

MEDICAL INDUSTRIES IN AFRICA

A REGIONAL RESPONSE TO SUPPLY SHORTAGES



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Medical Industries in Africa

A Regional Response to Supply Shortages

About the paper

COVID-19 has severely strained the supply of certain healthcare products. This report shows that Africa can position itself strategically and develop a regional response to avert future shortages of such products.

Supporting health and positioning the continent strategically in the future trade landscape of the global medical industry are compatible objectives. Opening markets, diversifying supply and reinforcing regional value chains to combat COVID-19 would build resilience to future pandemics and help Africa become a competitive supplier of certain health-related goods. The African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) has a vital role to play in supporting these value chains.

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For more information, contact: Julia Spies, spies@intracen.org

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Foreword

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely burdened the global health system, especially in terms of accessing medical supplies. The World Health Organization warned in early March 2020 that global production of certain personal protective equipment would have to increase dramatically to meet the surge in international demand.

For many countries in Africa, access to these essential materials is complicated by the introduction of export restrictions from their already limited number of suppliers. Business surveys on non-tariff measures conducted by the International Trade Centre (ITC) provided evidence to show that complex regulatory requirements and rules of origin have added pressures on African trade of COVID-19-related products.

We are pleased to present this paper, which aims to support the recently launched UN Framework for the Immediate Socio-Economic Response to COVID-19, as well as the discussions around the implementation of the AfCFTA.

In the report, we examine the potential of the African medical supply industry and show how trade can be an important element of the continent's health response, both in the short and long term. We suggest a strategic mix of open markets, diversified procurement and stronger regional value chains to combat the current health crisis, build Africa's resilience against future pandemics and help the region become a competitive supplier of certain health-related products.

As we continue to respond to COVID-19, we hope this report demonstrates our capacity as an institution to produce prompt, targeted studies to meet immediate needs. We also hope it will serve as a springboard for future analyses of the health sector and other critical topics.



Dorothy Tembo
Executive Director a.i.
International Trade Centre

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Acronyms

Unless otherwise specified, all references to dollars (\$) are to United States dollars, and all references to tons are to metric tons.

AfCFTA	African Continental Free Trade Agreement
ITC	International Trade Centre

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