


Curriculum Vitae – Dr Richard Mihigo

I. Candidate overview and contact details:

Family name: Mihigo	
First name: Richard	
Gender: Male	
Place and country of birth: Bukavu, Democratic Republic of Congo	Date of Birth: 12/12/1966
Citizenship: Rwanda	
If you have ever been found guilty of violation of any law (except minor traffic violations) give full details: Not Applicable	
Civil status: Married	Number of dependents: 5

II. Statement of vision, priorities, and strategies

The COVID-19 pandemic has evidenced the value of **resilient health systems** as indispensable assets for the development and prosperity of our countries, shifting our understanding of health from a sectoral concern to a **cornerstone of national development**. This realization compels us to adapt our support mechanisms for Ministries of Health, repositioning health as a pivotal asset for development.

My vision is to enable our Region place health at the heart of its broader development agenda to ensure healthier and prosperous lives across Africa. It requires transforming our health systems into strong, resilient, and adequately financed systems to tackle ongoing and emerging threats with the support of a strong secretariat at WHO/AFRO. I have identified **five priorities**, in line with GPW14, to address foundational health needs of our region and achieve the vision.

My first priority is to accelerate access to Universal Health Coverage (UHC) across Africa through strong and resilient Primary Health Care systems. Tailoring UHC strategies to the socio-economic realities of our nations, embedding gender equality in health services, leveraging digital health, and tackling overlooked challenges such as AMR and mental health are crucial. By strengthening our health systems and ensuring their financial sustainability, we will ensure that no one is left behind.

Enhancing country capacities for Prevention, Preparedness, and Response to acute public health threats constitutes my second priority. The COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the fragility of our health security. Enhancing our readiness and response capabilities for future crises requires reinforcing surveillance systems, scaling regional and local manufacturing capacities, and bolstering the training and resources of our health workforce. These steps are essential to build health systems capable of withstanding future emergencies.

My third priority centers on intensifying the fight against Communicable Diseases (CDs), catalyzing efforts against the burgeoning tide of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), and tackling persistently high maternal, neo-natal and child mortality. Addressing these challenges will unlock potential for saving more lives and fostering economic development and societal well-being.

Proactively addressing the key social, economic, and environmental determinants of health, including climate change, marks my fourth priority. Establishing cross-sector partnerships, generating evidence for policy coherence across ministries, and promoting health across all policies will ensure a holistic approach to health promotion. Additionally, developing health systems resilient to climate shocks will contribute to the well-being of future generations.

Leading an effective, well-resourced WHO/AFRO secretariat that is responsive and accountable to Member States' needs is my fifth priority. This strategic priority is crucial for the success of the other strategic priorities. By increasing operational efficiency, ensuring budget sustainability, and focusing on enhanced responsiveness and accountability, we can effectively support our ambitious agenda.

I am fully committed to dedicating all my energy and expertise to support our Member States and to position WHO/AFRO as a leading office. As we navigate together the multiple health challenges our region is facing today, we have a unique opportunity to create a healthier and more resilient Africa.

III. Qualifications with regard to the criteria for nomination to the post of Regional Director

Good understanding of and commitment to WHO's mission:

Rooted in nearly two decades of service at WHO at different levels, and broadened by my experience globally at Gavi, my candidacy is built upon a deep understanding of WHO's unique challenges and opportunities.

I have dedicated over 18 years to WHO in the African Region. I began as a Monitoring and Evaluation Officer in Cameroon, later joining the inter-country support team for West Africa in Burkina Faso to support the immunization program. Finally, I moved to the regional office in Brazzaville, where I spent 14 years, rising to the position of Chief of the Immunisation and Vaccine Development Programme. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I coordinated WHO's response in the African Region, leading efforts in resource mobilization, preparedness, deployment, and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines and other countermeasures. This extensive experience has provided me with a profound understanding of WHO's mission, roles, and policies.

In 2022, I joined GAVI, The Vaccine Alliance, as the Global Lead and Senior Director of COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery, Coordination, and Integration. This role broadened my perspective of WHO's mission and the global health ecosystem, building on prior experiences at the Global Fund's country coordinating mechanism and Rwanda's Ministry of Health.

Since March 2024, as the Senior Director of Programmatic and Strategic Engagement African Union/Africa CDC at GAVI, I have led efforts to strengthen collaboration with African institutions, including WHO/AFRO.

Proven leadership qualities:

Throughout my career, I have been entrusted with senior positions and major responsibilities, demonstrating leadership at national, regional, and global levels. I am committed to leveraging these qualities to advance WHO's mission across Africa.

At the national level, I was instrumental in the redesign and revitalization of Rwanda's health system since 1994. I played a pivotal role in launching Rwanda's national Community Health Worker (CHW) program, establishing a network of over 55,000 CHWs, crucial for achieving the MDGs. In 1999, I contributed significantly to the creation of Rwanda's national health insurance system and held several senior roles within the Ministry of Health, including Director of the National Immunization Program.

At the regional level, I provided critical policy guidance to the WHO regional office and its member states over my 18-year tenure. As Regional Coordinator of the Immunization and Vaccine Development Programme, I managed essential portfolios. During the COVID-19 pandemic, I led WHO's response as Incident Manager, coordinating the provision of vital supplies and support.

At global level, I led the COVAX initiative's delivery efforts, ensuring equitable access to COVID-19 vaccines worldwide. As Deputy Global Coordinator of the COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery Partnership (CoVDP), I coordinated the distribution of nearly two billion vaccine doses to over 146 countries. I also supported the development of the African Vaccine Manufacturing Accelerator (AVMA), a one-billion-dollar GAVI board-endorsed financial instrument to bolster vaccine manufacturing across Africa.

Proven managerial ability:

My extensive managerial experience, demonstrated by leading significant global health initiatives, managing complex health issues and emergencies, and fostering multidisciplinary team collaboration, uniquely positions me to enhance the operational excellence of WHO/AFRO Secretariat (as highlighted in my strategic priorities).

I successfully led the Addis Ababa Declaration on Immunization, adopted by all African member states, and endorsed by the African Union Heads of States in 2017. At the 2018 World Health Assembly, I presented a compelling business case for WHO's immunization activities in Africa, demonstrating significant health and economic benefits by 2030. My ability to secure support from global leaders for these initiatives highlights my expertise in advocating for and securing significant health investments.

Besides, I have effectively managed large-scale health issues, including contributing to the regional efforts that led to Africa being certified free of wild poliovirus in 2019. At Gavi, I led major COVID-19 response initiatives and was appointed Senior Director for Programmatic and Strategic Engagement with the African Union/Africa CDC, tasked with the critical mission of enhancing relationships and ensuring effective collaboration across Africa.

My management style focuses on teamwork, empowerment, and trust across multidisciplinary teams, proving essential during various health emergencies. I have assembled diverse and inclusive teams to deliver on complex missions, such as during the H1N1 pandemic and Ebola outbreaks.

Professional and technical qualifications:

I am a medical doctor and senior public health executive with solid academic foundations from Boston University School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, and the University of Kisangani (DRC). My commitment to lifelong learning is demonstrated through advanced training in quality assurance management, epidemiology, biostatistics, and complex humanitarian emergencies.

With over three decades of experience, I have developed broad technical expertise in designing, implementing, and evaluating disease control programs at national and international levels. I have led the Rwanda Expanded Programme on Immunisation and the Global Fund's country coordinating mechanism. I have also helped develop pandemic PPR systems globally. Finally, I engage in innovative projects like the African Vaccine Manufacturing Accelerator to continually advance my skillset.

Sensitivity to cultural, social, political, and other differences:

I am fluent in English, French, Swahili, Lingala, Kinyarwanda, and Kirundi. I have led multicultural teams throughout my career, consistently advocating for inclusivity and gender equality – a commitment influenced by Rwanda's leadership in this area. My program integrates diverse cultural and social perspectives to ensure health inclusivity and equity, embedding health equity and gender equality in PHC systems and accelerating gender equality transformations within the secretariat.

Medical fitness:

I maintain a high level of medical fitness, as evidenced by a recent (April 2024) medical check-up at Gavi, with results available upon request.

Formal education:

- Master of Public Health in International Health, Boston University School of Public Health, USA, 2003.
- Bachelor of Medicine; Bachelor of Surgery (M.B., Ch.B.). Faculty of Medicine, Université de Kisangani, DRC, 1994.

Selected short trainings:

- Executive Leadership Programme WHO, Regional Office for Africa, Johannesburg, 2019.
- Complex Humanitarian Emergencies, Boston University School of Public Health, Certificate program, USA (02 – 05 /2002).
- Quality Assurance Management Methods for Developing Countries, Certificate program, Johns Hopkins University, School of Public Health, USA (06 – 07 / 2000).
- Monitoring and evaluation of public health programmes in developing countries, CESAG, Senegal (07/1999).
- Strategic leadership for developing countries in the 21st century, Certificate program, Management Sciences for Health, USA (05-06/1998).
- Epidemiology and Applied biostatistics, Certificate program, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium (05 –08 / 1997).
- Health care management for developing countries, Certificate program, Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium (06 –07 / 1996).

Knowledge of languages:

		Mother Tongue	Speak	Read	Write
Code 1: Limited conversation, reading newspapers, routine conversation.	English		3	3	3
Code 2: Engage freely in discussions; read and write more difficult materials.	French		3	3	3
Code 3: Fluent (nearly) as in mother tongue.	Portuguese			1	1

Positions held:

- *03/2024 – to date:*
Senior Director, Programmatic and Strategic Engagement African Union/Africa CDC
GAVI, The Vaccine Alliance, Geneva, Switzerland
- *04/2022 – 02/2024:*
Global Lead & Senior Director, COVID-19 Vaccine Delivery, Coordination & Integration
GAVI, The Vaccine Alliance, Geneva, Switzerland
- *06/2014 – 03/2022:*
Regional Coordinator of Immunisation & Vaccine Development Programme
WHO, Regional Office for Africa, Brazzaville, Republic of Congo
- *06/2008 – 05/2014:*
Team Lead, Immunisation & Vaccine Development Programme
WHO, Regional Office for Africa, Brazzaville, Republic of Congo
- *08/2006 – 05/2008:*
Immunisation and New Vaccines Officer, Inter Country Support Team for West Africa countries.
WHO, Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso
- *07/2004 – 07/2006:*
Monitoring & Evaluation Officer, Inter Country Programme for Central Africa countries.
WHO, Yaoundé, Cameroon
- *01/2004-06/2004:*
Permanent Secretary, Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM)
The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, Kigali, Rwanda
- *2000-2003:*
National Director, Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI)
Ministry of Health, Kigali, Rwanda
- *1999-2000:*
Chief Provincial Medical Director
Ministry of Health, Provincial Health Services, Butare, Rwanda
- *1996-1999:*
Chief District Medical Director
Ministry of Health, District Health Services, Nyanza, Rwanda
- *1994-1996:*
Chief Medical Director, Nyanza Hospital
Ministry of Health, Nyanza, Rwanda

Awards received:

- Winner of the COVAX award in 2022 for outstanding contribution in supporting AMC92 countries for the deployment and implementation of COVID-19 vaccination (GAVI, The Vaccine Alliance).
- Winner of the Hib Initiative award in 2009 for the outstanding contribution in new vaccines introduction in Africa (Hib Initiative, US CDC/Johns Hopkins University, School of Public Health).
- Winner of the 2003 Rex Fendall Award for Excellence in Writing (Boston University School of Public Health, International Health Department).
- Winner of the 2003 John Snow Incorporated Award for Excellence in International Health (Boston University School of Public Health, International Health Department).

For access to my detailed CV (including detailed professional experience, publications, consulting activities, and professional affiliations), please scan the below QR code:

