

26 September 2023

Dear EU Ambassador,

As the [Multiannual Indicative Programmes](#) (MIPs), which lay down the priorities for EU cooperation with partner countries, are being reviewed, we – Global Health Advocates – ask you: **will you make this a healthy partnership, and ensure the political and financial commitments made in recent years are put into action?**

The current MIPs were developed in the midst of a pandemic which claimed millions of lives, wreaked havoc on economies worldwide and exacerbated inequalities of access to the most basic services. Despite this, and the fact that many partner countries in Sub-Saharan Africa have human development - and health - as a key national priority, these areas are not always identified as key objectives in EU's bilateral cooperation.

Investments in human development – in health, education, nutrition, social protection, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) – are paramount to ensuring universal, equitable, affordable, and quality access to these services. Investments in human development are also crucial to achieve fundamental human rights and contribute to the fight against inequalities. Since ill-health is both a source and an exacerbation of poverty, achieving Primary Health Care and Universal Health Coverage will be critical to ending global poverty and inequalities, which is one of the main objectives of the [EU Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument](#).

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, EU Official Development Assistance (ODA) for health was at risk of stagnation, with decreasing figures for 2018 and 2019. In 2021, despite renewed political attention to health due to the pandemic, **health represented only 8% of all EU ODA**. When it comes to bilateral ODA, in 2021, health accounted for only 4.8% of this figure. We were surprised and disappointed to see that **only 16 out of 45 Sub-Saharan African countries had specific health objectives in their MIP**. Furthermore, only 11 out of the 20 Sub-Saharan African countries with the worst [Universal Health Coverage Index](#), have specific health objectives in their MIP. Even in the countries where human development and health have been identified as priorities, they may not receive the necessary focus and funding, particularly when compared to other priorities.

Since the MIPs were adopted, the EU has made new commitments in support of global health. The EU-AU Summit in 2022 resulted in a [joint political declaration](#) where the EU committed to supporting full-fledged African health sovereignty, and included a dedicated health Global Gateway [investment package](#). Moreover, a new [EU Global Health Strategy](#) was adopted in November last year. It consists of three main priorities to address global health challenges. These include: 1) delivering better health and well-being of people across the life course, 2) strengthening health systems and advancing UHC, and 3) preventing and combating health threats, including pandemics, applying a "One Health" approach. And just last week, while recognising we are off track to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the EU confirmed its commitment to the 2030 agenda.

At a time when the geopolitical context calls for strong alliances and partnerships, the EU's ability to deliver on its promises will be seriously jeopardised if its ambitions are not matched with adequate financing.

We therefore urge you to increase funding allocated to human development, in particular for health, when revising the MIP. This will allow the EU to fully embrace the role of global health leader, and be a champion in promoting access to quality health care services to citizens of EU partner countries.

Yours sincerely,

Global Health Advocates