



**Mo Ibrahim**  
FOUNDATION

## COVID-19 in Africa: a challenging road to recovery

*New analysis from the Mo Ibrahim Foundation unpacks ten key governance challenges for African countries on the road to recovery from COVID-19*

**Dakar and London, 6 December 2021** – COVID-19 has exposed wide-ranging, fundamental challenges for African countries across the governance landscape. Addressing these is critical for long-term recovery, but without a massive step-up in vaccination rates, any recovery will be delayed and the opportunity to build a more self-reliant future squandered.

This is the picture that emerges from *COVID-19 in Africa: a challenging road to recovery*, a new report from the Mo Ibrahim Foundation examining COVID-19's impact on Africa and the continent's potential to respond.

Unless it can vaccinate 70% of its population by the end of 2022, Africa stands little chance of overcoming the pandemic. However, as of 18 November 2021, just 6.8% of the continent's population had been fully vaccinated, and only five African countries are predicted to meet the World Health Organization (WHO) target of vaccinating 40% of their population by the end of 2021. The immediate priority is to get more jabs into arms by increasing access to doses and strengthening logistics. In parallel, upscaling local manufacturing capacities is vital for building Africa's vaccine autonomy and overcoming its over-reliance on international support.

*COVID-19 in Africa: a challenging road to recovery* looks beyond the vaccination issue – 'challenge zero' – to unpack ten key challenges, in the areas of health, society and the economy, that must be addressed to ensure a sustainable recovery and preparedness for future pandemics. Drawing on a decade of data from the 2020 Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG), the report assesses each African country's performance relative to the ten challenges, highlighting success stories, identifying areas of concern, and providing insights on where to focus future efforts.

### **Mo Ibrahim, Founder and Chair, Mo Ibrahim Foundation said:**

*"From early in this crisis, our Foundation and other African voices have been warning that an un-vaccinated Africa could become a perfect incubator for variants. The emergence of Omicron reminds us that COVID-19 remains a global threat, and that vaccinating the whole world is the only way forward. Yet we continue to live with extreme vaccine discrimination, and Africa in particular is being left behind."*

*"The impact of COVID-19 has thrown into stark relief a spectrum of complex governance challenges facing African nations. I hope this report, informed by a decade of data from the Ibrahim Index, serves as an essential resource for policymakers, the private sector and civil society as they work to put Africa back on the road to recovery."*

### **Africa needs to build its health sovereignty**

A chronic shortfall in reliable data is impairing sound health policymaking. Just 10% of deaths in Africa are registered and over 50% of African children do not have a legal existence. The IIAG underscores a stuttering recent performance in the indicator *Civil Registration*.

Significant out-of-pocket expenses and insufficient public investment mean that for most Africans, healthcare is neither affordable nor accessible. In 2021, just ten African countries, representing 9% of the continent's population, provide their citizens with free and universal healthcare. The IIAG indicator *Access to Healthcare* remained almost static at the continental level between 2010 and 2019.

Africa demonstrated an early and relatively well coordinated response to COVID-19. However, most African countries remain unprepared for a future pandemic. The continent performs worse than all other world regions for WHO International Health Regulations.

### **The pandemic threatens recent social gains across the board**

Extended school closures due to COVID-19 and a lack of remote learning opportunities have compounded Africa's pre-existing learning crisis. While there have been notable improvements in staffing, enrolment and completion since 2010, *Education Quality* is one of the 79 indicators that have deteriorated the most at the continental level, with 30 countries declining in this measure.

Women and girls have been particularly impacted by the pandemic, ranging from diminished economic opportunities to greater exposure to sexual and gender-based violence. Most COVID-19 mitigation measures put in place by African countries are not gender sensitive.

COVID-19 has further shrunk civic space and media freedoms across the continent. 44 African countries restricted at least one democratic practice as part of their COVID-19 response in 2020, with media freedom being the most violated.

### **Real potential for transformative economic recovery provided key hurdles are overcome**

Social safety nets to protect the most vulnerable need to be strengthened. Constrained by limited fiscal space, the African average spend on COVID-19 response measures, outside of healthcare, was 2.4% of GDP, less than half the global average. The African average value for the IAG indicator Social Safety Nets has stagnated since 2010. Upscaling domestic financial resources is critical but, concerningly, the IAG indicator *Tax & Revenue Mobilisation* has deteriorated since 2015.

While almost all African countries have increased their score in the IAG indicator Access to Energy since 2010, Africa still has the lowest electricity access of any region globally. Over 600 million Africans remain off-grid. Every African country has improved in the IAG indicator *Digital Access* since 2010, but, alongside the energy divide, the current digital divide remains a major obstacle to realising the continent's economic potential.

The recent creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the largest free trade area in the world, has the potential to transform intra-regional trade and reduce Africa's dependence on external demand and supply. However, inadequate transport networks still pose a major hindrance to a more integrated continental economy.

**Ma Soukha Ba, member of the Foundation's Now Generation Network** and a contributor to the report, said: *"COVID-19 has served as a wake-up call for Africa. The old model of stagnating at the bottom of global value chains and competition between neighbours to export low-value products is not serving us well. If Africa is to leverage the opportunity of the fourth industrial revolution – not just as a consumer but also as a producer – we will need a sustained focus on nurturing the continent's human capital."*

*COVID-19 in Africa: a challenging road to recovery* provides ranks and trends for each African country relative to these ten challenge areas. By benchmarking each country's performance against continental trends, the report serves as a critical resource for all those wanting to explore how Africa's 54 countries can prioritise resources for an effective recovery from COVID-19.

The report draws on data from the 2020 IAG, which includes data which covers the period 2010-19. To learn more about the Ibrahim Index, visit [iig.online](https://www.iigonline.org) #IAG.

## Notes to editors:

### About the Mo Ibrahim Foundation

The Mo Ibrahim Foundation was established in 2006 with a focus on the critical importance of political leadership and public governance in Africa. By providing tools to support progress in leadership and governance, the Foundation aims to promote meaningful change on the continent.

The Foundation, which is a non-grant making organisation, focusses on defining, assessing and enhancing governance and leadership in Africa through five main initiatives:

- Ibrahim Index of African Governance
- Ibrahim Prize for Achievement in African Leadership
- Ibrahim Governance Weekend
- Ibrahim Fellowships and Scholarships
- Now Generation Network

### About the Ibrahim Index of African Governance (IIAG):

Published since 2007, the IIAG provides a comprehensive assessment of governance performance in 54 African countries. The Mo Ibrahim Foundation defines governance as the provision of political, social, economic and environmental public goods and services that every citizen has the right to expect from their government, and that a government has the responsibility to deliver to its citizens.

The IIAG dataset and [Online Data Portal](#) provide scores, ranks and trends at the African continental, regional and national level. The IIAG dataset is published every two years and provides comparable data for all African countries over a period of ten years. It is accompanied by an Index Report outlining the main findings of the Index, continental, regional and country data, and other resources and analytical tools. In the intervening year, the Foundation publishes an interim report, to further unpack and explore the latest IIAG dataset, with a focus on country results.

The latest dataset was published in November 2020 and covers the period 2010-2019.

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