

# African Development Bank outlines new health infrastructure strategy

African Development Vice President, Dr Beth Dunford has outlined the details of a new strategy that seeks to boost access to health services across the continent.



Source: [Pexels](#)

Dunford delivered the message in a keynote speech at the 22nd Ordinary Session of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Assembly of Health Ministers in Abuja.

Opening the meeting on behalf of Nigeria's President, Muhammadu Buhari, the country's Health Minister, Osagie Ehanire, noted that the Covid-19 pandemic had exposed the fragility of health systems and infrastructure in the sub-region.

"The challenges posed by the pandemic have strengthened our collective resolve as a region to build back better, and part of our strategy is to work together as a regional bloc. It is in this regard that we appreciate and commend the support and leadership role of our development partners such as African Development Bank Group in the development of quality health infrastructure across the continent," the health minister said.

## Disease diagnosis prioritised

Representing the African Development Bank President, Dr Akinwumi 'Akin' Adesina at the event, Dunford explained that the strategy focuses on three categories: primary healthcare infrastructure for underserved populations; developing new secondary and tertiary healthcare facilities alongside specialist facilities for cancer diagnosis and treatment, dialysis and pain management; and building diagnostic infrastructure for efficient and effective disease diagnosis across Africa.

“Covid-19 is a wake-up call on the central role of health systems and infrastructure for inclusive economic growth,” said Dunford. “Developing quality health infrastructure is a triple imperative: health infrastructure is fundamental to public health, has significant economic impact, and is of strategic importance for governments,” she added.

Currently in the consultation phase, the strategy entails policy dialogue and technical assistance on effective financing strategies, including expanding health insurance. Its implementation will boost the continent’s efforts to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goal 3 which refers to good health and well-being.

## Financing health infrastructure

Dunford said the Bank was poised to play a critical role as a health infrastructure financier by drawing on its expertise in infrastructure development and working with sector partners.

“The portfolio will include investment projects, results-based financing, risk-sharing instruments to leverage private-sector resources, debt and equity investments in private companies, and the promotion of innovative sources of finance, such as diaspora funds.”



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Dunford said filling the financing gap for health infrastructure would require mobilising finances from the private sector, development finance institutions and diaspora groups.

Stanley Okolo, director general of the West African Health Organization, welcomed the Bank’s initiative to support the development of quality health infrastructure across Africa.

The African Development Bank launched a multi-billion-dollar Covid-19 Response Facility and issued a \$3bn Covid-19 bond to support the efforts of African countries to mitigate the health and economic impacts of the pandemic.

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