MEETING REPORT

Demystifying technology transfers: Building the next generation of pharmaceutical manufacturing partnerships in Africa

25 November 2026

On 26 October 2026, the Access to Medicine Foundation, Vizuri Health Dynamics, and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) co-hosted a side event at the African Healthcare Manufacturing Trade Exhibition and Conference (AHMTEC) 2026. The event brought together multinational pharmaceutical companies, African and Chinese manufacturers of pharmaceuticals and vaccines, funders and other stakeholders to discuss how technology transfer partnerships can support sustainable pharmaceutical manufacturing in Africa.

ABOUT THE EVENT

Held under Chatham House rule, the discussion explored the commercial models, enabling conditions and partnership approaches needed to build lasting manufacturing capabilities and strengthen pharmaceutical supply chains across the continent. Participants identified three areas for action:

1. Build a credible market that supports sustainable, long-term access.
2. Strengthen technical capacity, develop skilled talent and mobilise fit-for purpose finance.
3. Align stakeholders around a shared vision and secure long-term commitments.

1. Build a credible market that supports sustainable, long-term access

Establishing a viable business case

- Technology transfer can help establish or strengthen local pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity, but the transfer itself is only the beginning. While the initial transfer may be relatively straightforward, sustaining production and competitiveness over the five to ten years that follow is considerably more challenging. The challenge is to ensure that facilities and products remain commercially viable over time, while maintaining quality and keeping medicines affordable.
- Working with companies that have Good Manufacturing Practice (GMP)-qualified facilities, regulatory expertise and established routes to market can help generate demand and facilitate access to markets beyond the country of production.

Strengthening market intelligence and demand

- Decisions are often made without sufficient market intelligence. Both providers and recipients need more reliable information on market size, expected volumes, production costs and demand to assess the commercial viability of potential partnerships. Participants highlighted opportunities to explore how artificial intelligence and other technologies could improve this intelligence. Better evidence can help align incentives across manufacturers, purchasers, governments and financing partners.

- Africa should not be treated as a single, uniform market. Nevertheless, health security and regional supply considerations extend beyond national borders. Regional initiatives such as the African Medicines Agency (AMA) and the African Pooled Procurement Mechanism (APPM) could address market fragmentation. By supporting regulatory harmonisation, pooling demand and strengthening regional procurement, these mechanisms could help create more predictable markets and improve the conditions for local manufacturing.
- Product selection needs to reflect both market demand and the potential to improve access. Aligning incentives around the right products is critical to making manufacturing commercially viable. In addition, product launch and technology transfer do not need to happen sequentially: production and market development can progress in parallel.

Creating predictable demand through procurement

- Newly established operations may face higher production costs in their early years, before reaching scale. Participants discussed whether governments and other purchasers would be willing to absorb some of these initial costs, including through a modest price premium for locally manufactured products where this contributes to longer-term capacity development.
- Examples discussed included the African Vaccine Manufacturing Accelerator, which provides financial incentives linked to the procurement of African-manufactured vaccines, and UNICEF's efforts to leverage its procurement processes to support regional manufacturers and create more predictable markets for locally produced health products. Participants also noted a growing call for international procurement agencies to purchase more products locally, across a broader range of health products. Procurement approaches will need to balance affordability for buyers with security of supply and the need to build sustainable local manufacturing capacity.
- Public purchasing commitments and greater visibility of future demand can help reduce uncertainty for both manufacturers and technology providers. Brazil's use of subsidies for domestically produced products was raised as a case worth examining, particularly to understand for how long such support is required. For vaccines, where the African market is heavily influenced by procurement through organisations such as UNICEF and Gavi, the relationship between manufacturers, purchasers and global market-shaping mechanisms is particularly important when assessing commercial viability.

2. Strengthen technical capacity, develop skilled talent and mobilise fit-for purpose finance

Building the capabilities behind technology transfer

- Successful technology transfer requires more than simply establishing a manufacturing facility. It requires robust production processes, strong scientific and technical capabilities, engineering expertise and skilled personnel who can operate within and continuously improve the facility. Both technology providers and recipients have a role to play in buildings and sustaining these capabilities.
- Participants highlighted the need for practical mechanisms to identify and mitigate technology transfer risks. Some capability gaps are to be expected, particularly among manufacturers at earlier stages of development. What matters is whether these gaps are understood and can be addressed within a realistic timeframe as they emerge.

Investing in people

- Human capital remains a major constraint for local manufacturers. Infrastructure needs to be matched by people with the skills to manage production and quality systems and meet engineering and regulatory requirements.
- Existing training and institutional capacity across Africa, including the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Regional Capability and Capacity Networks, regional biomanufacturing training centres and Centres of Regulatory Excellence, could provide a foundation for sustained collaboration and skills development. Participants also emphasised the value of practical exposure and training outside the region, particularly for teams receiving a technology transfer.

Connecting finance with capabilities and implementation

- Financing was repeatedly identified as essential to turning technology transfer partnerships into operational manufacturing capacity. Yet local manufacturers – particularly smaller companies – can struggle to access finance, with existing mechanisms not suited to their needs, with eligibility criteria, collateral requirements and financing terms creating barriers. More tailored financing and technical assistance mechanisms could help address these gaps, strengthen recipient capabilities and bridge the transition from initial technology transfer to independent operations.
- However, financing alone will not resolve the underlying challenges. It needs to be underpinned by a credible demand outlook, clear product strategy, realistic production costs and a practical plan for building technical and managerial capacity.

Understanding changes in the global supply landscape

- Participants noted that changes in the global pharmaceutical industry could create new opportunities for regional manufacturing in Africa. Chinese pharmaceutical companies, for example, may be entering a period of greater access to capital and increased risk appetite, potentially making them more open to expanding beyond their domestic markets. Understanding these shifts, alongside the financing models that could support new partnerships, will be important in identifying viable opportunities.

3. Align stakeholders around a shared vision and secure long-term commitments

Aligning expectations between providers and recipients

- Technology transfer partnerships bring together organisations with different roles, incentives, operating models and levels of experience. The success of such partnerships depends on recognising these differences early and establishing a shared understanding of objectives, responsibilities, and expected outcomes. Participants notably described technology transfer partnerships as long-term commitments requiring trust and alignment, rather than short-term transactions.
- Recipients may be at the beginning of their manufacturing journey, while providers may be used to working with more mature markets and systems. Multinational companies may also encounter differences in organisational cultures and ways of working. Partnerships need to account for these differences through realistic implementation plans, practical support and regular communication.

Learning from vaccine manufacturing partnerships

- Vaccine manufacturing offers useful lessons for other areas of pharmaceutical production. Participants highlighted the importance of shared objectives and clearly defined roles and responsibilities.

LOOKING AHEAD

The discussion pointed to a clear need for more reliable market intelligence, tailored financing and closer alignment between technology providers, local manufacturers, governments, funders and procurers.

Insights from the discussion will inform the Foundation's ongoing work on generic and biosimilar medicine manufacturers, technology transfer and partnerships, including future engagement with manufacturers, governments, international organisations and civil society stakeholders.

For more information or to discuss the contents of this report, please contact Claudia Martínez, Director of Research, at cmartinez@accesstomedicinefoundation.org.