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# Strengthening Research Systems for Health in West Africa

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The COHRED Group



Supporting research and innovation systems for health, equity and development

# DEVELOPMENT OF A RESEARCH SYSTEM FOR HEALTH AT A NATIONAL LEVEL

is often hindered by managerial, regulatory, financial and capacity deficiencies. Lack of resources, little or no control in setting national research priorities, inadequate research policy framework, weak researchers' career development pathways, and unpredictable research financing are problems affecting most low- and middle-income countries. Strengthening national capacity to govern research can help countries achieve greater autonomy, development and equity.

**Working together across the region** to strengthen research systems for health offers an efficient way to tackle national research system development. Regional partnerships have the value of bringing countries together for a common goal, optimising the use of resources, and maximising impact. The strength of the regional approach lies in its inclusive nature – pooling resources and experiences, and creating momentum.

**With the aim of improving research for health**, the West African Health Organisation (WAHO) has built within the WAHO strategic plan 2009 – 2013 a programme for health research promotion. To support this programme, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) and The COHRED Group have collaborated to launch a four-year project aimed at strengthening research system development in the sub-region.



West African  
Health Organization  
Organisation Ouest  
Africaine de la Santé

The West African Health Organisation is a partner of  
The COHRED Group for strengthening research for  
health systems in West Africa

## AIMS OF THE PROJECT

Four West African countries – Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Mali and Sierra Leone, have officially joined the ‘Strengthening Research for Health System Development in West Africa’ project. Strengthening activities target:

- Policy development 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 to ensure that the 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 southern institutions;
- Monitoring and evaluation to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of research investments.



## PROJECT SUCCESS

**GUINEA BISSAU** has finalised its first research priority setting effort and is currently in the process of setting up the national research for health agenda. Future activities are aimed at establishing a national research coordination committee and a national research ethics review committee, and building capacity to support and sustain the above mentioned activities.

**LIBERIA** has created a Research Unit in the Ministry of Health and is currently in the process of developing a national research policy and national research for health agenda. Future activities aim at establishing a national research committee and a national research ethics review committee, and building capacity to support and sustain the above mentioned activities.

**MALI** has launched the legal process for the establishment of the National Research Coordinating Committee, and is currently preparing the basis for the Committee to be operational. Future activities aim at improving the functioning of the National Research Ethics Committee, enhancing research monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, strengthening the use of research results, and building capacity to support and sustain the above mentioned activities.

**SIERRA LEONE** is currently in the process of developing a national research for health policy. Future activities are aimed at strengthening research financing mechanisms and building capacity to support and sustain the above mentioned activities.



## COHRED FOCUSES ON STRENGTHENING THE GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT OF SYSTEMS OF LOW AND MIDDLE-INCOME COUNTRIES (LMICs)

in their efforts to use research, science and technology and innovation to improve health, equity and development. In doing this, COHRED partners with LMICs in providing technical support on research and innovation systems for health. COHRED offers over 15 years of experience in the development field, assisting low- and middle-income countries in identifying their capacities and in designing appropriate strengthening actions.

Evidently, COHRED is well placed to support national research and innovation systems strengthening which requires a comprehensive approach that calls for the full use of the abilities and resources at the country-level.

COHRED Tech, the technical arm of COHRED, brings the essential experience for customising tools, methods and approaches to best meet country needs and advance research systems managed by the countries themselves.

If you are interested in the activities of COHRED in 'Strengthening Research for Health Systems in West Africa', please contact: Gabriela Montorzi, [montorzi@cohred.org](mailto:montorzi@cohred.org)

COHRED  
(Council on Health Research for Development)  
1-5 Route des Morillons  
PO Box 2100  
1211 Geneva  
Switzerland  
Tel: +41 22 591 89 00  
Email: [cohred@cohred.org](mailto:cohred@cohred.org)  
[www.cohred.org](http://www.cohred.org)

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