

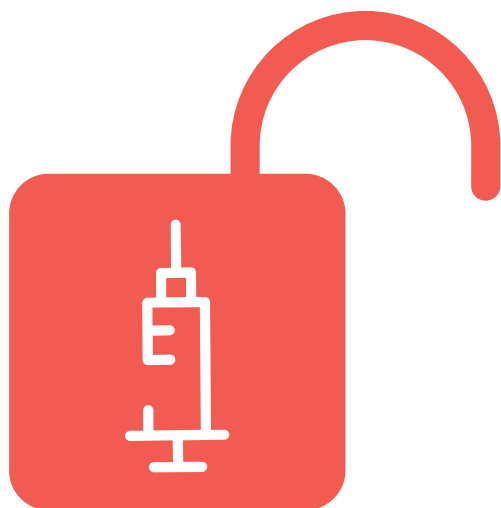


COLUMN

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FAIR ACCESS TO VACCINES



It is well known that not everyone has equal access to vaccines. But the extent of this inequality became clear once again with the corona vaccine. The majority of vaccines developed in HICs have a long delay before they see the light of day in LMICs. For some vaccines, such as the pneumococcal vaccine, this took as long as 10 years.

With the corona vaccine, it seemed to be different. It was quickly realized that everyone had to have access to vaccination in order to mitigate the pandemic. Thus, the COVAX initiative brought together a wide range of stakeholders to work towards rapid accessibility of the COVID-19 vaccine in every country in the world. This sounded fantastic. However, when it turned out that the vaccine supply was limited, the principle of equality of access was rapidly thrown overboard. Vaccines became a political football and vaccine nationalism prevailed.

The African Union (AU) realized that they were almost completely dependent on production for their vaccines outside of Africa. This resulted in the concept of Partnerships for African vaccine manufacturing (PAVM): framework for action. The stated aim is to enable a thriving African vaccine industry in order to develop, produce and distribute more than 60% of the total vaccines needed on the continent by 2040.

Such an ambitious plan does not happen overnight and the entire value chain consists of many building blocks that have to eventually come together. And sustained international commitment, development of in-depth knowledge on manufacturing, regulation and procurement options -and of course sufficient funding area all essential to achieve the goal.

Many partnerships, including between the EU and AU are being developed to facilitate the process.

I know that there is skepticism about this plan, but for me it is also an enormous opportunity for further development in a number of critical areas related to vaccines but also medicines in general and above all a real opportunity for increased African competencies, ownership and participation in this important area of Global Health. 💧