NEWS | GLOBAL HEALTH

As NCDs rise in Africa, generic drugmakers see a growing market

The generic pharmaceutical industry is starting to take notice of an improved operating environment in Africa, alongside a growing demand for NCD care and treatment.

By ***Andrew Green*** *// 08 September 2026*

Dr. Halehezo Albert attends to Bindja, a diabetes patient at the Kivu Diabetes Center, in the Ibanda commune of Bukavu, South Kivu Province in the Democratic Republic of Congo, on Aug. 6, 2025. Photo by: Victoire Mukenge / Reuters

For years, public health officials have been warning about rising rates of noncommunicable diseases, or NCDs, in Africa, including diabetes and cardiovascular disease. NCDs are set to become the leading cause of mortality in sub-Saharan Africa by 2030.

Generic drugmakers in Africa are starting to take notice.

A new report out today from the Access to Medicine Foundation tracks how some continental manufacturers are adapting to meet these emerging health challenges, thanks in part to developments that are making it easier for generic providers working across all areas of health.

“This is a rising demand and we’re going to actually need supplies in the continent, itself, in some shape and form to ensure availability,” Jayasree Iyer, the CEO of Access to Medicine Foundation, told Devex. “I think that recognition is a signal from this that we found out in this paper.”

The South Africa-based Aspen Pharmacare received regulatory approval this year to release the first commercial batches of human insulin.

Following a 2023 agreement with Eli Lilly and Company, Aspen also launched a treatment for Type 2 diabetes in South Africa the following year. And Egypt-based EVA Pharma, also in cooperation with Lilly, announced regulatory approval for the release of locally manufactured insulin in Egypt.

There is clear commercial interest. Care and treatment for people living with NCDs can often stretch out over decades.

“It has a huge opportunity because that’s what gives you the volumes from a manufacturing point of view,” Iyer said.

In the report, her foundation also

Why NCD drug licensing lags behind

tracked developments such as greater regulatory harmonization, greater trade integration, and coordinated procurement efforts that make the continent more attractive for generic manufacturers — whether they are focusing on NCD care and treatment or other health issues.

Medicines Patent Pool Executive Director Charles Gore tells Devex that one of his priorities in his last year on the job is to get a license for GLP-1 therapies. But he admits that expanding MPP's portfolio of drugs for NCDs has been a challenge.

Iyer also underscored how last year's United Nations high-level meeting on NCDs returned attention to the issue, broadly, but also amplified calls for taxes on sugary beverages, tobacco, and other drivers of NCDs. Those could provide a financing base for countries to procure treatment, offering manufacturers greater security.

The new report also highlights where further action is needed to make it easier for generic manufacturers to identify what countries actually need.

A lot of the basic treatments for cardiovascular disease, or CVD, are not restricted by patents, "making them a realistic entry point for many manufacturers, including emerging Africa-based companies," according to the report.

The problem is that, across Africa, there is a patchwork of procurement and financing for CVD medicines, which increases the cost for manufacturers and can create blind spots, particularly in places with poor procurement infrastructure.

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