

# U.S.-China Collaboration in Creating and Supporting the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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CARTER CENTER



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## Introduction

The Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which is under the purview of the African Union (AU), launched in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in January 2017 with the goal of improving infectious disease surveillance, emergency response, and prevention across Africa. In order to reach the whole continent, the organization has Regional Collaborating Centers in Gabon, Kenya, Egypt, Zambia, and Nigeria. The need for an Africa CDC was first aired in July 2013 at the African Union

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## **U.S.-China Collaboration**

There has been U.S.-China-

local production of basic drugs such as antibiotics. In July 2018, Fosun Pharmaceutical, which owns Guilin Pharmaceutical, received a US \$450,000 grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation to improve the manufacturing process of its anti-malaria drug. Guilin Pharmaceutical is looking for an African partner to provide local business expertise. Ren Minghui, director-general for international cooperation at the Chinese Ministry of Health, hopes the AU will work to clarify pharmaceutical regulations in various regions and help reduce barriers for entry into the private sector. These changes will facilitate more Chinese pharmaceutical investment in Africa.

In addition, China and Africa have worked together to establish the Integrated Surveillance and Laboratory Networks, which strengthens regional integration. Africa CDC director Dr. John Nkengasong has written that through the cooperation between the Africa and China CDCs, the two entities are strengthening trust and confidence in each other.

At the High-Level Meeting on China and Africa Health Cooperation on August 17-18, 2018, China committed to supporting the response to public health emergencies in Africa. At the September 2-3, 2018, FOCAC, China and Africa agreed to strengthen cooperation on quarantine procedures either bilaterally or through the Africa CDC. China also committed to training quarantine professionals in Africa. Africa and China agreed that China will build the Africa CDC headquarters in Addis Ababa and said they hoped construction would start soon.

In January 2019, Africa CDC and China CDC resolved to deepen their partnership to make the collaboration more “result-oriented.” It was discussed that with this new long-term setup, the organizations would be able to measure joint achievements. Nkengasong pointed out that the Africa CDC has drawn much inspiration from the development of the China CDC. China also committed to constructing the Africa CDC headquarters.

On June 24, 2019, the AU and China signed an Exchange of Letters Agreement in which China agreed to construct the headquarters building for the Africa CDC. According to the Africa CDC, this signing “paves the way” for an Agreement of the Economic and Technical Cooperation to be signed, which would detail grant aid for construction, start the project design, and plan laying the foundation.

African and Chinese officials held an event on July 31, 2019, revealing the site chosen as the Africa CDC headquarters in Addis Ababa. AU Commissioner for Social Affairs Amira Elfadil said Chinese construction of the headquarters is expected to begin by 2020. The site is 90,000 square meters and close to AU headquarters. Nkengasong has said two Chinese experts are helping the Africa CDC develop the center.

### **U.S.-Africa Collaboration**

At the Carter Center’s Trilateral Consultation for Peace and Development: Public Health Engagement conference, we learned that the U.S. CDC views the transfer of knowledge and skills as its primary responsibility to the Africa CDC. In order to facilitate this work, the U.S. also gives monetary support. It has provided resources for meetings, travel, infrastructure, and supplies. In particular, the U.S. has renovated the Emergency Operations Center and remodeled the Africa CDC offices. By 2016, the U.S. had provided US \$10 million to the Africa CDC.

The U.S. CDC staff works very closely with the Africa CDC staff. Early on in the collaboration, U.S. CDC staff based at the Africa CDC office got a directive from the Africa CDC leadership, including Nkengasong, that when meeting with other organizations, they should present themselves as members of the Africa CDC. It was emphasized that the U.S. CDC staff understand the importance of teamwork, particularly in a multicultural environment, and that when there is work to be done at the Africa CDC, U.S. CDC staff rise to the occasion just like anybody else.

As part of its work within the Africa CDC, the U.S. CDC works to build lasting public health capacity in other countries using national public health institutes, which are incorporated into the countries' governments. The institute is tasked with studying public health in the country and influencing policy. The U.S. CDC invests in countries to increase their laboratory capacity, disease surveillance, and response capacity. The U.S. works with country leadership and ministry of health officials to develop a sustainable strategic plan that will increase accountability. The U.S. government funded this program with US \$1 million from 2014 to 2019. In November 2018, it announced that it would devote another US \$150 million to this program, demonstrating the program's increased importance. The creation of these national public health institutes is a way for the U.S. and Africa CDCs to make a lasting impact on public health policy and practice in Africa.

On June 24, 2019, the U.S. CDC, Africa CDC, WHO, and West Africa Health Organization began a nine-day training on Public Health Emergency Operations Centers (PHEOC). This program trained 31 people from 21 AU member s



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