The African Medicines Regulatory Harmonization Initiative (AMRH)

Concept note on support to regulatory harmonization and operationalization for the African Medicines Agency (AMA)

Medical Products Regulatory Capacity Development and Harmonization of In vitro Diagnostics (IVDs) Regulation

(October 2023 - December 2024)

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Table of Contents

1. Background and rationale

Access to medical products and technologies is an important component of any health system. Most African countries grapple with ensuring sustainable and equitable access to the medical products needs to respond to priority health needs of the continent. It is for this reason that the African Union (AU) Assembly in 2005 undertook to adopt the pharmaceutical manufacturing plan for Africa (PMPA) as a policy framework to ensure self-reliance on medical products by the African continent. However, for the continent to make progress, there is a need for an enabling regulatory environment for local production of medical products that meet internationally acceptable standards of quality, safety, and efficacy. The African Medicines Regulatory Harmonization (AMRH) Initiative was therefore established in 2009 to address desperate regulatory systems on the continent working through regional economic communities (RECs). Through the African Union Development Agency – New Partnership for Africa's Development (AUDA-NEPAD)'s coordination, partners[1] agreed on a stepwise approach to address regulatory systems challenges faced by national regulatory authorities (NRAs) on the continent. The AMRH focused to supporting countries to resolve challenges including desperate regulatory standards and guidelines which led to duplication of processes and fragmentation of the market, limited and varying regulatory capacities across the continent, limited regulatory infrastructure, outdated legal frameworks and inefficiencies in regulatory processes.

Significant progress has been made on regulatory harmonization in the RECs. Five regions are implementing Medicines Regulatory Harmonization (MRH) initiatives including the East African Community (EAC), Economic Community for West African States (ECOWAS), Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), Inter-Governmental Authority for Development (IGAD) and ECCAS. Through the regional harmonization initiatives, RECs have (i) adopted regional harmonized standards and guidelines which have been domesticated in the Member States, (ii) conducted joint regional assessments of applications for registration of medical products, (iii) conducted joint inspections of manufacturing sites, and (iv) supported countries to strengthen their systems and capacities towards attaining higher levels of maturity of NRAs. In addition, an African Union Model Law was adopted as a benchmark for countries in reviewing their legal framework towards harmonization. Building on this progress, the AU adopted the Treaty for the establishment of the African Medicines Agency. Currently twenty-six (26) countries are parties to the treaty and the AU organs are collaborating to facilitate its operationalization building on the AMRH as a foundation.

For the African continent to attain its targets to produce the needed medical products and ensure access to the people that need them, there a need to build the needed regulatory capacities across different functions. In addition, the continent has set a target to produce 60% of vaccines required by the continent by 2040. This will require substantive investment in regulatory capacity strengthening across all levels. Currently, only five of the 55 AU Member States have attained WHO ML3 with the majority and ML1, thus the need to build capacity for more countries to attain higher levels of maturity as a foundation for implementing AMA recommendations. This project will therefore support the AMRH to build capacity of NRAs in African countries and support the operationalization of the African Medicines Agency. In addition, it will support continental technical committees to adopt and pilot continental harmonized standards and processes that will anchor AMA operationalization.

[1] AUDA-NEPAD, AUC, PAP, WHO, BMGF, DFID, CHAI, World Bank

2. Goal and Objectives

The overall goal of the project is to improve access to safe, efficacious and quality assured medical products for responding to priority health needs of the African continent.

The specific objectives of the continent include:

1. To improve the availability and quality of medical products regulatory experts in Africa.
2. To strengthen regulatory systems for medical products at the continental, regional and national levels.
3. To facilitate harmonization and capacity building for the regulation of in-vitro diagnostics (IVDs).
4. To strengthen the capacity of the AUDA-NEPAD to facilitate regulatory harmonization and technical operationalization of the Africa Medicines Agency (AMA).

3. Project Work Packages

3.1 Work Package 1: Regulatory Capacity Development

Strong functional NRAs rely on qualified and experienced regulatory professionals to effectively carry out their duties. These professionals must also be equipped with the latest tools and techniques in health product regulation across different territories. As the AMA is being operationalized, it will require well qualified regulatory professional in the different regulatory function to undertake its scientific and technical work. However, there is a critical gap in regulatory capacity across the continent. The continent has a limited number of well qualified and experienced regulatory experts in different functions to support continental work while ensuring that regional and national activities are not compromised.

The AMRH initiative established the Regulatory Capacity Development Technical Committee (RCD-TC) to provide technical advice on the development and implementation of sustainable regulatory capacity development programs in Africa. As part of undertaking this function, the RCD-TC guides the designation of Regional Centres of Regulatory Excellence (RCOREs) as platforms for spearheading capacity strengthening in regulatory science. Currently, there are 15 RCOREs across the continent, eleven (11) designated in 2014 and four designated in 2023 for other regulatory functions and products and vaccine regulatory oversight respectively. The RCOREs ensure sustainable production of workforce in Africa towards creating a robust regulatory ecosystem. Figure 1 and 2 provides a summary of RCOREs' areas of competence.

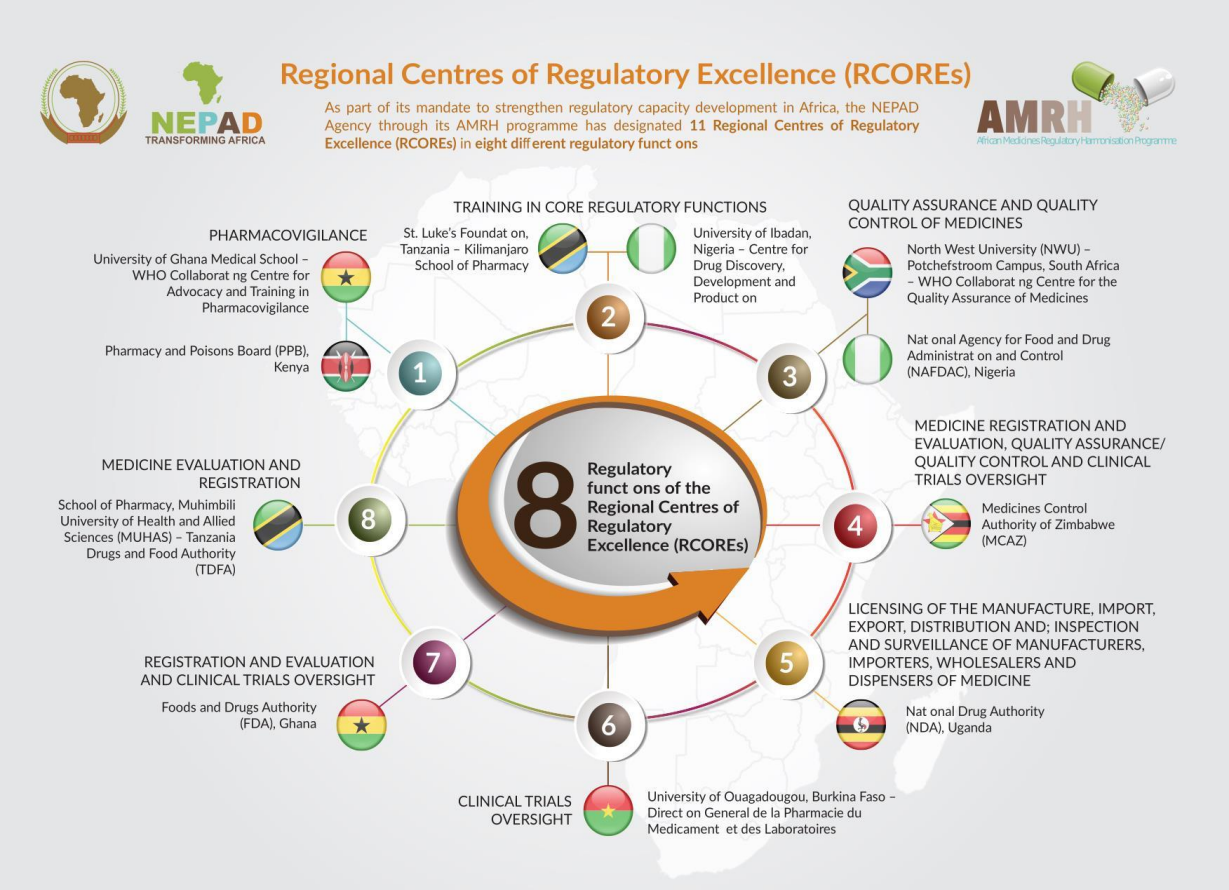

Figure 1: Focal Areas for Eleven RCOREs designated in 2014

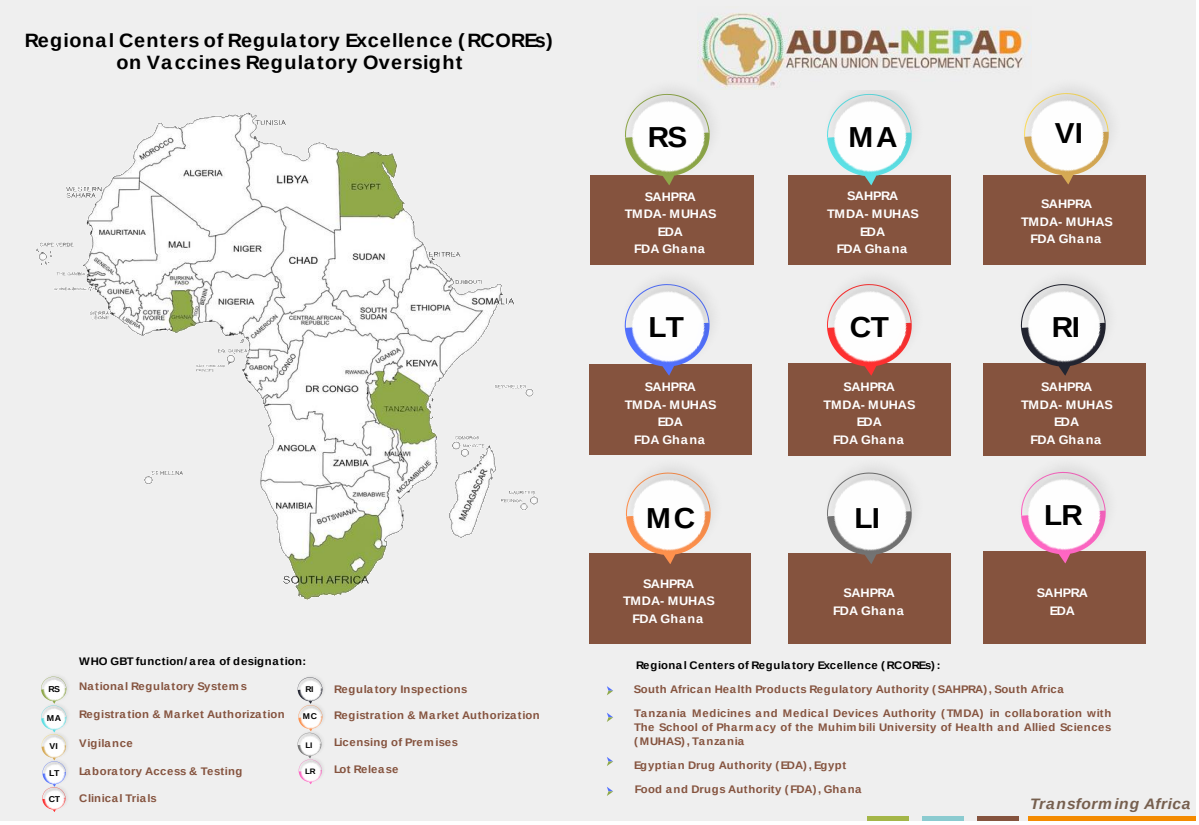

Figure 2: Vaccine focused RCOREs

The existing RCOREs have proved to be useful platforms for capacity building in regulatory science including developing of approximately 25 curricula and training of more than 360 pharmaceutical and regulatory personnel across Africa. For instance, the Ghana FDA which serves as an RCORE on clinical trials oversight has trained 54 regulatory experts from 9 countries on the continent[2].

A body of knowledge for RCOREs was developed as a technical content for instruction in the technical categories and areas that the RCOREs are involved in capacity building. The body of knowledge is intended to serve as a reference resource for regulatory curricula reforms undertaken by the RCOREs, a tool for harmonizing training curricula offered by various institutions participating within the RCOREs framework or other interested institutions in the regulatory capacity building space. This work package will build on these advances to support implementation of objective one to improve the availability and quality of medical products regulatory experts in Africa and objective two to strengthen regulatory systems for medical products at the continental, regional and national levels. These interventions will contribute to strengthening the pool of regulatory experts to support continental regulatory activities. The following will be implemented:

i. The Technical Committee on regulatory capacity development (RCD-TC) and its subcommittees will be strengthened to provide technical oversight on the development of regulatory workforce on the continent. A consultant will be engaged to support the four newly established RCOREs to develop guidelines for capacity building in advancing regulatory science on the continent to support the work of the subcommittee in monitoring and evaluation of RCOREs. In addition, a mapping of regulatory expertise will be conducted to identify gaps and needs to inform the design of training

[2] USAID MTaPS Program, Evaluation of the Regional Centers of Regulatory Excellence, 2014-2019

programmes. This exercise will facilitate the review of the existing pool of regulatory experts in different fields and therefore create and operationalize the database.

ii. Specific training will be provided to a minimum of 600 experts from NRAs across the continent based on the identified gaps from the mapping. The training will be offered in the RCOREs and other centres of excellence and academic institutions. Different forms of training will be offered including virtual, physical hands-on, twining and mentorship. The trained experts will be added to the pool of regulatory experts to support continental and regional joint regulatory activities. They will also be important in NRA capacity strengthening.

iii. A consultant will be engaged to establish a mechanism for recognition of regulatory professionals including a certification system through a continuous personal development (CPD) Programme for individuals engaged in regulatory affairs for human and veterinary medicines, medical devices and in vitro diagnostics on the continent. The CPD programme will be implemented through the African College for Regulatory Science Professional currently under establishment.

iv. The AUDA-NEPAD undertook an assessment of NRA implementation of Institutional Development Plans (IDPs) which noted several challenges in capacity. A meeting of Head of Regulatory Agencies convened in August 2023 in Kigali, Rwanda particularly noted capacity gaps in francophone countries. Most of the francophone countries do not have functional regulatory authorities and none of the list of 5 ML countries. The meeting recommended an intra-continental twining programme for NRAs to facilitate mentorship of the countries with limited capacity. Twinning programs will be developed and implemented within the continent by twining mature regulators with less mature regulators in identified priority regulatory areas. A minimum of five NRAs will be supported to benchmark the five ML 3 NRAs. A twining programme with clear targets, monitoring and evaluation will be developed and used to guide the programme.

Key results areas (KRAs) under this workstream include:

KRA 3.1.1: Guidelines for capacity building in advancing regulatory science on the continent for the four newly established RCOREs developed.

KRA 3.1 2 Pool of Regulatory Expertise database operationalized.

KRA 3.1.3: 600 experts from NRAs trained in different field of regulatory science.

KRA 3.1.4: A continuous personal development (CPD) programme developed.

KRA 3.1.5: Five NRAs supported to implement IDPs

3.2 Work Package 2: Regulation of medical devices and in-vitro diagnostics

Regulation of medical devices including in vitro diagnostic (IVDs) remains a major challenge in most African countries negatively impacting access to the population. The capacity gaps range from policy, legislations and non-availability of well-defined regulatory processes to human capacity. A study conducted in fourteen member countries of the College of Surgeons of East, Central and Southern Africa found that eleven countries had legislation mandating medical devices and IVD regulation. The study noted that despite eleven countries having legislation in place, only seven countries were developing processes for the regulation of medical devices and IVDs. The other seven countries had no formal regulatory processes in place. The situation is similar in most African countries with weak regulatory systems for medical devices and IVDs that are diverse requiring manufacturers to navigate multiple regulatory systems to get approval. The African Medical Devices Forum (AMDF) TC was therefore created to support capacity strengthening of Member States to regulate medical

devices and IVDs and facilitate harmonization. The overall mandate of the AMDF is to identify technical needs, develop technical documentation in line with international guidelines and best practices and recommend to the Steering Committee for adoption. In executing its roles and responsibilities, the TC provides technical advice on matters related to regulation of Medical Devices (MDs) and In-vitro Diagnostics (IVDs), develop, and disseminate scientific materials to inform policy and decisions to the member states, RECs and AMRH Steering Committee. The TC also develops technical guidelines for both pre, placing and post market activities and establishes, promotes, and strengthens platforms for communication, collaboration and sharing of work and information between regulators and stakeholders. The AMDF TC is currently developing a continental systems for assessment of IVDs and providing recommendations to NRAs on priority medical devices. The TC will undergo reforms to start an African prequalification of Africa's priority Medical Devices and IVDs in support of operationalization of the African Medicines Agency (AMA). This project will therefore support the following interventions:

i. Strengthen the capacity of the AMDF-TC to develop continental procedures and processes for the regulation of AVDs.
ii. A process for designation of new RCOREs for invitro diagnostics will be initiated including development of training materials and subsequently conducting trainings programs in RCOREs and other accredited institutions. .
iii. In collaboration with the Africa CDC Diagnostic Advisory Committee, priority IVDs will be identified, and a consultant will be engaged to develop a continental IVDs certification procedure and its corresponding supporting documents including guidelines for assessing and approving priority IVDs by the AMRH in collaboration with the Africa Diagnostics Advisory Group (DAC) to accelerate access to diagnostics:

Key results areas (KRAs) under this workstream include:

KRA 3.2.1: Continental procedures and processes for joint regulatory activities for IVDs adopted.
KRA 3.2.2: Continental certification procedure for priority IVDs operationalized.
KRA 3.2.3: Two joint continental joint assessments undertaken.
KRA 3.2.4: Two NRAs supported to strengthen policies, processes, guidelines and technical capacity for regulation of medical devices and IVDs.
KRA 3.2.5: At least 50 regulators trained in the continental guidelines and processes.
KRA 3.2.6: Two RCOREs for IVDs designated and operationalized.

3.3 Work Package 3: Strengthening the capacity of the AUDA-NEPAD to facilitate regulatory harmonization and technical operationalization of the Africa Medicines Agency (AMA)

The AUDA-NEPAD provides leadership in the implementation of the AMRH initiative and technical support to the operationalization of the AMA. This project supports these efforts at the continental level. The project will be implemented using the existing AMRH structures including the regional expert working groups, steering committees and heads of agencies fora that drive the harmonization initiatives within the RECs. The continental structures including: the AMRH Technical Committees (TCs), the AMRH Partnership Platform (AMRH PP), the AMRH Steering Committee, and the African Medicines Regulators Conference (AMRC) and

the AMRH Joint Secretariat[3] will drive continental joint activities under the project. The AMRH Secretariat will undertake day-to-day management of the project and support the technical activities implemented by the TCs and RCOREs. This work package will focus on strengthening the AMRH secretariat to coordinate implementation of interventions under the project as they contribute to regulatory systems strengthening, harmonization and AMA operationalization. In addition, partner coordination will be supported to ensure coordinated efforts on regulatory systems strengthening, advocacy for harmonization and the ratification of the AMA. ***Key results areas (KRAs) under this workstream include:***

KRA 3.3.1: Two programme officers engaged to support implementation of project activities

- P.O. Regulatory Capacity Strengthening
- P.O. Medical Devices and Diagnostics

KRA 3.3.2: Partners engaged to support regulatory harmonization and AMA operationalization.

KRA 3.3.3:Advocacy for AMA Treaty ratification conducted in five countries.

4. Project work plan and budget

The total budget for the project is Euro 3,999,909.06 for a period of fifteen months, from October 2023 to December 2024 as outlines in Table 1 below. A detailed budget is attached as Annex 1. Table 2 below details the proposed areas and activities to be supported under the project.

Table 1: Budget summary

Work Packages	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Total**
Work Package 1: Regulatory Capacity Development	1,246,500.00	731,837.50	1,978,337.50
Work Package 2: Regulation of medical devices and in-vitro diagnostics	446,650.00	368,550.00	815,200.00
Work Package 3: Strengthening the capacity of the AUDA-NEPAD to facilitate regulatory harmonization and operationalization of the Africa Medicines Agency (AMA)	475,462.00	434,620.00	910,082.00
Total Direct Costs	**2,168,612.00**	**1,535,007.50**	**3,703,619.50**
Management fee & Overheads	**173,488.96**	**122,800.60**	**296,289.56**
Grand Total	**2,342,100.96**	**1,657,808.10**	**3,999,909.06**

[3] The AUDA-NEPAD and WHO serve as Joint Secretariat for the AMRH Initiative.

Table 2. Project Framework

Work Package 1: Regulatory Capacity Development				
	Activity	**Expected Output**	**Indicator**	**Target**
Key Result Area 3.1.1	**Guidelines for capacity building in advancing regulatory science on the continent for the four newly established RCOREs developed**			
3.1.1.1	Support the development a Plan of Action for RCOREs to support capacity development and training in Africa	Plan of Action for RCOREs developed	Action Plan in place	1
3.1.1.2	Support the four newly established RCOREs to develop guidelines for capacity building in advancing regulatory science on the continent	RCORE capacity building guidelines and training programmes developed	Number of RCORE training programmes	4
3.1.1.3	Conduct monitoring and evaluation field visits to newly designated and inactive RCOREs	Monitoring and evaluation for RCOREs conducted	Number of M&E reports	7
3.1.1.4	Develop Guidelines for RCOREs operations and a procedure for withdrawal and re-designation of RCOREs	Guidelines developed	Guidelines available/published	1
3.1.1.5	Convene annual RCOREs meetings to review progress	Annual Meetings Convened	Meeting minutes available	2
Key Result Area 3.1.2	**Pool of Regulatory Expertise database operationalized**			
3.1.2.1	Develop the eligibility and qualification criteria guideline for expertise to support AMRH in various regulatory functions in operationalization of AMA	Eligibility and Qualification Framework Developed	Eligibility and Qualification Framework published	9 in 1
3.1.2.2	Develop a continental competency framework of experts in line with the WHO Global Framework for regulators	Regulators Competency Framework Developed	Regulators Competency Framework published	3
3.1.2.3	Conduct competency benchmarking for continental experts in line with the WHO Global Framework for regulators	Competency assessment conducted	Number of countries benchmarked for experts competence	29
Key Result Area 3.1.3	**Regulatory Professionals trained in different fields of regulatory science**			
3.1.3.1	Conduct training in different fields of regulatory science	Regulatory professionals trained	Training reports	600
Key Result Area 3.1.4	**Continuous Personal Development (CPD) programme developed**			

3.1.4.1	Develop Continuous Personal Development (CPD) programme	Continuous Personal Development (CPD) programme developed	Continuous Personal Development (CPD) programme	1
Key Result Area 3.1.5	**NRAs supported to implement IDPs**			
3.1.5.1	Establish Twinning Programmes of NRAs in Africa (mature NRAs twinned with less matured NRAs)	Twinning Programmes established amongst African NRAs	Number of countries participating in the twining programme	10
3.1.5.2	Support countries to conduct self-assessment and develop Institutional Development Plans (IDPs) to strengthen regulatory systems for IVDs using WHO Global Benchmarking Tool plus Medical Devices (GBT+MDs)	IDP development for NRAs in IVDs regulation supported	IDPs framework and tracker on IVDs regulation for selected NRAs available	5
Work Package 2: Regulation of medical devices and in-vitro diagnostics				
Key Result Area 3.2.1	**Develop IVDs continental procedures and processes for joint regulatory activities**			
3.2.1.1	Develop IVDs continental procedures and processes for joint regulatory activities	Continental procedures and processes for joint regulatory activities for IVDs	Compendium of continental procedures and processes	2
3.2.1.2	Convene the Medical Devices Forum (AMDF) Technical Committee meetings to review and adopt continental joint assessment procedures and processes, certification procedure, etc.	AMDF TC meetings convened, and documents adopted	Number of guidance documents adopted by the TC	2
Key Result Area 3.2.2	**Continental certification procedure for priority IVDs operationalized**			
3.2.1.1	Engage a consultant to develop IVDs Technical File Certification Procedure by the AMDF	Consultant engaged to support AMDF certification procedure	IVDs certification scheme developed	1

3.2.1.2	Convene joint meetings with the Africa CDC to identify and list priority IVDs for Africa	Meetings convened	Adopted list of priority IVDs	1
Key Result Area 3.2.3	**Joint continental joint assessments undertaken.**			
3.2.3.1	Conduct pilot joint assessments for applications for registration of IVDs	Pilot joint applications reviewed	Number of application reviewed jointly in the pilot	20
Key Result Area 3.2.4	**NRAs supported strengthening policies, processes, guidelines and technical capacity for regulation of medical devices and IVDs.**			
3.2.4.1	Provide technical assistance to NRAs to strengthen policies, processes, guidelines and technical capacity for regulation of medical devices and IVDs.	- Technical assistance provided to NRAs - NRAs policies, processes, guidelines and technical capacity for regulation of medical devices and IVDs strengthened	Number of NRAs supported to strengthen policies, processes, guidelines and technical capacity for regulation of medical devices	2
Key Result Area 3.2.5	**Regulators trained in the continental guidelines and processes.**			
3.2.5.1	Develop training manuals and provide training on dossier assessment, and guidance documents on assessment and issuance of Market Authorization of IVDs	Training manuals developed	Training manual published	1
3.2.5.2	Develop training materials and Programme for dossier assessment of in vitro diagnostics	Training materials developed	Training materials developed	1
3.2.5.3	Train 50 personnel on IVDs assessment through designated RCORE	Trainings conducted	Number of regulators trained	50
Key Result Area 3.2.6	**New RCOREs for IVDs designated and operationalized.**			
3.2.6.1	Publish Expression of Interest (EOI) for RCOREs on IVDs regulatory oversight	EOIs developed	EOIs published and circulated	1

3.2.6.2	Review process, procedures and EOIs for the designation of RCORES and review applications received and designate new RCOREs on IVDs regulation	EOIs received and reviewed	IVDs RCOREs designated	2
3.2.6.3	Develop an RCORE performance evaluation tool and associated procedures	PE tool for RCOREs developed	PE tool for RCOREs published	1
3.2.6.4	Conduct monitoring and evaluation field visits to designated RCOREs	M&E field visit conducted	M&E field visit report available	1
Work Package 3: Strengthening the capacity of the AUDA-NEPAD to facilitate regulatory harmonization and technical operationalization of the Africa Medicines Agency (AMA)				
Key Result Area 3.3.1	**AMRH Secretariat strengthened**			
3.3.1.1	Recruit a Programme Officer – Regulatory Capacity Strengthening	Programme Officer recruited	Programme Officer recruited	1
3.3.1.2	Recruit a Programme Officer - AMDF	Programme Officer recruited	Programme Officer recruited	1
KRA 3.3.2:	**Partners engaged to support regulatory harmonization and AMA operationalization**			
3.3.2.1	Engage partners in the AMRH Partnership Platform to support regulatory harmonization and AMA operationalization	AMRH technical and funding partners engaged	Partners engaged	30
KRA 3.3.3	**Advocacy for AMA Treaty ratification conducted in five countries.**			
3.3.3.1	Update guidance notes to support NRAs with in-country AMA treaty ratification	AMA ratification and operationalization guidance notes developed	AMA ratification guidance notes	1
3.3.3.2	Advocate for AMA Treaty ratification	Non-ratified member states engaged to ratify	Member States signed and/or engaged	5