

The Institut Pasteur de Dakar's new alliance bolsters West Africa's epidemic preparedness

The Institut Pasteur de Dakar has teamed with the African Risk Capacity (ARC), AfriCatalyst and the West African Health Organization (Waho) to strengthen outbreak preparedness and response to West Africa's ebola, marburg, lassa fever, meningococcal meningitis, and emerging pathogens of concern.



Source: Supplied.

The partnership will also evaluate the capacities for epidemiological surveillance and laboratory diagnostics for viral haemorrhagic fevers in the Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas), model the risk of new and re-emerging outbreaks and epidemics in the region and put in place epidemic contingency plans and countermeasures.

As a World Health Organization collaborating centre for arboviruses (infections caused by a group of viruses spread to people by the bite of infected insects such as mosquitoes and ticks) and viral haemorrhagic fevers, IPD will provide expert opinion to enhance the capacity of the programme to evaluate surveillance and laboratory capacities in the region.

IPD has a unique combination of biostatistics, bioinformatics, mathematical modelling, epidemiology, software development and virology that will be used to input parameters for simulating outbreaks and transmission dynamics in the region.

IPD will support development of realistic outbreak scenarios deployed to prepare Ecowas member states in their training and preparedness for response and national contingency plans.

"The alliance represents a unique partnership of leading African institutions with a global outlook that brings expertise in science, policy, governance and finance to advance global public-health security through epidemic intelligence and outbreak response.

"As the project meets its goals, the alliance will represent a critically important convergence of complementary expertise to promote health security in Africa and mitigate the risk of global threats spreading to and from the region," said Dr Amadou Alpha Sall, chief executive officer of Institut Pasteur de Dakar.

As evidenced from the recent challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, surveillance systems and outbreak preparedness and -response are under resourced. However, with clear leadership, countries in West Africa can introduce policies informed by evidence and by recent epidemics to protect their populations and limit the spread of external threats to West Africa and those endemic in the region and beyond.



World Bank funds Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention \$100m

Alexander Winning, Joe Bavier and Andrew Cawthorne. 25 Jul 2022



For several years, IPD, ARC, and Waho have been actively involved in efforts to mitigate the adverse impact of health emergencies in the Ecowas region, in line with their respective mandate and in collaboration with various partners, including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF).

BMGF support will play a catalytic role for the activities of the alliance by enhancing AfriCatalyst's efforts to help coordinate and advance the common agenda of the alliance, including actions planned under existing and forthcoming partnership agreements to amplify the potential impact of these partnerships as well as the gender sensitivity of epidemic preparedness and response.

"We look forward to supporting the critical work being undertaken by ARC, Waho, and IPD in the context of the alliance to strengthen epidemic preparedness and response in our region.

"We're thrilled to be partnering with the BMGF as we fulfill this unique responsibility," said Daouda Sembene, chief executive officer at AfriCatalyst.

"ARC welcomes this great Africa-led initiative supported by the BMGF as we continue to develop our outbreaks and epidemics risk-insurance product to enable early containment of epidemic-prone diseases and respond to acute public-health emergencies," said Ibrahima Cheikh Diong, United Nations assistant secretary-general and ARC group director general.

IPD is rising to the challenge of scaling new innovations, tools and systems to contribute to the global effort to end epidemics and prevent pandemics.

In doing so, it aims to become a pioneer for innovative health solutions in an effort to advance inclusivity in access to critical health services in Africa.