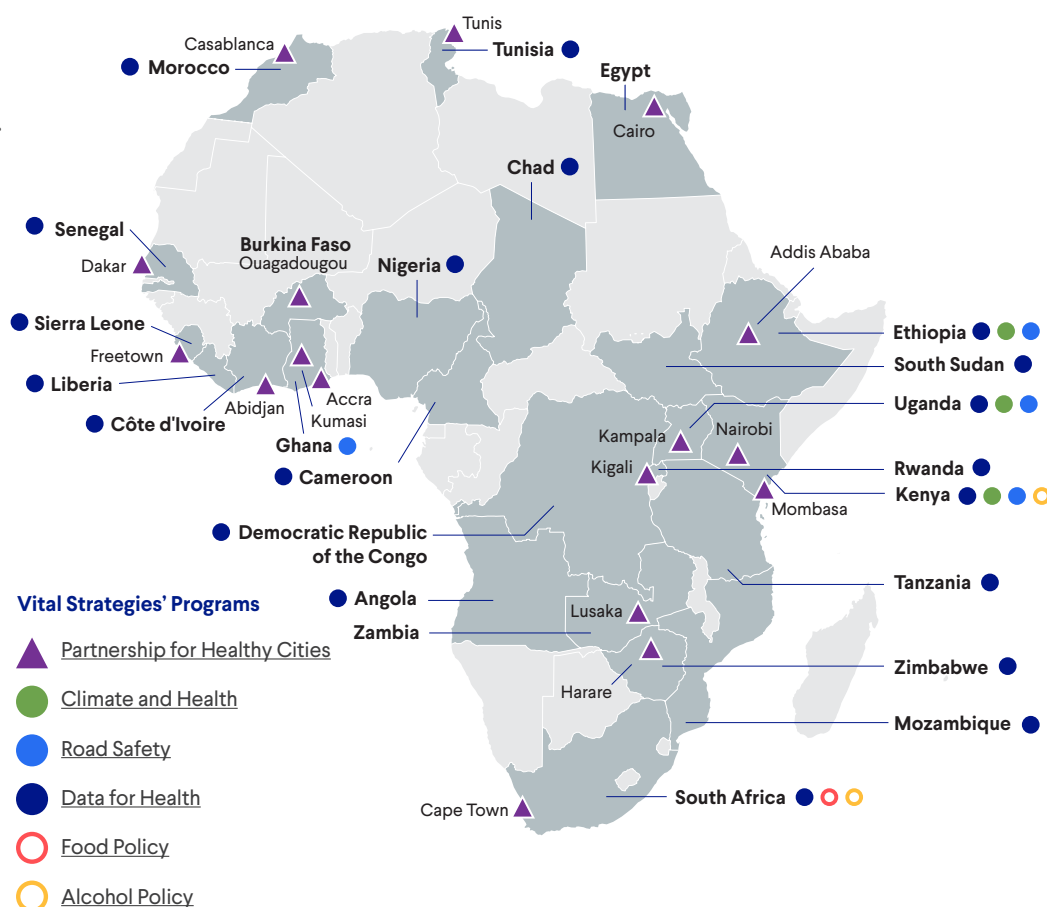


Partnering to Transform Public Health Across Africa: Vital Strategies in Action

At Vital Strategies, we are reimagining public health, working for a world where everyone, everywhere, is protected by equitable and effective public health systems. Guided by local priorities, we collaborate with government agencies and other partners in 80+ countries around the world to address the growing burden of noncommunicable diseases and injuries.

Since 2006, Vital Strategies' work in Africa has grown to include partnerships to create more responsive and resilient public health systems across 32 countries, co-designing and developing scalable and sustainable solutions that are improving health and well-being for millions of people. We currently partner in 24 countries on the continent.

Vital Strategies in Africa



By the Numbers

390 million

People in Africa covered by policies Vital Strategies helped to achieve that protect health and promote healthy environments.

32

African countries with strengthened public health data systems, including foundational civil registration and vital statistics data.

16

Cities in Africa advancing multi-sectoral evidence-based solutions to prevent noncommunicable diseases and injuries.

FOCUS AREAS

Protecting Africa's Next Generation From Noncommunicable Diseases

Heart disease, cancer, stroke, diabetes, lung disease and other noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) account for 74% of deaths worldwide. [Eight out of 10 premature NCD deaths](#) occur in low- and middle-income countries, and deaths from NCDs, injuries and mental health conditions are projected to [triple by 2063 to 89% of deaths in the African Union region](#). These diseases take an enormous toll on families and communities—[out-of-pocket health expenses push an estimated 100 million people into poverty](#) each year worldwide—and pose a major threat to development. Vital Strategies focuses on preventing NCDs using proven strategies to reduce consumption of unhealthy products—tobacco, alcohol, sugary drinks and ultra-processed food—that are the main drivers of cancer, heart disease and diabetes, and strengthening disease surveillance and data systems to equip governments to respond to the growing NCD burden.

Impact:

- **Angola, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, Mozambique** and **Tanzania** established their first population-based cancer registries with Vital Strategies' support.
- The mayors of **Abidjan, Dakar, Freetown** and **Ouagadougou**—all members of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Partnership for Healthy Cities—issued a statement calling on the region's urban leaders to increase the availability of healthy foods.
- Vital Strategies supported the establishment of International Agency for Research on Cancer collaborating centers in **Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya** and **South Africa**—bolstering work in 27 African countries toward establishing population-based cancer registries.
- **Senegal** established one of the continent's first [comprehensive national tobacco laws](#) in 2014, after a series of Vital Strategies-supported media campaigns built momentum and public support for tobacco control and catalyzed government action on a bill that had been stalled in Parliament for years.

SPOTLIGHT

South Africa Enacts the First Sugary Drinks Tax in Africa

In 2016, Vital Strategies began working with a civil society coalition on a [communication and advocacy campaign](#) to build public and policymaker support for a tax on sugary beverages. The first phase featured an agenda-setting ad, "[Are you drinking yourself sick?](#)" to highlight the harms of sugary beverage consumption. In 2018, South Africa became the first country on the continent to tax sugary beverages, with notable impact: Purchase and consumption of taxable beverages dropped [an estimated 29%](#) from 2014 (before the tax was proposed) to 2019. Sugar intake from taxable beverages [declined by 51%](#), with greater declines among lower-income households. In its first two fiscal years, the tax generated 5.8 billion ZAR (US\$313 million).



Leveraging Public Health Data to Strengthen Health Systems

High-quality data is the foundation of public health policy, but many data systems across the continent are outdated. Without data, leaders lack a clear picture of demographic trends or causes of death and disease in their countries, hampering decision-making about how to direct resources. Even the most basic population data—who is born, who dies, and causes of death—is lacking in some places: [42% of children under 5](#) in the African Union region have not been registered, and [25% of women in sub-Saharan Africa can't prove their legal identity](#). As part of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Data for Health Initiative, Vital Strategies supports governments to transform their data systems to enable them to count everyone, to register causes of death, and to analyze and interpret data to inform planning and policymaking.

Impact:

- In **Katsina State, Nigeria**, implementation of verbal autopsy—a way to determine cause of death by interviewing the deceased's family and caregivers—has led to a range of policy changes and resource allocations for women and children, including better reporting of maternal deaths and increased budget allocation for maternal health.
- In **Kenya**, health impact and economic analysis conducted during the Data to Policy partnership with Ministry of Health technical experts led to policy recommendations on reducing the cervical cancer burden in Kenya; as a result, HPV screening has been incorporated into the plan for the Social Health Insurance Fund for women ages 35 to 45 years.
- The Civil Registration and Vital Statistics program has collaborated with the Association of Medical Councils of Africa to advance medical certification of cause of death for **Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda** and **Tanzania**. In Rwanda, the quality of cause-of-death coding has increased from less than 10% in 2015 to 65% in 2024.
- In **Rwanda**, Vital Strategies' partnership since 2016 has supported dramatic improvements in birth and death registration: Birth registration completeness increased from 56% in 2015 to 90% in 2024 and death registration completeness increased from 4% in 2015 to 46% in 2024. In addition, the government has decentralized civil registration services so they are closer to the people, leading to a substantial increase in service delivery points from 446 in 2015 to 3,220 in 2020, all of which are digitized. The civil registration and vital statistics system is now integrated with identity management and Rwanda's digital public infrastructure, which provides access to over 200 services both in and outside the health sector, showing the true impact of #CountingEveryone.

SPOTLIGHT

Fortifying Policy to Increase Safe Deliveries in Cameroon

A Data to Policy partnership with government experts led to their development of a data-driven policy recommendation on how to increase safe deliveries in Northern Cameroon, which recommended free antenatal care for women in the region; the second phase of national health insurance implementation is anticipated to include this provision in the care package. This is one example of Vital Strategies' work to advance gender health equity and local priorities for women's, adolescents' and children's health through supporting development of data-informed policies to increase coverage for key services.



Saving Lives By Preventing Injuries

Injuries take the lives of 4.4 million people around the world each year and are a leading cause of death for adolescents and young adults. Road traffic injuries alone claim more than [1.19 million lives](#)—225,000 of them in Africa. The rate of road traffic deaths per 100,000 population is highest in the African Region, at 19 deaths per 100,000, compared to 7 in Europe. As part of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Initiative for Global Road Safety, Vital Strategies works with partners in 15 countries and up to 30 cities around the world to implement proven road safety measures. From 2007 through 2030, a projected [312,000 lives will have been saved worldwide](#) through the support of Vital Strategies and its partners in the Bloomberg Philanthropies Initiative for Global Road Safety.

Impact:

- Partnered with government to launch 18 road safety mass media campaigns, in **Ghana, Ethiopia, Kenya** and **Uganda**, to address risky road behaviors: speeding, drink driving, and not wearing helmets and seat belts.
- Led the revision of legal frameworks in **Ghana** and **Ethiopia** to strengthen traffic regulations.
- Supported **Lusaka** to adopt its Cycling and Pedestrian Safety Policy, mandating safe cycling lanes and pedestrian routes on all new roads.

- In **Accra**, the number of drivers observed speeding dropped 34% from 2019 to 2022, with significant contributions from Vital-supported mass media campaigns paired with enhanced enforcement.

SPOTLIGHT

Transforming Traffic Regulations to Save Lives in Ethiopia

In 2024, Vital Strategies worked alongside the Ethiopia Ministry of Transport to coordinate adoption of new comprehensive road safety legislation in Ethiopia. This sets urban speed limits at 50 km/h; requires mandatory use of certified helmets for all users and seat-belts for drivers and passengers; lowers limits for drink driving; and introduces graduated penalties based on risk severity for multiple risk factors. Work is underway on a strategy to implement this at state and city levels.

Addressing Emerging Threats to Public Health from Climate Change: Growing Partnerships on Air Pollution and Health

Vital Strategies works to collect and analyze critical climate health data, increase understanding of pressing environmental health threats, and advocate for innovative policy solutions that control air pollution, mitigate and adapt to climate change, reduce exposure to toxic chemicals such as lead, and expand clean energy and transportation options.

Impact:

- **Kigali** is conducting air quality surveillance, with support from Vital Strategies through the Bloomberg Philanthropies-funded Partnership for Healthy Cities, to assess the health impact of the city's car-free day and car-free zones and inform policies to reduce air pollution.
- In **Ethiopia**, Vital has completed a review of policy opportunities to prioritize air quality in public health efforts. Vital Strategies' [Policy Accelerator](#) program launched in 2025 to advance clean air action in the country's public health system.
- In **Nairobi**, public health officers were equipped to understand leading local sources of air pollution and their impacts, enabling them to identify residents most susceptible to air pollution-related illness, and to integrate guidance on reducing risk into their health promotion activities.



Vital Strategies partners with governments and local organizations to tackle the growing burden of noncommunicable diseases and injuries, using data and evidence to assess health and environmental risks and to move policy, practices and people. Our team of 400+ includes epidemiologists, policy experts, communicators, data analysts and others who work in 80+ countries around the world. We focus on evidence-based policy solutions that drive high-impact, long-term, sustainable results.

More at www.vitalstrategies.org