
EXAMPLES OF INNOVATIVE FUNDING HEALTH SYSTEMS STRENGTHENING

FONDATION MÉRIEUX RESAOLAB (Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal)

In Africa, inadequate or non-existent biomedical diagnostic testing, especially with regard to infectious diseases, has taken a heavy toll. In Burkina Faso, Mali and Senegal, the three countries where this project is carried out, it is estimated that more than 80% of the 300,000 people now living with HIV are unaware of their condition. Moreover, although tuberculosis (TB) affects 100,000 individuals annually, approximately one third do not have access to accurate diagnostic tests. In order to improve the fight against infectious diseases like HIV and TB and the access to appropriate treatment, there is an urgent need for strengthening the whole laboratory system. Fondation Mérieux's project, RESAOLAB (Réseau Afrique de l'Ouest de Laboratoires—West African Laboratory Network), was created in response to requests from the Ministries of Health of the three countries to build a network of biomedical laboratories.

This three-year project has a budget of 4 million euros (US\$5.1 million), 3 million of which have been provided by Agence Française de Développement (AFD, the French government's development agency), with the remaining 1 million euros coming from the project leader, Fondation Mérieux. The project is based on the three fundamental aspects that constitute an effective network of laboratories: professional training of staff, quality management, and epidemiological surveillance. The Ministries of Health and their respective Laboratory/Drug Departments are closely associated with this project, and WHO and the West African Health Organization are members of the project's steering committee.

The main activities of the RESAOLAB project, which was launched in 2009, are to standardise and decentralise professional training for laboratory staff; reinforce quality assurance with defined standards; and provide support to the surveillance system in conjunction with WHO. Investment in the renewal of national and regional laboratories is necessary to support standardized facilities used for educational and quality control purposes. Competencies will be shared among each of the three countries, and a sub-regional network of laboratories will be set up to launch harmonised practices among the countries involved. The project is expected to be ultimately expanded to other West African countries and is open for partnerships in this regard.



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