

STRENGTHENING RESEARCH SYSTEMS FOR HEALTH IN WEST AFRICA



ABOUT THE INITIATIVE

The West African Health Organisation (WAHO) has made ‘strengthening research and innovation system development’ one of the key strategic objectives in its 2009–2013 strategic plan.

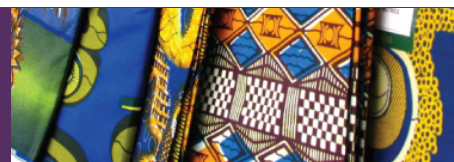
To ensure the achievement of this objective, WAHO has partnered with The COHRED Group—an organisation with extensive experience in this domain. The programme aims at strengthening national research and innovation system governance and capacity through improved:

- Research policy, to provide vision for national research development.
- Financing strategy, to develop a focused research funding plan.
- Human resources strategy development, to scale-up research capacity.
- Research ethics review system to ensure that research implemented meets standard criteria.
- Management and coordination, to advance national research oversight.
- Priority setting, to provide stakeholder input into the establishment of research agendas.
- Fair research contracting, to enable fair funding opportunities for institutions in LMICs.
- Monitoring and evaluation, to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of research investments.

Currently, the programme is running a 4-year project in Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone, with the financial contribution of the International Development Research Centre—Canada (IDRC).

The COHRED Group





THE CHALLENGE

Thirty percent of the world's poorest countries are located in West Africa (i.e. 13 of the 43 LICs as listed by the World Bank). The World Bank ranks all but three¹ of the 16 countries² of West Africa as "Low income" and the other three are ranked as "Lower-middle income" countries. Most of these countries do not have strong Research for Health Systems and this leads to the following challenges:

1. Limited research for health.
2. Research that is driven by the agendas and priorities of outside donors rather than by the needs of a country.
3. Inefficient use of available funds

THE SOLUTION

The obvious solution to this problem is to help these countries to develop and invest in their own Research for Health systems. COHRED is already working with four of the 16 West African countries through our "Strengthening Research Systems for Health in West Africa" and we would like to expand this work to cover the entire West African region.

WHO BENEFITS AND HOW

- Governments and research institutions in the participating countries benefit from a better managed research and innovation for health system, where information is shared, research duplication is minimized, and research is targeted towards jointly agreed upon national priorities.

- Governments benefit by working in partnership with other countries in the region. Together they share experiences and create momentum as they build national systems for managing research and innovation.
- Citizen's of these countries benefit through better health, equity and development outcomes.
- Donors benefit by knowing where to target their research investments in the participating countries

SUCCESS STORIES

Some of the early successes of this programme include the following:

- Guinea Bissau has finalized its first research priority setting effort and is currently in the process of setting up the national research for health agenda.
- Liberia has created a research unit in the Ministry of Health and is currently developing a national research policy and national research for health agenda.
- Mali has launched the legal process for the establishment of the National Research Coordinating Committee and is preparing the basis for the Committee to be operational.
- Sierra Leone is currently in the process of developing their first national research for health policy.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

By expanding this project to the 12 other countries in West Africa, COHRED can help to ensure that 30% of the world's poorest countries have access to improved health, equity and development via better Research for Health systems. This expansion could be done at a cost of approximately Euro 1.08 million. In other words, nearly 30% of the world's poorest countries could strengthen and improve their Research for Health systems at a total cost of just Euro 0.0038/person³.

1) Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire and Nigeria.

2) Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Cote d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

3) Based on an estimated total population of 284'067'547 in these 12 countries.