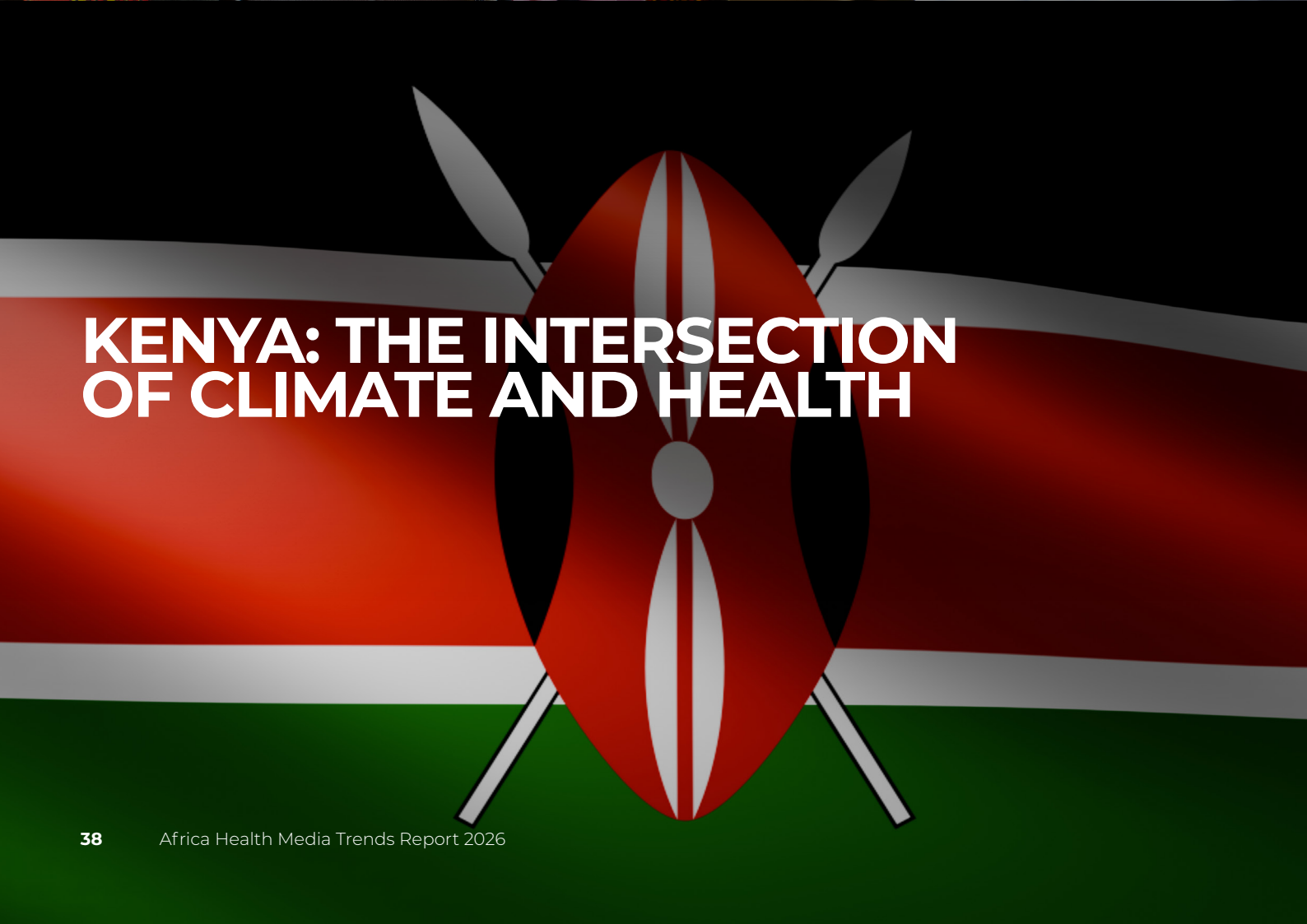
## ADAPTING TO FUNDING SHIFTS FROM DONOR COUNTRIES AND ADVOCATING FOR AFRICAN VOICES

Shifts in funding from donor countries have accelerated Ghana's strategic pivot towards self-reliance and catalysed a powerful call for authentic African storytelling.

**The reduction or suspension of funding for crucial programmes** like PEPFAR and other USAID-supported initiatives has threatened the continuity of services targeting HIV/AIDS, malaria, and maternal health. This disruption has served as a catalyst, reinforcing the national commitment to domestic resource mobilisation and the broader goal of achieving health sovereignty.

**The core strategy proposed for ensuring stronger representation of African voices** is rooted in the principle of **“Africans telling their own stories the African way.”** This involves a fundamental shift in how global health narratives are constructed and shared. Recommended actions include:

- **Partnering directly with African media** outlets and journalists.
- **Investing in capacity-building initiatives** to enhance the skills of local media professionals.
- **Sponsoring African journalists to attend global health events** to ensure their perspectives are included in international conversations.



# KENYA: THE INTERSECTION OF CLIMATE AND HEALTH

## INTRODUCTION TO THE KENYAN CONTEXT

Kenya stands at the forefront of a critical global conversation: the undeniable link between climate change and public health. In the Kenyan media landscape, environmental issues are no longer siloed but are increasingly recognised as primary drivers of health crises, from infectious disease outbreaks to malnutrition. This interdisciplinary approach is reshaping health journalism in the country. The following analysis synthesises the expert views of a health journalist at a national daily newspaper and the science and health editor at a media outlet on health and development.

***“The direct link between climate change and health is a top story. We’re covering increased cholera and dengue outbreaks resulting from floods, malnutrition from droughts affecting crops, and the spread of malaria to new highland areas previously unaffected. It’s no longer just an environmental story.”***

— Science and health editor, media outlet on health and development

## ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY HEALTH CHALLENGES



Kenyan media analysis reveals a national health agenda defined by the convergence of environmental threats, chronic diseases, and systemic failures.

**Climate Change and Health:** This is a top story. Journalists are directly connecting extreme weather events to health outcomes. This includes covering the rise of cholera and dengue outbreaks following floods, increased malnutrition resulting from droughts that affect crops, and the alarming spread of malaria into new highland regions that were previously too cold for mosquitoes.

**The “Silent Epidemic” of NCDs:** NCDs—particularly cancer, diabetes, hypertension, and mental health issues—receive sustained media attention. The focus is on the rising burden these diseases place on families and the health system, as well as the profound lack of access to affordable diagnostics and treatment.

**Health System Failures:** The state of the health system itself is constant front-page news. This includes extensive coverage of doctor and nurse strikes, the “brain drain” of health workers emigrating for better opportunities, frequent stock-outs of essential medicines, and ongoing national debates around health financing.

**Reproductive and Mental Health:** Stories related to reproductive and menstrual health are gaining significant traction, fueled by advocacy and a growing openness on previously taboo subjects. Similarly, mental health, especially among youth, is becoming a more prominent topic of coverage.



**“We are moving past just reporting on Western studies. The trend is toward localising global health news. How does a WHO announcement impact a patient in Kibera or a clinic in rural Uganda? We’re looking for African data and African experts to comment on global issues.”**

— Science and health editor, media outlet on health and development

### THE DUALITY OF THE COVID-19 HANGOVER

The COVID-19 pandemic has left a lasting, two-sided impact on health and media in Kenya, creating both new skills and new challenges.

**The Positive Hangover:** The pandemic accelerated the adoption of new journalistic practices. Reporters are now much more proficient in data journalism, interpreting scientific studies, and explaining complex health metrics to the public. The crisis also created a heightened public appetite for science-based stories and gave a major boost to the coverage of telemedicine and self-care innovations.

**The Negative Hangover:** A significant challenge is “pandemic fatigue.” Experts note that editors and the public are often resistant to stories about “the next big outbreak,” which can make it more challenging to secure coverage for new health threats. Furthermore, the pandemic left a lingering mistrust of authorities and “big pharma” messaging, which journalists must navigate carefully to maintain credibility.

### KEY TRENDS AND NEEDS IN HEALTH JOURNALISM

Health journalism in Kenya is evolving, with journalists adopting new approaches and clearly articulating what they need from health organisations to do their jobs effectively.

#### First, key journalistic trends include:

- **A significant shift toward solutions-focused reporting** that moves beyond just covering problems to highlight what is working on the ground.

- **A strong emphasis on the localisation of global news**, with a demand for African data and African experts to provide context for global health announcements.
- **An interdisciplinary approach** that inherently connects health stories to climate change, economics, gender, and politics.
- **A recognition of the journalist’s role** as a frontline worker in the crucial fight against misinformation.

#### Second, what journalists need from communicators includes:

- **Timely access to local, media-trained African experts** who can provide crucial on-the-ground context.
- **Africa-focused data packets and fact sheets** that help them quickly localise global reports without having to mine massive datasets.
- **Logistical support for fieldwork**, which is essential for telling the most powerful health stories from communities and clinics.
- **To be treated as a resource and a strategic partner**, not just a source for press releases, with full respect for their editorial independence.



# MOROCCO: REFORMING FOR UNIVERSAL COVERAGE AND BRIDGING THE TRUST GAP



## INTRODUCTION TO THE MOROCCAN CONTEXT

The national conversation in Morocco is currently dominated by an ambitious and sweeping reform of the health system aimed at achieving universal social protection for all citizens. This monumental undertaking is unfolding within a complex media environment characterised by a deep-seated climate of structural mistrust between health actors and journalists. The following analysis synthesises insights from a freelance journalist, a lifestyle monthly journalist, a generalist daily journalist (Francophone), and a generalist/specialised daily journalist (Arabic).

***“For 2026, I think we should focus on strengthening our health sovereignty by investing in the local production of medicines and vaccines to reduce our external dependence, which is often linked to international funding.”***

— *Journalist, lifestyle monthly*

## ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY HEALTH CHALLENGES



Moroccan journalists pinpoint three areas of intense media focus that define the nation’s health priorities: systemic reform, specific pathologies, and pharmaceutical self-reliance.

**Health System Reform and Access:** The primary media focus is on the generalisation of social coverage and its practical implications. This includes coverage of the state of public hospitals, the persistent rural-urban divide in access to care, chronic human resource shortages, and the complexities of health financing.

**Pathologies in Focus:** Specific diseases are also receiving significant coverage. Mental health—particularly depression and anxiety—is a topic of growing attention. Major non-communicable diseases like cancer, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease remain central to health reporting. Additionally, emerging lifestyle-related issues, such as the health impact of screens on children, are becoming more prominent.

**Pharmaceutical Sovereignty:** There is a strong media and public interest in issues related to the pharmaceutical sector, including drug prices, availability, and the strategic importance of developing local manufacturing capacity to ensure a stable supply of essential medicines.



## THE LINGERING IMPACT OF COVID-19

Perceptions of the COVID-19 pandemic’s lasting impact are nuanced in Morocco. While some journalists feel the media has largely moved on (“Non, pas vraiment”), others identify clear and persistent physical and psychological consequences.

**Physical and Psychological Sequels:** The prevalence of long COVID—with lasting symptoms like chronic fatigue and respiratory issues—is a tangible after-effect. More broadly, the pandemic has left deep traces on the collective mental health, contributing to a notable rise in anxiety and depression that is saturating care services.

**Systemic Exposure:** The crisis starkly revealed the fragility of the Moroccan health system. This exposure acted as a catalyst, prompting the major reform initiatives that are now underway to strengthen national health infrastructure and governance.

**Diminished Media Focus:** Despite these lasting impacts, there is a clear sentiment among some journalists that media attention has significantly shifted away from the direct health aspects of the pandemic and onto other pressing national issues.

**“To reverse the trend, health actors must fundamentally change their posture: they must stop seeing the journalist as an enemy, even when the subjects are delicate. The journalist must be considered a partner who seeks, above all, easy access to true, solid, and impactful information.”**

— Freelance Journalist, society, culture and health desk

## THE MEDIA LANDSCAPE: COMMERCIAL PRESSURES AND THE TRUST DEFICIT

The state of health journalism in Morocco is shaped by two critical and interconnected challenges that undermine its effectiveness.

- 1. Commercialisation of Content:** There is a growing trend where traditional editorial coverage is being replaced by sponsored brand content financed by pharmaceutical companies. This commercial pressure blurs the line between journalism and advertising. Concurrently, podcasts featuring doctors speaking directly to the public are becoming a popular format, bypassing traditional media channels.
- 2. The Structural Mistrust:** Experts describe a “climate of structural mistrust” that has defined the relationship between health actors and journalists for decades. The proposed solution requires a fundamental change in posture: health actors must stop viewing journalists as enemies and instead treat them as strategic partners. This can only be achieved by providing easy and transparent access to true, solid information.

## STRATEGIES FOR AUTHENTIC AFRICAN STORYTELLING

Moroccan journalists offer clear recommendations for moving beyond institutional discourse to ensure a stronger and more authentic representation of African voices and narratives.

**Capitalise on African culture** through intelligent and compelling storytelling.

**Use touching and modern formats** that resonate with audiences, such as podcasts, vlogs, and short videos.

**Humanise health problems** by focusing on the stories of local actors—patients, caregivers, and researchers—whose narratives are often more impactful than official statements.

**Avoid institutional discourse and “miserabilist” coverage** that fails to reflect the complexity of the terrain.

**Support and train journalists on the continent,** providing them with the means to produce their own authentic investigations rather than depending on foreign or sponsored content.



# NIGERIA: CONFRONTING A BRAIN DRAIN AND HEALTH SYSTEM STRAIN

## INTRODUCTION TO THE NIGERIAN CONTEXT

Nigeria's health sector is navigating a perfect storm of crises, characterised by a severe “brain drain” of its healthcare workforce, recurrent and deadly disease outbreaks, and the profound economic aftershocks of the COVID-19 pandemic. This combination of factors has placed immense strain on an already fragile system, making health a top-tier issue of national concern. The following analysis consolidates the perspectives of a range of Nigerian experts: a health correspondent at a daily newspaper, the associate editor and head of the health desk at a daily newspaper, an award-winning health journalist and social advocate, an associate at a national civic-tech NGO, and a convener at a civil society organisation.

***“Many pharmaceutical companies have exited Nigeria because of the high cost of drugs, which has become unaffordable for the average person and has fueled the problem of counterfeit medications, endangering citizens’ health.”***

— Associate editor and head of the health desk, daily newspaper

## ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY HEALTH CHALLENGES



Media analysis from Nigeria reveals a health system under assault from multiple directions, with coverage dominated by disease outbreaks, workforce collapse, and foundational failures.

**Disease Outbreaks:** Lassa fever and cholera receive significant and consistent media attention. Experts link these outbreaks to seasonal factors like flooding and systemic issues, such as poor sanitation and inadequate access to clean drinking water, which exacerbate the spread of communicable diseases.

**Human Resource Crisis:** A critical and widely reported issue is the mass emigration of healthcare workers. This “brain drain” has created a severe shortage of personnel, leaving those who remain to face insecure, overworked, and dangerous working conditions, further fueling the cycle of departures.

**The Burden of NCDs, Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs) and Infectious Diseases:** Nigeria continues to face a high prevalence of malaria, NTDs, and other infectious diseases, alongside NCDs like diabetes, hypertension, and kidney disease. At the same time, the country is grappling with alarmingly high rates of maternal mortality and widespread malnutrition, particularly among children.

**Systemic Failures:** The media frequently highlights the poor state of health infrastructure, the lack of modern equipment in hospitals, and frequent shortages of essential medications and supplies, all of which compromise the quality of care.



**“There is a consensus among NGOs that Nigeria must mobilize and invest heavily in its healthcare system. At the Nigeria End Malaria Council (NEMC), we are partnering with NGOs to mobilise domestic resources, enhance government ownership, and create stronger, self-reliant health systems to bridge funding gaps.”**

— Convener, national NGO.

### THE COMPOUNDED CRISES OF COVID-19 AND FUNDING CUTS

The Nigerian health sector is reeling from the dual impact of the pandemic’s lingering economic consequences and recent, disruptive shifts in foreign aid, which have created a compounding crisis. The economic recession induced by COVID-19 severely weakened the system, making it far more vulnerable to the subsequent shock of funding cuts. The rising cost of medicines put care out of reach for many and fueled the dangerous problem of counterfeit drugs, while the pandemic starkly exposed the nation’s unpreparedness.

In 2023, the US provided more than US\$600 million in health assistance in Nigeria. That equates to around 21% of Nigeria’s 2023 annual health budget, highlighting the reliance of the health system on aid that has now largely been withdrawn. When aid reductions from USAID and the US President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI) followed, their impact was amplified by this pre-existing fragility. NGOs were immediately forced to reduce operations and lay off staff, threatening years of progress. This compounding effect, however, has also served as a powerful catalyst, forcing an urgent strategic response. The Nigerian government has formed a multi-ministerial committee to secure new financing and has placed renewed emphasis on mobilising domestic resources and strengthening private-sector engagement to build a more self-reliant system.

### THE RISE OF DIGITAL HEALTH AND ADVOCACY JOURNALISM

The state of health journalism in Morocco is shaped by two critical and interconnected challenges that undermine its effectiveness.

**Digital Transformation:** The rise of digital platforms, telemedicine, and AI-powered tools is creating new channels for disseminating health information and improving access to care, especially in rural areas. However, this digital shift is accompanied by the significant challenge of combating the rapid spread of health misinformation fueled by social media.

**Advocacy and Accountability:** Health journalists are increasingly taking on a crucial watchdog role, investigating systemic failures and holding the government and institutions accountable. This has led to the rise of “advocacy journalism,” a model that combines health communication with direct demands for policy change and improved public services.

**Solutions and Preparedness:** In response to funding uncertainties, NGOs are focusing on building systemic resilience. Their strategies include leveraging technology, enhancing financial transparency to attract new donors, diversifying funding sources, and advocating for investments that strengthen public health infrastructure.

### A CALL FOR INVESTMENT IN LOCAL JOURNALISTS

To ensure stronger representation of African voices, Nigerian experts uniformly advocate for a core strategy: **invest directly in local journalists**. This approach is seen as the most effective way to cultivate authentic, context-rich storytelling that moves beyond Western narratives. Specific recommendations include:

- **Provide training in storytelling**, the proper use of health jargon, and reporting on complex issues.
- **Offer grants and funding opportunities** specifically for health reporters to enable in-depth, independent journalism.
- **Strengthen African media outlets** with resources to promote local perspectives and build their sustainability.
- **Embrace developmental journalism**, an approach that requires journalists to deeply understand the African context and tell stories authentically from within that framework.



# SENEGAL: THE PUSH FOR HEALTH SOVEREIGNTY AND RECOGNITION OF TRADITIONAL MEDICINE



## INTRODUCTION TO THE SENEGALESE CONTEXT

Senegal's health and media landscape is shaped by a forward-looking national ambition for health sovereignty, driven by a strategic focus on local production and adaptation to funding challenges. This push for self-reliance is complemented by a unique and powerful call for the official recognition and integration of traditional African medicine into the formal health system. This section consolidates the expert perspectives of the head of health desk at a national public broadcasting network, the president of an association of journalists for health, and the director of a community radio station.

*“Actors of this age-old knowledge continue to suffer a kind of injustice... political leaders [must] carry the voice of this medicinal practice at the level of international bodies because it yields results alongside recognised medicine. [...] This so-called traditional medicine must be supported by authorities [...] by putting in place a legislative framework to supervise their work.”*

— Head of health desk, national public broadcasting network

## ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY HEALTH CHALLENGES



An analysis of Senegal's health media coverage reveals a nation contending with a dual burden of chronic and infectious diseases, compounded by access and environmental issues.

**Incurable and Endemic Diseases:** A major focus of media coverage is on incurable diseases like cancer and diabetes, which are described as “wreaking havoc” on families. This is alongside the continued fight against endemic diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis.

**Access and Cost of Care:** Despite government policies aimed at providing free treatment for certain conditions, the high cost of care remains a significant barrier for many families, often leading to financial ruin.

**Health Crises and Epidemics:** Senegal is currently facing challenges from outbreaks of Rift Valley Fever (RVF) and Mpox. These crises highlight the ongoing need for robust surveillance and rapid response plans to prevent widespread transmission.

**Environmental and Lifestyle Factors:** There is growing media coverage of diseases linked to environmental factors, such as air pollution in major cities, and the health consequences of sedentary lifestyles and changing dietary habits.



***“If I take the example of Senegal, we have voice bearers like artists Youssou Ndur known worldwide, athletes such as Sadio Mané [...] who can carry the voice in international bodies. [...] They must help make the African narrative better known because they are influential and their voice carries more weight than that of a minister in certain spheres of decision-making.”***

— President, association of journalists for health

### **NAVIGATING FUNDING SHIFTS AND PREPARING FOR FUTURE CRISES**

Senegal is actively developing strategies to mitigate the impact of international funding restrictions and to better prepare for future pandemics, with a strong emphasis on self-reliance.

**Impact of Funding Suspension:** The suspension of funding from donor countries is expected to have a direct negative impact on critical health programmes. Experts specifically express concern for mother-child vaccination campaigns (EPI) and HPV vaccination initiatives, warning that a lack of funding could risk a resurgence of preventable diseases.

**Strategies for Future Preparedness:** Drawing lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic, experts recommend a multi-pronged strategy for crisis preparation:

- 1. Establish resilient health systems** supported by sustainable, endogenous funding to reduce dependence on external aid.
- 2. Work decisively toward health sovereignty,** with a particular focus on developing local capacity for vaccine and pharmaceutical production.
- 3. Invest in local epidemiological surveillance** and early warning systems to detect threats sooner.
- 4. Accelerate the digitisation of health data** to enable better surveillance, patient follow-up, and data-driven decision-making.

### **ELEVATING AFRICAN NARRATIVES THROUGH POLICY AND PRACTICE**

Senegalese experts propose a set of unique and powerful strategies for ensuring better representation of African voices in the global health arena.

**Advocacy for Traditional Medicine:** There is a strong call for African governments to advocate for traditional African medicine in international bodies like the WHO. The goal is to have it codified and officially recognised, similar to traditional Chinese or Indian medicine. The success of local institutions like the “Centre Malango” is cited as evidence of its efficacy and potential.

**Leveraging High-Profile Ambassadors:** A key strategy is to use internationally renowned cultural figures—such as artists Youssou Ndur and Baaba Maal, and athlete Sadio Mané—as “voice bearers.” These influential ambassadors can carry the African narrative and advocate for the continent’s health priorities in global forums where their voices carry significant weight.

**Prioritising Local Media and Experts:** Alongside these high-level strategies is a foundational demand to finance and prioritise local media, promote African researchers in global discussions, and demand a quota of African representatives on international panels and decision-making bodies.



# SOUTH AFRICA: YOUTH HEALTH, FUNDING UNCERTAINTY, AND THE MEDIA AT A BREAKING

**“Mental health has become a major storyline, particularly among learners. Every time we go into schools we hear about anxiety, bullying, substance use, and a general sense of emotional strain.”**

- National NGO representative

## INTRODUCTION TO THE SOUTH AFRICAN CONTEXT

South Africa’s health media landscape in 2025–2026 reflects a convergence of deepening health needs, funding uncertainty, and mounting pressure on journalism itself. Insights from health journalists and advocates point to a “perfect storm” in which longstanding communicable disease burdens coexist with rapidly growing non-communicable diseases, mental health challenges, and systemic inequities. These pressures are unfolding against the backdrop of post-COVID recovery and increasing instability in global health financing, particularly linked to shifts in US policy.

## ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY HEALTH CHALLENGES



Media coverage in South Africa is increasingly shaped by health issues that are both visible at the community level and politically charged. These debates are inseparable from the difficulties of building a national health system in South Africa, and broader, across many African countries as they seek to deliver universal and equitable care.

### Mental Health and Youth Wellbeing

Mental health has emerged as a dominant storyline, particularly among children and adolescents. Journalists report rising anxiety, bullying, substance use, and emotional distress among learners, with schools becoming frontline sites where these challenges are most visible. While coverage has increased, access to mental health services remains limited.

### Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

Cancer, diabetes, hypertension, and other NCDs are now recognised as “silent epidemics.” Media attention reflects growing concern about prevention, early diagnosis, and long-term system capacity, especially as these diseases place sustained pressure on already overstretched health services.

### Tobacco, Nicotine, and Vaping

Tobacco control—particularly youth vaping—has become a recurring media issue. Coverage intensified around policy debates, such as the Tobacco Products and Electronic Delivery Systems Bill and global advocacy moments like World No Tobacco Day. Journalists link these stories directly to regulatory gaps, addiction, and school-based exposure.

### Food Safety and Environmental Health

Incidents of food contamination—sometimes resulting in severe illness or death among children—have sparked national media debates on regulation, oversight, and inequality. These stories underscore how health risks disproportionately affect under-resourced communities.

### Migrant and Asylum Seeker Access to Care

Barriers faced by migrants and asylum seekers in accessing healthcare, including xenophobic obstruction of services, have entered mainstream reporting. These issues sit at the intersection of health, politics, and social justice, reinforcing the role of journalism in accountability reporting.



## THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 AND SHIFTS IN FUNDING

### COVID-19 Hangovers

The pandemic's effects continue to shape health coverage. Health systems remain burdened by backlogs and workforce strain, while the mental health toll on young people and frontline workers persists. COVID-19 also reshaped public expectations: audiences now demand clearer, faster, and more transparent communication from both government and the media.

### Funding Shifts and Health Sovereignty

Shifts in donor countries' policy and financing—including the recent withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO), changes to the US President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and related programmes—are felt acutely. Delays or reductions in funding directly affect HIV, TB, malaria, and maternal health services, creating uncertainty for civil society organisations and health workers.

These shifts are accelerating conversations around African-led financing, regional collaboration, and sustainability. However, journalists note that reduced global attention to prevention areas such as tobacco control risks slowing progress at a time when these issues are escalating locally.

**“During the pandemic, people relied heavily on the news for guidance; from where to go, what to avoid, where to get help. That period deepened an already strong reliance on journalism as a trusted source of accurate information.”**

- National NGO representative

## INNOVATIONS AND PREPAREDNESS FOR FUTURE CRISES

### Digital Health and AI

Media narratives increasingly frame digital health and AI as key enablers of future progress. AI-driven diagnostics for cancer, heart disease, TB, and malaria are gaining attention for their potential to improve early detection and clinical decision-making. Digital platforms are also transforming health education, particularly through youth-focused and community-driven content.

### Crisis Preparedness and Surveillance

There is growing media coverage of investments in early-warning systems, disease surveillance, and cross-border coordination, including through institutions such as the Africa CDC. Governments are visibly trying to avoid the mistakes of COVID-19, though progress remains uneven.

### Persistent Gaps

Despite these advances, underfunding continues to undermine preparedness. Preventive programmes are often the first to be cut during budget restrictions, while misinformation—around vaccines, vaping, and public health interventions—remains a major threat. Journalists stress that preparedness must include trust-building, community engagement, and effective communication, not only technical capacity.

## STRENGTHENING MEDIA COLLABORATION AND AFRICAN REPRESENTATION

### Trends in Health Journalism

Health journalism in South Africa is increasingly focused on people and accountability. Reporters

increasingly prioritise lived experiences, community voices, and investigative reporting that links health outcomes to governance failures and social injustice. At the same time, misinformation pressures have reinforced a focus on accuracy, verification, and credible sourcing.

### What Journalists Need from Health Stakeholders

Journalists consistently highlight the need for:

- Clear, jargon-free information
- Rapid access to credible, media-ready experts
- Localised data and community-level insights
- Practical resources such as press notes, visuals, and short-form content
- Respect for tight newsroom deadlines
- Underfunding and staff shortages make this support essential to sustaining quality health reporting.

### Building Trust and Elevating African Voices

Trust is built through consistent, transparent engagement—not only during crises. Journalists value honesty about uncertainty and direct access to experts over heavily filtered messaging.

Ensuring stronger representation of African voices requires more than inclusion. Journalists call for African scientists, researchers, activists, and policymakers to lead narratives as authoritative sources. This includes investing in local journalism, supporting African-led research and data production, and fostering editorial partnerships between African and global media outlets. Owning data and evidence is seen as central to controlling narratives and reshaping global perceptions of Africa as a source of innovation and solutions.



# TANZANIA: FUNDING STRAINS, RISING NCDs, AND A SHIFTING MEDIA LANDSCAPE

**“Journalists often struggle to find sources or contact organizations due to bureaucracy or the ‘media phobia’ of some agencies. Building direct relationships and capacity through workshops helps both sides work together more effectively.”**

- Reporter, global media platform focused on science, health, and development

## INTRODUCTION TO THE TANZANIA'S CONTEXT

Understanding Tanzania's health and media environment is critical, as the country navigates complex challenges around healthcare financing, rising non-communicable diseases, and adapting to shifts in international aid. The Tanzanian experience offers insight into how health systems across Africa are responding to funding shocks, emerging disease threats, and evolving public expectations. This analysis synthesises the expert perspectives of Tanzanian journalists and media commentators to provide a clear picture of the country's current health and media landscape, while also highlighting emerging approaches to strengthening journalist capacity and stakeholder engagement.

## ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY HEALTH CHALLENGES



Tanzanian experts highlight three interlinked challenges that dominate media attention and reflect broader structural issues in the health system:

**Healthcare Financing:** The most prominent issue currently capturing media attention is healthcare financing. While the government is working toward universal health coverage, implementation challenges remain. Only 15–20% of Tanzanians are currently

covered by health insurance, leaving the majority to pay out of pocket. Questions around affordability, coverage for the poor, and equitable access dominate public and media discussions. In response to reductions in funding and shifting international aid, the government is engaging local manufacturers and investors to strengthen domestic health financing and reduce reliance on imports.

**Rising Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs):** Tanzania is facing a growing burden of chronic diseases such as diabetes, cancer, cardiovascular disease, and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. These conditions are expensive to treat and can push households into poverty, particularly when insurance coverage is limited. Media coverage increasingly reflects public concern over the dual financial and health burdens posed by NCDs.

**Endemic and Emerging Infectious Diseases:** While Tanzania has not experienced major recent epidemics, endemic conditions such as malaria remain critical, and recent outbreaks (e.g., Mabug) have drawn attention. COVID-19-era policies, such as regulations restricting disclosure of outbreak information, continue to influence public discourse. Misinformation around vaccines persists, with lingering public scepticism linking new viral outbreaks to the earlier COVID-19 vaccine controversies.



**“The government is engaging local manufacturers to ensure that Tanzania can support itself with medical products instead of relying heavily on imports.”**

— Tanzanian health journalist

## THE LINGERING IMPACT OF COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to shape health and media landscapes in Tanzania:

**Mental Health:** Misinformation and fear from the pandemic have left a psychological imprint on the population. Discussions around vaccination and viral disease outbreaks are often influenced by the residual anxiety and mistrust generated during COVID-19.

**Health System Strain:** Pandemic-era reallocations of budgets and resources disrupted routine health services, and Tanzania is now working to strengthen resilience. Efforts include developing infrastructure at airports and improving preparedness for future public health emergencies, with support from regional bodies such as the East, Central, and Southern African Health Community (ECSA-HC).

**Erosion of Scientific Trust:** Public scepticism toward vaccines and health authorities remains a challenge. This “hangover” effect shapes coverage and public reception of health interventions.

## THE EVOLVING MEDIA LANDSCAPE AND JOURNALIST SUPPORT

Tanzanian journalists are responding to these challenges by adopting new approaches and emphasising specialisation:

**Key Journalism Trends:** Health journalism is increasingly shaped by the need for specialised reporting and a deeper understanding of complex issues such as healthcare financing and NCDs. Digital and AI tools are being explored for supply chain management, mental health support, and

data analysis. Post-COVID-19, journalists recognise the importance of combating misinformation while adapting to shifts in funding landscapes that previously supported capacity-building initiatives.

**Essential Support for Journalists:** There is a need for structured collaboration with health agencies, access to reliable information and targeted training. Capacity-building sessions can equip journalists with skills while simultaneously bringing health agencies closer to the media, helping both sides better understand each other’s constraints and needs. Journalists often face challenges identifying sources or contacting institutions due to bureaucratic barriers or “media phobia” within some organisations. Establishing curated lists of trained health journalists and creating direct contact points with agencies could help build lasting, trusted relationships.

**The Fellowship Approach:** Continental or regional organisations hosting health conferences can invite journalists to apply for fellowships to cover events. These initiatives allow journalists to demonstrate their skills in the field, deepen their understanding of institutional work, and build professional networks with agencies and peers across Africa.

**Stakeholder Engagement and the “Bridge” Role:** Engagement between health stakeholders and the media should be two-way. Rather than relying solely on technical experts to brief journalists, participants advocated for media professionals to serve as a “bridge”, facilitating learning sessions where both stakeholders and journalists exchange perspectives under the guidance of individuals who understand media realities.

## NAVIGATING INTERNATIONAL FUNDING SHIFTS AND STRENGTHENING AFRICAN NARRATIVES

Shifts in donor countries’ funding policies have had significant effects on Tanzania’s health sector. Reduced external support for programmes such as HIV/AIDS has prompted the government to explore alternative financing strategies, including increasing levies and encouraging local manufacturing of medical products.

At the same time, experts stress the importance of amplifying Tanzanian voices in global health discourse:

- **Encourage editors to prioritise African scientists and policymakers** in international coverage. Positive models cited include outlets such as the BBC and CNN, which increasingly feature African experts when covering continent-related health issues.
- **Highlight research and solutions developed locally**, promoting African narratives that reframe Africa from a “backdrop of crises” to an “actor of solutions.”

One expert cited their own experience writing for *The Lancet’s* World Report section, deliberately seeking out Tanzanian and regional voices, including officials from East, Central and Southern African Health Community (ECSA-HC), as an example of how global platforms can better reflect African expertise.



# UGANDA: A FOCUS ON HEALTH FINANCING AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION



***“The battle against HIV which seemed to be going in the positive direction is being lost again with the resurgence of new infections among youth. With the freeze of funding to fight HIV from the US government the situation is likely to worsen as many people who were undergoing treatment will face challenges.”***

— Health reporter, leading media organisation

## INTRODUCTION TO THE UGANDAN CONTEXT

Uganda’s health sector is currently defined by an intense and urgent focus on health financing, driven by recent cuts in donor countries aid, as well as persistent domestic budgetary constraints and competing national spending priorities. This challenge has catalysed a proactive national response, including a robust embrace of digital health solutions to expand access to care, empower patients, and strengthen the overall health system. The following analysis consolidates views from a health writer at a national radio network, a health editor at a private television network, a health reporter from a leading media organisation, and representatives from NGOs focusing on health and human rights.

## ANALYSIS OF PRIMARY HEALTH CHALLENGES



Uganda’s media landscape reflects a national health agenda dominated by the urgent search for sustainable financing and the need to combat a range of infectious disease threats.

**Health Financing:** This is described as the top trending topic in health coverage. The suspension and re-prioritisation of external funding—most visibly from the US, but also within a broader donor ecosystem that includes the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) and

European bilateral donors—has created an urgent need for the government and its partners to identify and secure alternative funding sources to prevent the collapse of essential services.

**Emerging and Re-emerging Diseases:** There is significant concern and media coverage around diseases like Ebola and Marburg, given Uganda’s position in a “hot spot” region. Drug-resistant tuberculosis is another growing threat that is capturing attention.

**Mental Health and Substance Abuse:** This is highlighted as an emerging challenge that has been historically neglected. It is now gaining more attention as a critical public health issue, especially among young people.

**HIV/AIDS Resurgence:** After years of progress, there is growing concern over a resurgence of new HIV infections, particularly among youth. Media and civil society voices increasingly point to the suppressive effect of punitive laws targeting LGBTQ+ communities on HIV testing, diagnosis, and prevention efforts, alongside the freeze in external funding, which has historically supported a large portion of Uganda’s HIV response, exacerbates this challenge.

**Global Health Security:** There is a sustained media focus on the country’s capacity to detect, prevent, and respond to infectious diseases, with a particular emphasis on strengthening surveillance and health controls at its borders.



## THE IMPACT OF FUNDING SHIFTS AND UGANDA'S RESPONSE

The withdrawal of US funding has had a profound impact on Uganda's health system, prompting a multi-pronged response at the national and regional levels.

The immediate consequences have been severe. Civil society organisations (CSOs) that relied on US grants have been forced to scale down crucial outreach, family planning, and HIV services. This has shifted a significant burden onto an already underfunded national health budget, widening inequities in access to care.

### In response, Uganda and its partners have initiated a series of strategic actions:

**Government Action:** The government is drafting a cabinet white paper for policy discussions and has asked parliament to identify alternative funding sources to fill the gap.

**Budget Re-alignment:** Health rights advocates have successfully lobbied parliament to increase the health sector's budget allocation.

**Regional Collaboration:** Uganda participated along with the East African Community (EAC) Partner States, which comprises eight countries—Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania, in March 2025 in an East African regional meeting to launch the implementation of an EAC Pooled Bulk Procurement Mechanism (EAC PPM) which would leverage collaborative purchasing power to reduce the cost of medical supplies.

**“We do not only need to report about the findings, but we want to be part of the process of getting the findings. This gives a deeper understanding of the topics and makes it easy to report about.”**

— Health writer, national radio network

**Local Manufacturing:** The National Drug Authority is encouraging local production of medical essentials and drugs by offering incentives **such as** tax holidays to investors, with the aim of building a more self-reliant supply chain. However, past experiences, including the Cipla case and similar withdrawals by large manufacturers, highlight the challenges of sustaining local drug production beyond fiscal incentives.

## INNOVATIONS IN DIGITAL HEALTH

Uganda is actively implementing a range of digital health innovations to strengthen its health system and improve access to care.

**Self-Care Tools:** The Ministry of Health is advancing the use of a Self-Care Dashboard and App that empower individuals—especially women and young people—to manage their sexual and reproductive health by enabling self-testing for HIV and providing information on contraception.

**AI-Driven Diagnostics:** Artificial intelligence is being piloted in several key areas, including tuberculosis detection, cervical cancer screening, and malaria diagnosis, to improve accuracy and speed.

**Telemedicine Platforms:** Digital tools like Rocket Health and Matibabu are being used to expand virtual consultations and health education, reaching patients in remote areas.

**Electronic Health Records:** Efforts are underway to digitise patient records, which will improve data-driven decision-making at both the facility and national levels.

## STRENGTHENING MEDIA COLLABORATION

To improve collaboration and produce more impactful health stories, Ugandan journalists have clear needs and expectations from health organisations.

**Deeper Engagement:** Journalists express a strong desire for more fluid interactions, including the opportunity to join researchers in the field. This allows them to gain a deeper understanding of health issues and tell more authentic stories from the community's point of view.

**Financial and Technical Support:** There is a critical need for media training on complex health topics and work grants to facilitate detailed, time-consuming reporting. Financial sponsorship is essential to overcome the severe limitations of media house budgets.

**Access to Information:** Journalists require assistance in accessing restricted data from government institutions and need to be linked with expert voices who can provide context and analysis for their stories.



## WESTERN LEGACY MEDIA PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBAL HEALTH

Drawing on interviews with journalists from France, the UK, and the United States, the following key findings outline how Western media currently frame global health.

**Diverging Health Priorities: “Franco-Français” vs. The “Perfect Storm”:** There is a distinct divergence in editorial priorities between French and Anglophone media. French coverage tends to remain “Franco-Français,” focusing on domestic issues or global health topics only when they pose a direct risk to Europe, such as Mpox, or involve a specific French angle, such as the involvement of a French NGO like *La Chaîne de l’Espoir*. Conversely, UK and US perspectives are currently dominated by a “perfect storm” narrative: a convergence of rising health risks and plummeting budgets. A major narrative identified in the US and UK is the “panic and neglect” cycle, where the withdrawal of US funding (e.g., PEPFAR, US-AID) and an “America First” security approach are threatening the sustainability of HIV, malaria, and tuberculosis programmes. Ben Deighton (UK) describes the current environment as a “code red” for journalism, noting that just as science is being undermined by disinformation, funding for science journalism is evaporating, leading to cuts in coverage when scrutiny is most needed.

**The COVID-19 Legacy: Indifference vs. Structural Anxiety:** Perspectives on the pandemic’s legacy vary significantly. In France, COVID-19 is no longer a major standalone topic; it is viewed as a past event experienced differently in Africa than in Europe, and is difficult to “sell” to editors unless linked to the concept of “One Health”. However, in UK and US media research, the “hangover” is defined by lingering vaccine inequity and the complex, often pessimistic negotiations regarding pathogen access for future pandemics. While technological optimism exists regarding new vaccines (malaria, HIV) and AI-driven drug discovery, there is deep concern in the US and UK that the world is moving away from preparing for the future due to financial constraints.

*“As journalists, it is our responsibility to ensure that even if a French media outlet is happy to feature French people in a story, we do not include only French or European voices. We must also highlight highly skilled African doctors and health actors who know the subject matter well. It is equally important to give space to African women’s voices, because they are doing extraordinary work, even if they do not always put themselves forward.”*

— Reporter, French national public broadcaster

*“I really value having embargoed information and some time to work on it. Often, I get pitches after something has already come out, which puts me in a tight spot to cover it quickly. Even a day helps, but having 2 days to a week is a rare gift that lets me actually spend time on it”*

- Editor, US digital media platform focused on health and science, and podcast host

**Operational Challenges: The Broken Business Model:** Journalists across these regions emphasised that the business model for health reporting is broken, necessitating new forms of collaboration with agencies.

**Financial Support & Access:** There is a critical need for grants and funding. French journalists noted that reporting from Africa is becoming impossible without external financing for press trips, citing that major outlets like *Le Monde* or *La Croix* rely on organised trips by NGOs to cover stories in the countries. Similarly, UK journalists called for organisations to fund independent reporting to sustain the ecosystem.

**The Need for Exclusives:** To build trust, agencies must move beyond generic press releases. Journalists in the UK emphasised the need for “exclusives” that answer “why now?” and “is this counterintuitive?”. French journalists highlighted the need for “human stories” and charismatic characters—patients or community workers—rather than institutional rhetoric, which does not work for television or broad audiences.

**Barriers to African Representation:** There is a consensus on the difficulty of accessing African researchers. UK journalists noted that unlike Western researchers who respond in minutes, African experts can be cautious about speaking due to government pressure, leading to weeks of delay. French journalists warned against using administrative officials who lack field experience, urging agencies to facilitate access to genuine “field actors” and female voices to ensure authentic representation.

## A CALL FOR BUILDING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS AND RECLAIMING THE NARRATIVE

Africa stands at a pivotal moment. This multi-country analysis reveals a continent facing two intertwined challenges: strengthening vulnerable health systems amid global funding uncertainty, and reclaiming ownership of its health narrative. The insights shared by journalists, editors, and health experts are more than a reflection of current pressures—they form a clear roadmap for collective action.

The conclusion is unmistakable: the old, top-down model of global health engagement is no longer fit for purpose. Progress now depends on **authentic, sustained partnership**—one that strengthens local media capacity, elevates African expertise, and supports the continent’s drive toward health sovereignty.

For international health organisations, funders, and communicators, the imperative is to move from passive observation to active collaboration. This means investing in scientific communications training, supporting education and trust-building campaigns, and countering misinformation with clear, credible, data-driven narratives. It also requires elevating locally grounded, emotive storytelling that reflects lived realities and resonates with communities. The future of global health will be shaped by those willing to listen deeply, adapt quickly, and co-create a more equitable, resilient narrative: one authored with, not for, Africa.



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- Cameroon** SciDev  
Le Messenger  
Echos Sante

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- Cote d'Ivoire** Radio Santé Côte d'Ivoire  
Radio de la Paix  
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NGO Santé Rénale

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- Egypt** SciDev

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- France** France TV

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- Ghana** Daily Graphic Newspaper  
Ghana News Agency  
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PATH Ghana

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- Kenya** The Standard  
KTN TV  
Talk Africa

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- Morocco** Le Matin  
Femmes du Maroc  
Al Ittihad Al Ichtiraki

- Nigeria** The Punch Newspaper  
The Nation Newspapers  
Invictus Nigeria  
End Malaria in Nigeria

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- Senegal** RTS  
Le Soleil  
OxyJeunes

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- South Africa** Cart  
Tobacco Free

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- Tanzania** Sci Dev

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- Uganda** Uganda Radio Network  
NTV-Uganda  
Vision group  
CEHURD  
Mildmay Uganda

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- UK** SciDev

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- US** Behind the Breakthroughs,  
Inside Precision Medicine

## FINN PARTNERS AFRICA CORE TEAM



**Darren Jones**  
UK



**Mouna Belkhat**  
France and Morocco



**Sharon Quntai**  
Kenya



**Anne Mireille Nzouankeu**  
Cameroon

## CONTRIBUTORS



**Sethou Banhoro**  
Côte d'Ivoire



**Carlton Cofie**  
Ghana



**Dounia Z. Mseffer**  
Morocco



**Taiwo Alimi**  
Nigeria



**Khadim Fall**  
Senegal



**Themba Hlegani**  
South Africa



**Ignatius Bahizi**  
Uganda



**Ben Deighton**  
UK



**Nick Parry**  
UK



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**Get in touch:** [africa@finnpartners.com](mailto:africa@finnpartners.com)





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