Rwanda has long been a symbol of resilience and innovation, and its strides in the healthcare sector are no exception. In recent years, the country has become a leading example of how primary healthcare can be successfully implemented in Africa.

The African Union's Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) has highlighted Rwanda's transformative approach as a model for other nations to follow.

Dr. Raji Tajudeen, the Acting Deputy Director-General and Director of the General Healthcare and Research Institutions Department at Africa CDC, recently praised Rwanda's health system during his visit to the country.

Dr. Tajudeen is in Rwanda for the Africa Health International Conference Agenda (AHAIC 2025), an event that brings together experts and leaders to discuss the future of healthcare across the continent. For him, Rwanda's approach to primary healthcare is a lesson that is both affordable and accessible.

Dr. Raji Tajudeen, the Acting Deputy Director-General of Africa CDC

"Achieving quality healthcare at an affordable cost is no small feat," Dr. Tajudeen noted in his address at the conference. "Rwanda has shown that it is possible. By building a strong primary healthcare system, they have set an example for the entire continent."

His remarks underscored the importance of focusing on the needs of the population and empowering communities to take responsibility for their own health. Primary healthcare, he explained, isn't just about clinics and hospitals; it's about creating a health ecosystem where every citizen can access care without financial barriers.

But Rwanda's success isn't just about the technicalities of healthcare. It's about leadership, vision, and a commitment to progress. President Paul Kagame has long championed the idea that investment in the health sector is critical to the country's future. Dr. Tajudeen echoed this sentiment, praising Kagame's efforts to demonstrate that health sector investments can pay off in both tangible and intangible ways.

President Kagame's leadership is visible in the country's response to health crises,

such as the Marburg outbreak. Rwanda’s quick action and the effective management of the crisis were cited by Dr. Tajudeen as proof that the nation’s healthcare system is maturing and capable of facing challenges head-on.

“Rwanda’s ability to manage and contain the Marburg outbreak while reducing fatalities shows just how far the country’s healthcare system has come,” he said.

Dr. Tajudeen also emphasized the importance of technological innovation in healthcare. With Africa’s population increasingly relying on mobile phones to access the internet, Rwanda is embracing technology to bridge the gap between rural communities and healthcare providers.

The country’s widespread use of modern smartphones for health education and services is helping to ensure that healthcare information is available to those who need it most.

But Rwanda’s success in primary healthcare is not just about technology and quick responses to crises. The country has taken a comprehensive approach, focusing on building the necessary infrastructure and workforce to support the health system.

Dr. Sabin Nsanzimana, Rwanda’s Minister of Health, outlined the six key pillars that have supported the country’s healthcare progress.

“We’ve worked hard to build a health system that is sustainable and accessible,” said Dr. Nsanzimana. “It all starts with the people. We need to increase the number of healthcare workers at all levels, from community health workers to specialists at referral hospitals. This is where we have focused a lot of our efforts.”

One of the most notable initiatives is the “4×4 Reform,” a program designed to quadruple the number of healthcare workers in the next four years. This effort is set to strengthen Rwanda’s primary healthcare system even further, ensuring that there are enough trained professionals to meet the growing demands of the population.

In addition to workforce development, Rwanda has made significant investments in healthcare infrastructure. The country has prioritized building healthcare centers at the grassroots level, ensuring that even the most remote communities have access to medical services.

As of today, Rwanda boasts 1,280 primary healthcare facilities and government plans to build 100 new more centers and upgrade 420 in the next five years, further expanding access to care.

Rwanda’s efforts also include a strong focus on modernizing healthcare facilities with up-to-date technology and equipment. Dr. Nsanzimana emphasized that innovation is crucial for a sustainable health system, particularly when faced with challenges like staff shortages.

By integrating technology and artificial intelligence, Rwanda is preparing for a future where healthcare is more efficient, accessible, and capable of meeting the needs of a growing population.

“Technology is key,” Dr. Nsanzimana explained. “We are investing in digital health tools, training our workforce in the use of these technologies, and equipping our facilities with state-of-the-art equipment. This will make a big difference, especially in areas where we don’t have enough healthcare workers.”

The emphasis on technology, innovation, and workforce development highlights Rwanda’s forward-thinking approach to healthcare. But as Dr. Tajudeen noted, Rwanda’s achievements in health are not just about the infrastructure or the resources. It’s about the country’s vision for what a healthy and prosperous future looks like and the concrete steps being taken to realize that vision.

For other African countries, Rwanda’s progress offers valuable lessons in how to prioritize healthcare, invest in human capital, and leverage technology to address health challenges. As Dr. Tajudeen put it, “Rwanda has shown us that with the right leadership and a clear commitment to healthcare, we can transform the future of health in Africa.”