



Birth of African Population Cohorts Consortium (APCC)

June 2025



The [African Population Cohorts Consortium \(APCC\)](#) was formally launched in June, marking a transformative moment in African health research by uniting large-scale population cohorts across the continent to mobilise longitudinal data for research, policy, and societal impact.

The APCC is a pioneering initiative with a bold vision to advance Africa's scientific potential. At its core, APCC is about shifting the centre of gravity for population science to Africa, by Africans. The Consortium was officially launched during a high-level convening in Cape Town in May 2024, where more than 40 African population cohorts from 16 African countries endorsed the APCC [blueprint](#) that defines the vision, values, governance, and an ambitious three-pronged research agenda focused on ethics, data harmonisation, and translational impact

Wellcome has now renewed its commitment to the APCC through a £4 million investment to support the establishment of a permanent APCC Secretariat hosted by the Science for Africa Foundation, to activate key governance structures, and to catalyse the Consortium's first annual gathering while fostering regional and national stakeholder engagement.

"Despite their immense potential, large population cohorts have historically been underutilized in Africa. Through APCC, we are shaping a future where African-led longitudinal data not only advances scientific discovery but also enhances the health and well-being of communities across the continent," said Dr Evelyn Gitau, Chief Scientific Officer at the SFA Foundation.

According to a [report](#) by the World Health Organization's African Regional Office, nearly 60% of African nations lack robust systems for health data collection and utilisation. Yet studies show that longitudinal cohorts—studies that follow individuals over time—are among the most powerful tools to understand disease trajectories, social determinants of health, and the impact of interventions [WHO, 2023].

"Population health data can shape better futures, but to realise its full potential, we need to support diverse, high-quality data that is representative of the communities where the most impact can be made. Wellcome are pleased to support the APCC to advance discovery research, support equity and ensure that African researchers and communities are at the forefront of generating knowledge that shapes meaningful public health solutions, both



regionally and globally,” said Victoria Pelly, Senior Research Manager at Wellcome.

APCC will operate under the guidance of an Interim Steering Committee (ISC), chaired by leading figures in African population science, Dr Kobus Herbst (Africa Health Research Institute) and in ethics and engagement, Dr Dorcas Kamuya (KEMRI-Wellcome Trust Research Programme).

By aligning methodologies and ethical frameworks, APCC aims to enable interoperable, scalable research that accelerates insights into non-communicable diseases, pandemics, mental health, and more. Building on Africa’s rich cohort diversity, the consortium will promote cohort-based research across different health challenges in Africa, but will focus its efforts on the following three strategic research programmes:

- Health and well-being across the lifespan—to gain transformational insights into the multifactorial determinants of health and disease across different life stages and generations in the changing epidemiological landscape and given the current pace and intensity of health and social transitions.
- Climate change and health—to understand and mitigate the health impacts of climate change in Africa, especially for vulnerable populations (e.g., children, women, older adults, those with chronic illnesses, indigenous communities, and low-income groups), all of who bear a disproportionate burden of the ongoing climate change.
- Universal health coverage—to harness the unique potential of population health cohorts to monitor and improve equitable access to quality healthcare, financial risk protection, and health system performance. Given persistent disparities in UHC across African countries, population cohorts provide a critical platform for tracking progress, identifying gaps in financing and coverage, and driving investments for improvement.

"This consortium represents a long-awaited convergence of Africa’s population research leaders," said Dr Herbst. "Our collective effort will generate the evidence base needed to achieve universal health coverage, address context-specific health challenges, and inform national and regional policy from an African perspective."

In alignment with the [Health Research and Innovation Strategy for Africa \(2018–2030\)](#), APCC is poised to become a cornerstone of the continent’s data-driven transformation—strengthening ethical standards, promoting innovation, and ensuring data sovereignty.

