

Africans are living longer

Since the Millennium Development Goals were introduced in 2000, various reports have been published around healthcare achievements in Africa. One of the most notable improvements is that sub-Saharan countries have collectively increased the region's overall life expectancy by 16,5% over the past decade and a half.



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Data by the World Bank shows that life expectancy of Malawians increased by 51%, from 41,4 years in 2000 to 62,7 years 14 years later. Zambia (38,6%), Zimbabwe (37,8%), and Rwanda (21,25%) fared well too – largely due to progress on the HIV and malaria front. These two trends are driven by improved access to anti-retrovirals and a better availability of mosquito nets. A growing health insurance membership plays an important role too.

A recent KPMG report sketches a similar scenario; it adds that the future of healthcare in Africa lies in health insurance products provided by private medical companies, although government-initiated programmes will play an important role too.

Andrew Schwulst, CEO of Liberty Health, agrees and says the number of lives covered by health insurance in Africa is growing; “This is mostly due to increased spending power, which is fuelled by a rising middle class, but also due to the fact that employers, including large corporates and multinationals, are acknowledging the benefits of contributing towards their employees’ health insurance premiums”.

“Whilst our client base in Africa includes individuals, the majority is made up of local and international employees of large

corporates and multi-nationals. Between 2015 and 2016 our membership in Africa has grown by 15%. We foresee more growth, particularly since Africa is fast becoming an attractive investment option for global companies."

Employers who contribute to their staff's medical aid, tend to see it as an investment in their company. "Covering your employees' health, means you cover your most important asset, this results in the reduction of their financial stress, which in turn results in boosted loyalty and happier staff - essentially, it's insurance to your firm," says Schwulst.

A second reason why more and more corporates and multi-nationals with operations in Africa, local or international, are contributing towards employees' medical aids, is that people who are covered, tend to see a doctor sooner, which can save tens of thousands of dollars a year. "The longer it takes for someone to go see a doctor, the more risks of complications and the longer it takes for them to get healthy. Healthcare insurance means that employees are likely to go for more regular health checks," adds Schwulst.

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