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Africa healthcare federation one continent: one team

To meet the pressing need for affordable, quality and equitable healthcare, the Africa Healthcare Federation (AHF) integrates the private health sector of Africa, and presents a unified platform where the private sector can effectively engage the public sector for best health outcomes.



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The African region is experiencing steady economic growth despite many challenges, and predictions for the coming years remain favourable, with growth rates between five and six percent (well above the world average of 2.2 percent). With its increasing role and impact, the private sector is now being recognised by the international community as the engine for sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

The impact that such growth has on the healthcare sector in particular, is that a growing urban middle class is willing to pay for better treatment. This widens the door to the private sector, which is in turn starting to play a new vibrant role, often working in partnership with donors and governments to provide affordable quality healthcare services.

Built to fill the gap of the pressing need for a movement towards access to affordable, quality and equitable health care, AHF presents a unified platform where the private sector can effectively engage the public sector to improve the health business environment and promote pro-growth policies that maximise the input of both the sectors. Established in 2016, Africa Healthcare Federation (AHF) has been formed to unite the private sector, as well as to serve and facilitate collaborations among governments, development partners and international and domestic healthcare players from the private sector. It has received exceptional support and goodwill from stakeholders across the globe, including governments in Africa as well as development partners.

At the inaugural Africa Health Business Symposium (AHBS), held in October, 2016 in Nairobi, Kenya, the leaders of five regional healthcare federations of Africa (East Africa Healthcare Federation (EAHF), West African Private Healthcare Federation (WAPHF), and the key players of the upcoming Central, Southern and Northern African private healthcare federations) signed a Communiqué to pledge their commitment towards the development of AHF and to chart a roadmap for a stronger health sector in Africa. This historic launch of the AHF was graced by Ministries of Health, leading corporations within Africa and captains of the healthcare industry. AHF will unify not only the regional health federations

but also the entire private health sector of Africa, across 45 countries, under a single health platform.

AHF is the voice for the private health sector of Africa with the goal of ensuring the scaling up and strengthening of health systems. Under the theme “One Continent: One Team”, it also supports the five regional federations and their respective country federations to take approaches that enable Africa to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s) and Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want.

“ AHF PRESENTS A UNIFIED PLATFORM WHERE THE PRIVATE SECTOR CAN EFFECTIVELY ENGAGE THE PUBLIC SECTOR TO IMPROVE THE HEALTH BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT ”

The main activities of AHF include:

- Advocacy
- Promoting appropriate regulatory frameworks in the regions
- Fostering public-private partnerships
- Encouraging innovations and disruptive technologies
- Facilitating pro-growth policies
- Increasing investments in health

In February 2017, AHF was awarded for its “Outstanding contribution to the African Healthcare Industry” at the Africa Healthcare Summit Awards 2017 held in London. Oliver Kinross presented this award in Kensington, London, in the presence of Ministers of Health from Africa, captains of the industry, leading investors, and influential leaders in the healthcare industry. Within the first year of its formation, AHF has been recognised at an international level.

AHF has also had incredible support from all the member countries. Most of the member countries that have a strong private sector, continue to provide assistance at the country, regional and continental level. The



AHF Team accepting the Africa Healthcare Award at the Africa Healthcare Summit in London, February, 2017



Dr. Amit N. Thakker, with AHF Directors, Dr. Anuschka Coovadia, Southern Africa Private Healthcare Federation (left), and Clare Omatseye, Healthcare Federation of Nigeria (right) at the IFC Health Event in Barcelona, May 2017.



Dr. Amit N. Thakker, Chairman of Africa Health Federation (left) engages with Dr. Awa Marie Coll Seck, Minister of Health, Senegal (right) and Dr. Ardo Boubou Bâ, President of Alliance Nationale du Secteur Privé de la Santé Senegal/ASPS, and AHF Director (centre).

regional levels have been mirrored around the economic zones of Africa and incorporate member countries of the respective economic zones to carry out the AHF objectives and strengthen the partnership with the public sector.

Embarking on any pioneering path, involves breaking new ground, which is bound to involve a few obstacles. Some of the challenges we have faced have been:

- Building trust: as a newly founded organisation, building trust with the government and other entities of health can be challenging because the relationship between the public and private sector has always been weak. Historically the two entities have hardly had engagements for economic growth and prosperity.
- Inclusivity of the private sector: by nature, corporate institutions and companies have always worked with an interest of their own organisation. Bringing this fragmented private sector under a single umbrella to share a common vision has been difficult. Inclusivity is an evolving journey that many countries are still undergoing.
- Creating a robust in-country institution in every country: the in-country federations have to carry out their own activities, policy briefs, advocacy campaigns and public awareness drives. These require resources and skills that are best found in the respective country where the federation operates. As a start-up with fledgling resources, it requires innovative strategies to look for alternative sources of funding beyond membership fees so as to build operational capacity and to be sustainable.
- Impact analysis: the transformation created by the establishment of a unified federation happens over a long period of time before results can be recognised. It requires persistence, and that deters some

of the stakeholders who are looking for quick results.

The passion for creating an effective healthcare sector in Africa has led us to relentlessly focus on bringing champions and like-minded people to drive the agenda of institutionalised public-private partnership which would be catalytic in creating shared value and improved outcomes. Our team has been growing, and we have received tremendous support from several development partners such as IFC/World Bank, USAID, German Association for International Health (GIZ), Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) and The Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA). Although AHF was formally launched in 2016, it has been about a 12 to 13-year journey overall in building our team. The new leadership in government in several of the African countries has been very receptive in adopting innovative models of public-private partnerships (PPP) in health. This has encouraged the establishment of institutions that will be sustainable in the long run through collaborations.

The wide exposure that AHF has received through international healthcare platforms, government forums, and presidential roundtables in many countries has opened up opportunities for the federation to be an international hub for investments and effective partnerships in Africa. In addition to that, through this platform, AHF also advocates to overcome the perception that health in Africa is donor dependent, by improving local resources and embedding innovation so that as a sector we are self-reliant in facing emerging challenges, and focus on preventive care rather than curative care.

The results so far have been very promising, and they have been achieved due to the contributions of the partners that we have worked with. Within the private sector, we now have a consistent platform for the sharing of best practices, thereby encouraging appropriate business models to scale up within the regional economic zones. We have seen the outcomes of this particularly in medical insurance companies (Jubilee, UAP, etc.) and in companies involved in supply chain – both local distribution companies, and multinationals setting up offices across Africa. Academic and training institutions (universities and colleges) are now also accepting students from neighbouring countries and training the students to work as health workers in their own nations. With more stability and an organised regulatory framework, there has also been an increase in investments. Local and international investors are finding it easier to put capital in this industry through the opening of clinics, hospitals, manufacturing sites, etc. We have seen in the recent past, several private equity companies coming to the market and investing in private companies. Several private equity companies are also increasingly investing in private companies in Africa.

Within the public sector, there has been an improvement in the engagement between the governments and the private sector, thus bringing greater transparency in the procurement of medicines and medical supplies. New models of engagement such as leasing and outsourcing have also emerged in the healthcare industry which has not been experienced in the past several decades. This has given the private sector greater accountability in the products and services it offers the government. Another significant achievement is the setting up of PPP units in the Ministries of Health. Several governments in Africa have now appointed senior officers to head newly formed PPP offices, which had never existed before. The focal point is now better organised within the Ministries to effectively engage with the private sector which provides over 50% of the services in most of the African countries. There have also been noticeable changes in leadership of the Ministry of Health (MOH) in many countries like Kenya that have an appointed MOH, rather than an elected MOH. Several countries have appointed leaders from the private sector to head these government offices.

This is the start of a pivotal moment that marks the beginning of a momentous change towards overcoming challenges together and achieving mutual far-reaching outcomes. As a unique organisation that embodies the entire African continent private healthcare sector, AHF is envisioned to make a significant contribution to the African healthcare industry through the ramping up and strengthening of health systems, and the development of quality and uniform standards of healthcare delivery across the continent.

We now truly embody the Old African proverb, “If you want to go quickly, go alone. If you want to go far, go together”. ■

KEY POINTS



- ✓ The private health sector in Africa now covers over 50% of medical services in many African countries
- ✓ The AHF fills the gap of the pressing need for access to affordable, quality and equitable health care
- ✓ AHF presents a platform where the private sector can engage the public sector
- ✓ The organisation promotes pro-growth policies that maximise the input of both the sectors
- ✓ The AHF structures and integrates the private health sector of Africa