

Efforts to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic have underscored the fragile and neglected nature of some national health laboratories in Africa. In response, national and international partners and various governments have worked collaboratively over the last several years to build sustainable laboratory capacities within the continent. Key accomplishments reflecting this successful partnership include the establishment of the African-based World Health Organization Regional Office for Africa Stepwise Laboratory Quality Improvement Process Towards Accreditation (SLIPTA); development of the Strengthening Laboratory Management Toward Accreditation (SLMTA) training programme; and launching of a Pan African-based institution, the African Society for Laboratory Medicine (ASLM).

These platforms continue to serve as the foundations for national health laboratory infrastructure enhancement, capacity development and overall quality system improvement. Further targeted interventions should encourage countries to aim at integrated tiered referral networks, promote quality system improvement and accreditation, develop laboratory policies and strategic plans, enhance training and laboratory workforce development and a retention strategy, create career paths for laboratory professionals and establish public-private partnerships. Maintaining the gains and ensuring sustainability will require concerted action by all stakeholders with strong leadership and funding from African governments and from the African Union.

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