

## Good health and well-being in the African Region: A status that all people should enjoy (#HealthForAll)

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“**Stay healthy**” – it is probably the most frequently spoken phrase between 2019 and 2023 when the global society has gone through the COVID19 pandemic. One important takeaway from the pandemic is that good health is not something that continuously exists, thus persistent efforts should be made for its maintenance

### What is Health?

As [the World Health Organization \(WHO\) stipulates in its constitution](#), health is a “state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing, not a mere absence of disease or infirmity”. The essence of the global solidarity to assure the “good health and wellbeing” for everyone by 2030 is specificized with [the United Nations \(UN\) Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#). Universal health coverage (UHC) safeguards a basic human right, which is to [“allow all people to have access to the full range of quality health services they need, when and where they need them, without financial hardship”](#).

Based on the diverse concepts defining health, good health is oftentimes measured by combining the results ascertained in various dimensions, frequently including life expectancy, UHC service coverage index and SDG indicators. Over the past two decades, African Region has achieved significant progress in the life expectancy at birth, [risen from 50.80 years in 2000 to 64.5 years in 2019](#). The UHC service coverage index suggests that almost [46% of all Africans in 2019 are covered](#).

### The Path to Ultimate Well-Being

The journey to assure good health and wellbeing starts even before a baby is born. Family planning, especially [contraceptive use accounted at 28% in 2017](#), remains under-utilized in the African Region. As mothers’ health during the pregnancy affects both the mothers and babies, it is utmost important to have mothers received necessary health services as soon as the pregnancy realizes. [In 2021, 83.3% of African mothers made at least their first antenatal care \(ANC1\)](#).

### Life and well-being at birth

Bringing a new life into the world is an honorable task but it can come with a great health risk – [of the more than 130 million births occurring each year, an estimate 303,000 mothers die and 2.6 million babies are born in stillbirth](#). Therefore, giving birth in a circumstance



where mothers can receive immediate medical interventions if needed is important. In the African Region, [only 65% of newborns were delivered while skilled health personnel's was attending](#). Prevention of passing HIV/AIDS from mother to her child had remarkable coverage in 2020, [rating at 87%](#). However, other services to prevent transmission of infection between mother and her child, [such as malaria and tetanus, are falling behind](#) to protect mothers and children in the African Region. Despite the fact that children's immunization coverage has been significantly improved, [more than 30 million children under the age of five in Africa still suffer from infectious diseases which could have been prevented with vaccines](#).

## Youth and young adults' health challenges

Adolescents in the African Region face significant health challenges, including HIV/AIDS, adolescent pregnancy, mental health issues, injuries, and substance abuse. In 2018, new HIV cases among adolescent girls were nearly five times higher than among boys, with rates of 2.3 and 0.5 per 1000 uninfected population, respectively. The African Region experienced a high prevalence of adolescent pregnancy, with [99.4 births per 1000 women in 2022](#), leading to increased health risks for both mother and child. Approximately 37 million African adolescents are affected by mental disorders, disproportionately affecting young girls.

Harmful drinking contributes to risky behaviors like road accidents, violence, and premature mortality. [Smoking initiation often occurs during adolescence, with 19% reporting occasional smoking and 21% occasional drinking between 2016 and 2017](#).



*Image capturing a youth engaging in health-conscious activities*

## Chronical health conditions and injuries

While health challenges persist among infants, children, and adolescents, chronic conditions such as cancer and diabetes are imposing a growing burden on African adults, evidenced by 1.1 million new cancer cases and 700 000 cancer-related deaths annually, along with 24 million people estimated to live with diabetes in Africa. Injuries, exemplified by 297 100 accidental road deaths in 2021 and 158 000 murders in 2020, rank among the top 10 causes of death for African adults, with 38% of female homicides attributed to intimate partners.

Impacts of chronic conditions continue to grow as one ages. [51.4% of the senior citizens pass away because of ill-conditions of their hearts and blood vessels while 13% are due to conditions related to diabetes and kidney diseases.](#) Disabilities become more common among the elderly, including hearing loss, cataracts, back and neck pain, joint pain, and dementia. Adults aged older than 60 years suffer from increased risk of unintended injuries which are most often caused by falls.

Other health issues stem from phenomenon which cannot be changed even at the community level. For instance, drought, cyclone, flooding, landslides and other natural disasters caused by [climate change has been becoming a growing threat to African society.](#) Africa is the Region in the world where [skilled health workers, such as doctors and nurses, are most insufficient.](#) Working together among governments, private businesses and communities is the absolute priority to protect good health and wellbeing for all Africans.

## WHO's contribution in achieving health for all in the African Region:

The World Health [Organization \(WHO\) has been actively working towards achieving Health for All at all ages](#) through various initiatives and contributions.

- WHO calls on Member States to address health equity through universal health coverage so that all children can access essential health services without undue financial hardship.
- WHO plays a critical role in responding to health emergencies and pandemics.
- WHO assists countries in strengthening their health systems to deliver effective and efficient health services.
- WHO has been a strong advocate for primary health care as a foundation for achieving universal health coverage.

## References

[iAHO health for all regional fact sheet](#)

[United Nations THE 17 GOALS Sustainable Development](#)

[Tracking Universal Health Coverage in the WHO African Region](#)

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[The implications for training of embracing : a life course approach to health.](#)