



**AFRICA HEALTH MEDIA  
TRENDS REPORT 2026**  
GATEWAY TO GLOBAL  
HEALTH INSIGHTS

**FINN**  
PARTNERS





## LETTER FROM PETER FINN, CEO OF FINN PARTNERS

At FINN Partners, we believe that communication has the power to shape healthier communities, stronger systems, and a more equitable future. The Africa Health Media Trends Report 2026 embodies that belief. It provides a forward-looking view of Africa's evolving health landscape, while underscoring what becomes possible when insight, collaboration, and purpose align.

We commissioned this report with a clear ambition: to identify the issues most likely to shape African and global health conversations in the year ahead, and to better understand how journalists, communicators, and organisations can work together to elevate the stories that matter most. The findings deepen our understanding of what resonates with audiences, what editors and newsrooms need, and how the media environment is transforming. They also sharpen our ability to support partners and clients with strategies that are relevant, credible, and grounded in real-world realities.

Yet this report is more than an analysis of trends; it is a call to action. It urges agencies, NGOs, governments, businesses, and media professionals to reimagine

the role of communication in advancing global health. It invites us to see journalists not simply as information channels, but as essential collaborators in shaping awareness, enabling accountability, and strengthening resilience.

By applying these insights, we can help ensure that health stories told across Africa reflect local realities, elevate African expertise, inspire collective action, and ultimately contribute to better health outcomes for millions. This is the work ahead—and we are proud to play our part.

This report builds on FINN Partners' launch of the [Global Health Impact Group](#) in 2024, which brings together cross-practice policy, advocacy, and media expertise to advance ideas and initiatives that promote improved health outcomes and economic growth worldwide. Spanning nearly 100 countries across Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas, the group reflects our conviction that meaningful health progress requires integrated, collaborative approaches across sectors and geographies.



FOREWORD BY  
**SHARON QUNTAI**, MEDIA RELATIONS AND  
COMMUNICATIONS SPECIALIST

**Health journalism in Africa has emerged as a critical pillar of public discourse, influencing policy decisions, public trust, and health outcomes at scale.** As its role expands, journalists are increasingly expected to navigate complex science, counter misinformation, and strengthen accountability—responsibilities that place Africa at the forefront of global conversations about the future of health communication.

Yet, this expanded role arrives at a precarious moment. Newsrooms are under-resourced, specialist funding is shrinking, and access to data remains uneven. The consequences of this disconnect have never been clearer: distorted reporting costs lives.

What matters now is better engagement, how institutions share information, who is elevated as an expert, and whether journalists are supported to work independently. This will define what the public understands and how decision-makers act. This report is a contribution to that urgent conversation. Grounded in the realities of 2026, it asserts that a strong media ecosystem is not a “nice to have,” but a public health necessity. By meeting the concrete needs of journalists - from better access to data to resources for investigation - we can build the strategic partnerships necessary to ensure African health stories are accurate, impactful, and told by the experts who know them best.



FOREWORD BY  
**BEN DEIGHTON**, PRESIDENT OF THE WORLD  
FEDERATION OF SCIENCE JOURNALISTS

**Our profession is facing a time of great uncertainty as business models fail and funding falls away.** However, the need for good health journalism is more important than ever. Global protectionism has weakened international institutions, and readers face a rising deluge of dis- and misinformation.

The global health system relies on good science journalism to highlight research findings, increase public understanding of health research, and drive science-informed policymaking. This creates a virtuous circle where the public and policymakers understand the importance of science, leading to greater investment in science infrastructure, resulting in better research outputs.

Yet the growth of generative artificial intelligence and direct-to-reader dissemination models is challenging this, enabling an increasing variety of actors to put health science directly in front of

audiences, unfiltered. While usually done with the best of intentions, such output often lacks the checks and balances of journalism, and the ultimate motivation can be unclear, whether it be to drive clicks, or to highlight the successes of a particular organisation.

This risks eroding trust in science. The importance of a research finding might be exaggerated, errors may go uncorrected, and failings glossed over. It threatens to turn a virtuous circle into a vicious cycle, as an erosion of trust in science leads to a decline in public support, budget reductions, and lower research outputs. As a result, I thank Finn Partners for this important report on trends in health journalism in Africa, which highlights the essential role that science and health journalists play in the global health system.



**“I think we’re really in a very dangerous situation, like a perfect storm, because on the one hand we have a more interconnected world [...] and greater risk of the next pandemic. But at the same time [...] we’ve got less money to look at it and we’re moving away from preparing for the future.”**

**- Ben Deighton,**  
President, [World Federation of Science Journalists](#) and Former Editor, [SciDev.Net](#)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the rapidly evolving global health landscape, staying ahead of emerging trends and understanding the shifting media dynamics are crucial for organisations aiming to make a significant impact. Innovation—particularly digital health and artificial intelligence—is increasingly redefining how health challenges are addressed worldwide, from disease surveillance to service delivery. Africa is not only becoming an increasingly important hub for global health initiatives, but a testing ground and driver of scalable innovations that influence global health and business models far beyond the continent. The Continent is defined by technological leapfrogging, investment and youthful energy, transforming how the world envisions growth, and positioning Africa as a critical contributor to the future of global health, innovation, and AI-enabled solutions.

The Africa Health Media Trends Report 2026 reveals a health media landscape at a critical turning point, shaped by fiscal instability and the rapid rise of chronic diseases.

Insights from journalists, editors, and advocates across major media hubs in Africa—Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Ghana, Egypt, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda—as well as reporters from Western legacy media paint a picture of a “perfect storm.”

The most urgent concern is the threat of funding cuts across multiple donor countries. Shifts in US policy and financing—including the recent withdrawal from

the World Health Organization (WHO) and changes to the US President’s Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)—remain highly consequential. The “America First” policy in 2025–2026 has resulted in drastic reductions to US foreign health aid to Africa, with approximately 83% to 86% of USAID programmes and contracts terminated. Similar reductions from European donors, including Germany, the Netherlands, and Sweden, as well as considerable reductions in financing from the UK, are also disrupting HIV, malaria, and maternal health services.

The focus of much of the funding from the US and European countries has shifted from a historical focus on disease-specific programmes to health system strengthening and regional manufacturing, in which recipient countries assume a greater share of the financial burden. In contrast to the reductions from Western countries, both Russia and China have slowly scaled up their own donations, though their contributions are minor compared to the former budget allocated by the US and Europe. China’s focus has shifted from the donation of personal protective equipment (PPE) to investments into major pharmaceutical hubs, while Russia remains focused on high-profile outbreaks such as Ebola.

Together, these changes are accelerating pressure on African countries to fast-track health sovereignty, diversify funding sources, and strengthen endogenous financing models. These debates cannot be separated from the enduring challenge to build

a national health system able to deliver universal and equitable care—a challenge shared, to varying degrees, across the continent.

At the same time, newsrooms are increasingly covering the growing burden of “new silent epidemics”: the surge of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, diabetes, and hypertension, along with rising but still underreported mental health challenges.

This convergence of financial strain and expanding health needs has created what many describe as a “code red for journalism.” The economic model for science reporting is eroding—grants are disappearing, coverage is shrinking, and this contraction comes precisely when rigorous, trusted reporting is essential to counter health misinformation.

The second part of this report addresses these realities directly, providing concrete pathways for collaboration. Media leaders consistently emphasise that health stakeholders must go beyond standard press releases: they need exclusive angles, fast access to researchers, and support for investigative reporting. Above all, elevating African voices as authoritative sources—rather than merely serving as conduits for external narratives—is essential to strengthening public trust.

Taken together, these dynamics point to three defining shifts shaping health coverage in 2026:

- **Key trends shaping 2026:** Coverage will increasingly focus on NCDs and mental health, while the geopolitical story of funding cuts from donor countries will dominate the immediate news cycle. Endemic diseases such as Malaria, along with episodic outbreaks like Cholera, and Mpox, will continue to command attention as weakened surveillance systems struggle under budget pressures.
- **Shifts in narrative practice:** Health journalism is professionalising rapidly. Reporters are moving from reactive event coverage to solutions-focused, data-driven reporting that adds depth and context. The spread of health disinformation on social media reinforces their role as critical verifiers. Emerging technologies, AI, telemedicine and drone delivery are viewed as engines of progress but raise pressing questions around data protection and research ethics.
- **Collaboration and trust:** To secure meaningful coverage, health communicators must treat journalists as strategic partners in public health. Media professionals are clear about their needs: rapid and transparent access to experts (with a preference for African researchers), funding mechanisms for independent investigations, and compelling, newsworthy storylines. Ensuring African voices lead African narratives requires direct investment in local journalism and consistent citation of African experts.



## ABOUT FINN PARTNERS

Founded in 2011 with a belief that the best communications are built through collaboration, trust and shared ambition, FINN Partners has grown from a small independent agency into one of the fastest-growing public relations firms in the world.

Over the past decade, we've expanded from around \$24 million in fees to nearly \$200 million—not through rapid consolidation alone, but by bringing together people, ideas and organisations that share a common philosophy. Growth, for us, has always been about building something bigger than any single office or practice: a connected community of specialists working together to solve real-world challenges.

Today, FINN Partners is a full-service marketing and communications company with more than 1,300 professionals across 35 offices, delivering global reach across the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia.

We are independent by choice, global by design, and grounded in the belief that communications can—and should—make a positive difference.

Find us at [finnpartners.com](http://finnpartners.com) and follow us on [LinkedIn](#) and Instagram on [@finnpartners](#).

## FINN PARTNERS AFRICA

FINN Partners operates across Sub-Saharan Africa and North Africa, working with 25+ FINN teams and local experts across 53 countries. Our core teams and specialists are based in 12 key markets: Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda.

Our Africa Global Health team sits at the intersection of science, policy and people. We combine deep scientific and medical expertise with strategic communications, public affairs and PR capabilities to help partners navigate complex health challenges—and translate them into clear, credible and action-driven narratives.

At the heart of our work is a commitment to local insight, partnership and impact. We collaborate closely with communities, policymakers, health leaders and media to ensure voices from across the continent are heard, respected and reflected.

**Visit us:**  
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