

# Guinea's Integrated Operational Action Plan Addresses Health Security Deficits and Improves Epidemic Preparedness

## Context

Breakthrough ACTION is a global project funded by USAID and implemented by a consortium of international organizations led by the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (CCP). The project provides technical communication support to the Government of Guinea, including the Ministry of Health, as well as USAID implementing partners and other stakeholders.

Recent epidemics of Ebola virus disease, Rift Valley fever, avian flu, and others have negatively impacted Guinea, causing casualties as well as social and economic consequences. These major health crises prompted global health security partners to strengthen national epidemiological surveillance and response systems. Though the Republic of Guinea is making progress, deficits in coordination among the partners each mounting separate response plans is resulting in duplicate efforts and wasted resources.

Breakthrough ACTION is working with the National Health Security Agency (ANSS) and the national One Health Platform (OHP) to establish a strong, inclusive system for partners fighting epidemics in Guinea to improve their collective impact.

## Challenge

In April 2017, the WHO evaluated Guinea's capacity to prevent and rapidly respond to public health risks and found that the country lacked an operational risk communication plan and dedicated teams or processes for updating and disseminating communication materials:

“Guinea has not yet established official government departments or a central unit or location for public communication. The country also does not have a national communication plan. There are documents such as the community-based communication strategy, and documents on health promotion that were developed with the support of partners. They are neither disseminated nor updated.” -WHO Joint External Evaluation for the Republic of Guinea (2017)

The lack of well-defined coordination structures for risk communication within the Ministry of Health was compounded by the lack of financial and political mobilization to prioritize risk communication. Social and behavior change programs were largely conducted through implementing partners and civil



society organizations. The OHP recognized the need for collaboration with a range of stakeholders outside the health sector. At the central level, these stakeholders include the Ministries of Health and Livestock, which remain the most essential collaborators in the prevention, detection, and response to zoonotic diseases in the human and animal health sectors in Guinea. They also needed a space for productive, technical discussions with environment sector partners, technical and financial partners, and civil society organizations. Targeted risk communication on the importance of animal disease surveillance is essential to preventing the adverse socio-economic impact of zoonosis.

## Actions taken

In 2019, Breakthrough ACTION collaborated with OHP to convene partners and develop the first Integrated Operational Action Plan (IOAP) in the country. At this workshop, stakeholders participated in presentations, debates, work groups, brainstorming, and simulations. The resulting IOAP served as a multisectoral risk communication instrument and responded to a priority recommendation from WHO's evaluation report. Each year since then, Breakthrough ACTION has supported the OHP in continuing to lead the evaluation and revision of the IOAP. The annual IOAP workshops are creating a framework for productive discussions that synergize all risk communication and community engagement (RCCE) activities in Guinea, especially epidemic preparedness and response efforts, and has become a flagship Breakthrough ACTION activity in coordinating partner interventions.



*IOAP workshops create a framework for productive discussions that synergize epidemic preparedness and response efforts. The 2022 IOAP workshop took place in Coyah, Guinea from February 9 to 11, 2022.*

This year, Breakthrough ACTION and OHP worked with GIZ to organize the annual IOAP workshop and focus on RCCE activities. The 2022 IOAP workshop took place in Coyah, Guinea from February 9 to 11, 2022. A total of 32 participants (including eight women) from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Regional Health Departments, and Guinean radio and TV attended. The workshop also engaged technical and financial partners and NGOs including Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (FICR), Regional Disease Surveillance Systems Enhancement (REDISS), Croix-Rouge Guinéenne (CRG), Zero Pauvre Afrique (ZPA), German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ).

Participants evaluated the previous IOAP from 2021, identified achievements and best practices, shared challenges, and proposed corrective strategies for the upcoming year. Participants then developed the 2022 IOAP with an accompanying monitoring and evaluation plan. Discussions centered around four

strategic areas derived from the One Health strategic plan and the One Health national communication plan: (1) Coordination, collaboration, and good governance; (2) Capacity building and research; (3) Prevention, integrated surveillance, and response; (4) Communication, social mobilization, and advocacy.

## Impact

The 2022 IOAP workshop participants concluded that the previous IOAP contributed to important gains despite significant challenges including reduced funding due to political instability, redirecting of resources due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the reorganization of activities related to the resurgence of Ebola virus in the Forest region of the country. Using the IOAP, implementing partners as well as technical and financial partners successfully executed activities under each strategic area:

- Coordination, collaboration, and good governance: 18 activities
- Capacity building and research: 30 activities
- Prevention, integrated surveillance, and response: 14 activities
- Communication, social mobilization, and advocacy: 14 activities.

Throughout the year, Breakthrough ACTION's sustained support for OHP meetings and periodic evaluations facilitated progress in coordinated communication activities as well as compliance with the 2021 IOAP. The IOAP and completed activities have strengthened capacity and allowed partners to harmonize RCCE activities and achieve greater collective impact throughout Guinea.

In developing the 2022 IOAP, participants built on progress from the previous year. They outlined a total of 219 activities, significantly increasing the number of activities under each strategic area, as well as a detailed monitoring and evaluation plan. Participants also identified communication activities for priority zoonotic diseases and One Health awareness days. For World Wildlife Day (March 3), partners held a televised round table discussion to

discuss the challenges of the multisectoral management of health emergencies, circulated a press release, and promoted the day via social media. Similar coordinated activities are planned for World Rabies Day (September 28), World One Health (November 3), and World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (November 18-24).

---

*"Guaranteed improvement in the health status and well-being of the population necessarily requires coordinated action by all actors on the socio-environmental determinants of health and the IOAP is one of the instruments of intersectoral coordination that allows for the effective management of different epidemics of zoonotic origin."*

*- Dr. Moussa SOUMAH, Director of the SNPS*

---

The IOAP and the annual multisectoral workshops to develop it are the direct result of support from Breakthrough ACTION and OHP and ANSS partners. This formal document fills critical coordination deficits identified by OHP and WHO in 2017 and strengthens Guinea's capacity to prevent and rapidly respond to the various epidemics that Guinea has faced and continues to face with great speed.

---

*This success story is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of Breakthrough ACTION and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.*