

## INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION DIRECTORATE

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### **Antimicrobial Resistance is a Greater Threat than HIV-AIDS, TB and Malaria, says New Report**

The likelihood of falling ill or dying from diseases that resist treatment has escalated in Africa, with children and other vulnerable groups being most at risk, according to a new report by the [Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (Africa CDC).

“The continent faces the highest mortality rate from antimicrobial resistance (AMR), with 27.3 deaths per 100,000—exceeding the combined death toll from HIV-AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria,” said the ‘African Union Landmark Report’ launched today at Africa CDC headquarters.

Africa bears a significant burden of infectious diseases, accounting for approximately 95% of malaria deaths, 70% of people living with HIV, and 25% of TB deaths globally, said the report.

“We must not ignore this silent threat that disproportionately impacts the most vulnerable among us,” said Africa CDC Deputy Director General, Dr Raji Tajudeen.

AMR occurs when microorganisms like bacteria, viruses, fungi and parasites develop resistance to antimicrobial drugs, a process hastened by human behaviors such as the misuse and overuse of these drugs in healthcare, agriculture and food systems. This renders antibiotics and other antimicrobials less effective, causing treatment failures, increased disease spread, severe illness, disability and higher mortality rates.

Despite the estimated USD2-6 billion needed annually for an effective AMR response across Africa, current funding is only a tenth of that allocated to other major diseases. This underfunding makes AMR a significant barrier to sustainable development, hindering progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063.

An estimated 700,000 people die annually from drug-resistant infections globally. Without timely intervention, this number is projected to reach 10 million by 2050, with Africa accounting for 4.5 million.

“Fighting disease requires resources and working with member states and our partners we need to do all we can to save lives,” said Dr Tajudeen, speaking at the launch of a report on AMR in Africa. The event also initiated discussions on a roadmap and targets to advance Africa's battle against AMR. The outcomes are expected to inform the upcoming United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting in September—a crucial platform for global action on this escalating crisis.

Dr Huyam Salih, the director of the African Union-Inter African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), emphasized the critical role that the AU must play in combating AMR. “Antimicrobial resistance is not just a health issue—it is a threat to our agrifood systems, food safety, food security, livelihoods, and economies,” she said.

By 2050, global healthcare costs could exceed USD1 trillion per year, and livestock production could decline by 2.6% to 7.5% annually due to AMR, according to Dr Salih. "In Africa, the situation is particularly alarming, with 37 countries reporting the prevalence of AMR in animal farms, yet only 16% of African countries are conducting routine AMR surveillance in animals as of 2023," she said.

Dr Salih also called for urgent action to strengthen leadership, expand surveillance and data systems, promote the responsible use of antimicrobials, improve public and animal health systems, and secure sustainable financing to combat AMR effectively. "Our health, our food, and our future depend on the actions we take now," she stressed.

Dr Tajudeen said addressing AMR in Africa requires engaging all levels of society in a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach. "Unless we work together, overcoming antimicrobial resistance will be a difficult and long-drawn process that will cost lives," he said.

Currently, millions in Africa lack access to essential antibiotics, with a study by Africa CDC and the African Society for Laboratory Medicine revealing that only 1.3% of microbiology labs in 14-member states can test for key AMR pathogens.

The head of the African Society for Laboratory Medicine, Mr. Nqobile Ndlovu, reaffirmed the organization's commitment to strengthening African laboratory capacities to combat antimicrobial resistance. "Our goal is to ensure the continued efficacy of treatments and promote data-driven solutions to safeguard public health across the continent," he said.

Dr Tajudeen underscored the importance of prioritizing infection prevention, strengthening health and food systems, developing human resources, ensuring sustainable access to diagnostics and therapeutics, and investing in laboratory infrastructure for effective surveillance and data generation.

The report recommends an increase in the availability of high-quality diagnostics, vaccines, and antimicrobials for high-priority pathogens in high-risk African countries.

### ***For more information:***

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#### About Africa CDC

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) is a continental autonomous public health agency of the African Union that supports member states in their efforts to strengthen health systems and improve surveillance, emergency response, and prevention and control of diseases. Learn more at: <http://www.afriacdc.org>

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About AU IBAR - The African Union-Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) is a technical office under the African Union's Department of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy, and Sustainable Environment (DARBE). Learn more at: [www.au-ibar.org](http://www.au-ibar.org)

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About ASLM - The African Society for Laboratory Medicine (ASLM) is a pan-African professional body working to advocate for the critical role and needs of laboratory medicine and networks throughout Africa. Learn more at [www.aslm.org](http://www.aslm.org)