

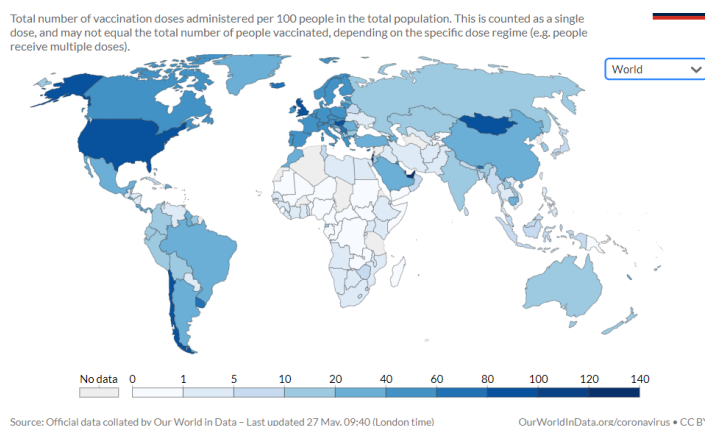
# A call to African Political and Research Leaders: Invest in Research and Development on the Continent

## INTRODUCTION

Scientific knowledge is a critical driver for human health and wellbeing, economic development and environmental sustainability. Yet research and development is still marginally funded on the continent. Most African governments are still unable to meet the commitments made by the African Union member countries in 2006 of spending 1% of their GDP on research and development.



The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has underlined the dangers of this approach even more. To date, one in four people in high-income countries have been vaccinated, compared to one in 500 people in low-income countries, many in Africa



In addition, African countries have struggled to get enough testing kits for the virus, a factor which could have affected countries' ability to bring the virus under control faster.

The continent has relied heavily on the globally funded COVAX initiative to secure vaccines and the dependency on Western vaccine development and manufacturing has resulted in limited stocks and multiple bottlenecks.

Nonetheless, this crisis has also presented an excellent opportunity for African governments to support research capacity, especially for infectious diseases and vaccine research.

Ultimately, the responsibility of addressing the current gaps lies with Africans and their institutions. Not with the international community. There has never been a better time than now for Africa to build the research and development infrastructure for the present and the future.

We urge all African leaders to prioritize funding for research and development in the current budget cycles to catalyze Africa's recovery.

## WHAT CAN AFRICAN COUNTRIES DO?

- Leverage the power of the collective African bloc through existing initiatives
- Integrate teaching with scientific research in African universities as an initial step to build African research capacity and leapfrog the continent into self-sufficiency
- Set research and development guidelines for foreign investments and foreign government commitments to see major projects through to the end of agreed timelines despite budget cuts.
- Prioritize research and development as a pillar of development and national security
- Broaden the stakeholder base of the Africa CDC initiative on vaccine manufacturing capacity on the continent to include African universities and research institutes.

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The **COVID-19** pandemic is a timely reminder that **African governments** must muscle up their support for **research capacity**, especially for infectious diseases and **vaccine research**.



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