



Pandemic Prevention in the ECOWAS Region

Strengthening ECOWAS, WAHO/RCSDC and National Coordinating Institutions for a One Health oriented prevention and control system in the region

The Challenge

Continuous outbreaks of infectious diseases transmitted from animals to humans (zoonoses) characterise the epidemiological context in West Africa and pose a substantial burden for affected countries. The successful control of zoonoses requires a coordinated, multisectoral One Health approach with cooperation of animal, environmental and human health. This approach is currently being implemented in the ECOWAS region but is not sufficiently established yet. In particular, there is a lack of a regional One Health strategy, corresponding institutional capacities and human resources both at regional and national levels, including a lack of compatible IT systems for real-time data. These gaps jeopardise the efficient prevention and control of pandemics not only in individual countries but also in the entire region, exposing the population to severe health threats from epidemics.

Achieved Impacts

The previous project of the same name has had a positive impact on the protection of the population against epidemics in the ECOWAS region by increasing relevant communication on health threats. The support measures implemented by the West African Health Organisation (WAHO) for ECOWAS member countries in pandemic prevention and control were also improved. Further, the digital disease surveillance and outbreak management system SORMAS was introduced in Nigeria and Ghana and is also being used to report COVID-19 cases during the ongoing pandemic. The programme showed great flexibility during the outbreak in supporting countries to implement regional and national COVID-19 contingency plans, which contributed to the rapid response to the pandemic at country level.



Project name	Regional Programme Support to Pandemic Prevention in the ECOWAS Region
Commissioned by	The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Lead Executing Agency	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Project region	ECOWAS Region
National Partner	Commission of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) - West African Health Organisation (WAHO) and the Regional Centre for Surveillance and Disease Control (RCSDC)
Duration	07/2021 – 06/2024
Financial Volume	€ 13,92 million

Our Approach

Based on the achievements of the previous programme, the follow-up regional programme “Support to Pandemic Prevention in the ECOWAS Region (RPPP2)” assists the ECOWAS Commission, WAHO and the Regional Centre for Surveillance and Disease Control (RCSDC) in strengthening the One Health oriented pandemic prevention and control system in the ECOWAS region. The focus of the strategy is being put on the establishment of the RCSDC, the strengthening of early warning systems, the setup of a Regional Rapid Response Team (RRRT) as well as the strengthening of core capacities as per the International Health Regulations (IHR). This includes a special focus on Burkina-Faso, Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone and Togo as well as activities in Nigeria and Ghana for the implementation of the digital Surveillance Outbreak Response Management & Analysis System (SORMAS).

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Implemented by



To achieve these objectives, the programme works closely with other international stakeholders in the region as well as with bilateral health programmes of the German development cooperation. Four approaches are being taken:

Strengthening selected capacities of the National Coordinating Institutes (NCI) for pandemic prevention and control in the six focus countries. This includes:

- Supporting the development and implementation of national COVID-19 immunisation strategies.
- Supporting the development and adaptation of NCI regulatory frameworks, strategies and plans.
- Conducting national IHR bridging workshops.
- Developing emergency action plans that include aspects on One Health, human rights, vulnerable groups and gender.

Strengthening the coordination and communication between regional One Health actors and ECOWAS member states. This includes:

- Operationalising the Regional Rapid Response Team.
- Supporting WAHO/RCSDC in the development of a regional One Health strategy in collaboration with the German Federal Research Institute for Animal Health, the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut.
- Conducting several cross-border simulation exercises involving all three One Health sectors.

Institutionalising human resource strengthening in ECOWAS with regard to pandemic prevention and control, including the One Health approach. This includes:

- Establishing a network of training institutes on pandemic prevention and control and facilitating cooperation agreements between WAHO/RCSDC and training institutes.
- Conducting a regional survey on training needs.
- Developing and implementing new training courses on One Health.

Strengthening the digital surveillance and outbreak management system in the ECOWAS region. These activities will be carried out in collaboration with the private sector via the German Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research, including:

- Developing an implementation concept for SORMAS at WAHO/RCSDC.
- Implementing SORMAS at RCSDC.
- Increasing the proportion of areas/districts in Nigeria and Ghana that submit data through SORMAS.

Response to the COVID-19 Outbreak

The programme continues its support in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic by supporting its partners at national and regional level in their response activities.

However, it should not be neglected that in addition to the ongoing pandemic, the ECOWAS region is continuously and severely affected by other diseases with pandemic potential, such as reoccurring outbreaks of cholera, lassa fever, Ebola and measles, as well as endemic diseases like monkeypox. These simultaneous outbreaks further burden the already strained health systems and reveal the urgent need for a strengthened pandemic prevention and control system in the region.

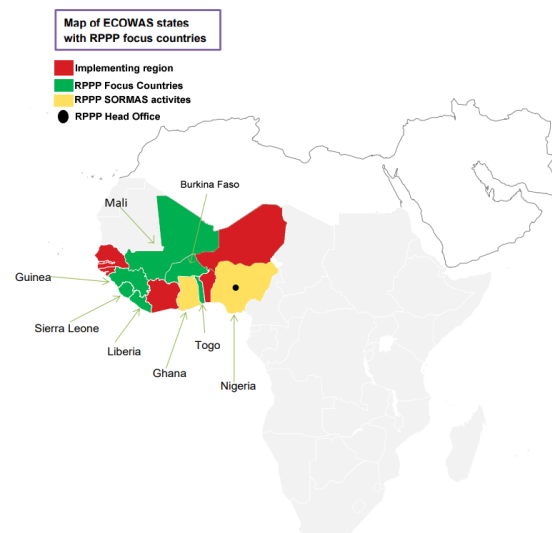


Image: Map of countries where RPPP is being implemented in © GIZ

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