



AFD AND “Health in Common”: the 2020–2021 response to Covid-19



€1.8 BN
committed to the Covid-19
response through
the “Health in Common”
initiative in 2020 and 2021

€1.2 BN
in additional commitments
to social protection,
to mitigate the effects
of the crisis

27 million
people obtained better
access to care thanks
to AFD financing

Fulfilling France’s commitment to the global response to the Covid-19 pandemic, AFD took action starting in April 2020 to address the social and health challenges stemming from the crisis, via our “Health in Common” initiative. The initiative was renewed in 2021 to adapt to the changing pandemic, and continue investing in health and social protection systems, now and in the future.

From emergency response to health and social protection system strengthening

1

Our priorities

AFD designed its “Health in Common” initiative to cover three key priorities then added a fourth in 2021 to deal with the evolution of the pandemic and the development of vaccines:

- **Strengthening capacities for diagnosis and epidemiological surveillance.** We have supported Covid-19 testing activities and strengthened capacities for monitoring evolution in the epidemic, especially in Africa. This support has largely consisted in the procurement of equipment and consumables and in the training of human resources.
- **Ensuring safe patient pathways, from testing to treatment of severe cases.** We have provided support to healthcare providers for patient management in areas such as equipment procurement, infrastructure renovation, and human resources support. These actions have been rounded out by community mobilization activities.
- **Mitigating the social consequences of the crisis.** To reduce the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable, we have contributed to the financing of emergency cash-transfer programs and bolstered social protection floors in partner countries.
- **Increasing national and regional vaccine procurement and production capacities.** We have provided support to capacity-building initiatives led by regional public and private entities, with the goal of improving access to Covid-19 vaccines in the Global South and helping those countries build their pharmaceutical sovereignty.

2

Responding via a partnership approach

“Health in Common” has mobilized a variety of complementary stakeholders:

- **States**, to develop and implement their national policies
- **NGOs**, to work with local populations to support national response plans
- **Research centers and institutions with relevant expertise** to strengthen local capacities
- **Other donors**, to develop joint co-financing approaches
- **The private sector**, particularly to increase production capacities for healthcare products in Africa

FOCUS on

Balancing emergency and medium-term responses

When the Covid-19 pandemic struck suddenly and unexpectedly, AFD had to react fast. As the pandemic evolved over time (with the arrival of new variants and vaccines), we needed to adapt our actions, tools, and priority countries and regions constantly.

Beyond the much needed short-term response, the crisis also highlighted the importance of making systems more resilient to future crises. To back up our emergency response, we have therefore continued our long-term investments in strengthening health and social protection systems.

Limiting crowding-out effects

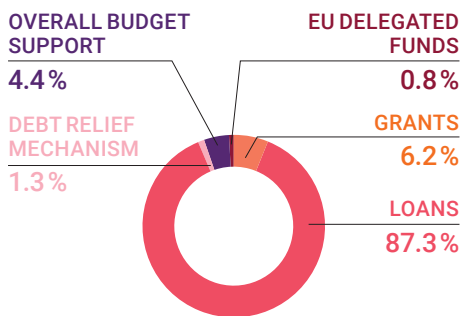
The Covid-19 crisis has focused energies on the response to the pandemic and put health systems under huge pressure. This has diverted attention away from other pathologies and health needs. Aware of this shortcoming, AFD has sought to mitigate such crowding-out effects by continuing to invest in other health priorities such as sexual and reproductive health and rights, nutrition, and mental health.

Building local responses

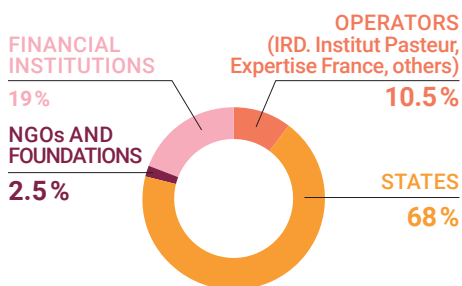
The Covid-19 crisis has put pharmaceutical sovereignty and health sector regulation issues at the top of the international agenda. Strengthening national and regional public-health institutions to coordinate preparation for and response to epidemics has become a priority for Africa. This is why AFD is supporting regional African institutions that play a key role in shaping health policies such as Africa CDC.

Our key financial commitments for the "Health in Common" initiative¹ in 2020–2021

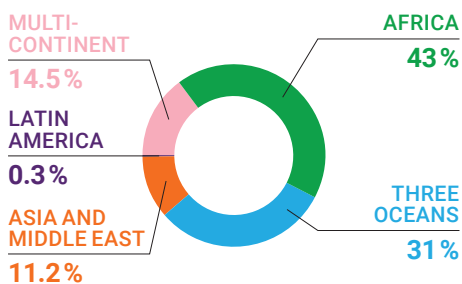
BY FINANCIAL TOOL



BY IMPLEMENTING PARTNER



BY REGION



35
countries
supported

Surveillance and diagnosis at the heart of our Covid response

Its long-term commitment to improving health security enabled AFD to respond swiftly when Covid-19 hit. We worked to improve capacities in diagnosis and epidemiological surveillance, by strengthening laboratories in the countries where we work. Our actions helped support testing, seroprevalence surveys and genome sequencing, for example:

- AFD has provided support to the **Institut Pasteur centers in Africa and Asia in their mandate as reference laboratories for Covid-19 diagnosis**. For example, we **provided laboratory equipment and staff training, using a South-South cooperation approach (total of €19.2 M in grants for 2020 and 2021)**.
- AFD has also supported the crisis-response plan of the **regional epidemiological surveillance network of the Indian Ocean Commission**, which we have been financing since 2008 to enhance its integrated risk approach to human and animal health (grant of €2 M and European Union delegated funds of €8.7 million).

Social protection at the top of the agenda since the crisis erupted

The sudden impact of the crisis on the incomes of the most vulnerable populations has brought social protection systems back to the top of the political agenda. AFD has addressed the urgency of the crisis, by financing cash transfers to compensate for the loss of income of the most vulnerable. In a more far-reaching approach, we have also helped States in the development of their social protection system, to enhance their resilience to shocks.

- In **Morocco**, we are supporting the Government in extending healthcare coverage to the entire population, the first step in an ambitious social protection reform decided by the King following the crisis. Our support comes in the form of a €150 M sovereign loan and €4 M grant in technical assistance provided by Expertise France.
- In **Mauritania**, we are working with our Sahel Alliance partners to support the government in its strategy to set up a social protection system capable of coping with health, climate as well as food crises. In 2020, this funding was supplemented by emergency assistance for poor and vulnerable households whose incomes were impacted by the Covid-19 crisis (€2.5 M in grants).

¹ The commitments presented here list only financing labeled "Health in Common" and thus exclude certain social protection projects and projects in French overseas department and territories.

Multi-country

Reinforcing the capacity
of African health ministries
to respond to the
Covid-19 pandemic



This grant provided to the NGO Alima to support health authorities aimed to reduce the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and enable better diagnoses and case management in Senegal, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Central African Republic.

BACKGROUND

The SARS-CoV-2 virus, which causes Covid-19, appeared at the end of 2019 and quickly spread to all continents. Authorities have striven to respond to the resulting global health crisis with healthcare and socio-economic measures on an unprecedented scale.

In West and Central Africa, where health systems are fragile, the fear of an epidemic wave made the detection and management of suspected and confirmed Covid-19 cases a priority for national authorities. Faced with the emergency, technical support was provided to health ministries across the region, to help strengthen their capacities in triage and management of Covid-19 cases and allow them to rapidly respond.

DESCRIPTION

This project, implemented by Alima, (i) enhanced infection prevention and control measures, (ii) supported awareness-raising measures to prevent the spread of the disease, and (iii) ensured good-quality and safe management of confirmed and suspected Covid-19 cases in the referral facilities designated by health authorities in five West and Central African countries.

RESULTS

- Management of confirmed suspicious cases has been carried out safely at facilities handling patient care: reorganization of patient inflow and outflow, improvement of waste management (especially infectious waste), and implementation of prevention measures.
- Diagnosis and case-management capacities have been strengthened: capacity building at referral facilities, technical and staff support, psychosocial support, and awareness-raising targeting patients and their families/communities.
- The Covid-19 response plans of health ministries and national strategies are being implemented.



**SENEGAL, BURKINA FASO,
CAMEROON, CENTRAL AFRICAN
REPUBLIC, DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC OF CONGO**

Countries



April 27, 2020

Date agreement signed



Health and social protection

Sector

1 year

Financing duration



Grant

Financing tool



€2 million

Financing amount

Alima

Beneficiary and project management



Key Sustainable
Development Goals targeted

Project code: CZZ2857

Togo

Supporting the Novissi program to provide safety-net income as part of Togo's Covid-19 response



This project provided support to the Novissi program, established by the Togolese Government. Novissi ("mutual aid" in Mina and Ewé) is one of the socio-economic components of Togo's crisis-response plan.

BACKGROUND

Economic repercussions from the health crisis were felt in Togo as early as April 2020, and the country suffered a sharp decline in its expected growth rate compared to previous years. The Government therefore developed measures to maintain economic productivity and to prevent excessive poverty among informal workers, who were disproportionately affected by the crisis and its impacts.

Togo's response plan included a healthcare component and an economic and social component in the form of its Solidarity and Economic Recovery Fund. A key component of the response plan was Novissi, a temporary cash-transfer program to partially offset the loss of income among its beneficiaries.

DESCRIPTION

The project provided support to vulnerable people in the informal sector, using response measures that (I) provided them with financial assistance to ensure their livelihoods and (II) promoted economic recovery by maintaining human and physical capital.

Many people working in the informal sector lost their daily income as a result of health-response measures, such as lock-downs. In this program, they received substitute income through a series of unconditional cash transfers via mobile money. Female beneficiaries received 12,250 CFA francs per month and male beneficiaries 10,500 CFA francs per month, via transfers made every two weeks to their e-wallet.

RESULTS

AFD's contribution enabled about 360,000 payments to workers in the informal sector who lost income. Ultimately, the program aims to keep those households out of poverty. Finally, by giving people the means to cope with the crisis, Togo is protecting the human and physical capital needed for its economic recovery.



TOGO
Country



June 30, 2020
Date agreement signed



Health and social protection
Sector

1 year
Financing duration



Grant
Financing tool



€3 million
Financing amount

Government of Togo
Beneficiary



Key Sustainable
Development Goals targeted

Project code: CTG1243

Multi-country

Afro-Screen: Enhancing Genomic Sequencing Capacities in Africa



Rapid sharing of information on genomic sequences is critical in the current context of the pandemic. The Afro-Screen project is helping to build an African surveillance network that will enhance laboratory capacity, improve data sharing, and ensure effective monitoring of virus circulation.

BACKGROUND

The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the lingering disparities in virological surveillance capabilities to track and trace viruses, among continents. In Africa, a lack of data makes it more difficult to examine and understand the epidemiological situation. And while it has been possible to report swiftly on the circulation of known variants in some countries, SARS-CoV-2 will continue to mutate, with serious consequences for the evolution of the epidemic. For this reason, it is crucial to enhance genomic sequencing systems, which is the main public-health tool for detecting and containing potentially epidemic pathogens. Such systems will enable more precise monitoring of the evolution, circulation, and clinical impact of variants in the population, as well as more appropriate adaptation of public-health policies.

DESCRIPTION

The project helps monitor the evolution of SARS-CoV-2 variants and other emerging pathogens by strengthening laboratory sequencing capacities in 13 sub-Saharan African countries. It will also monitor variant circulation dynamics, actions that will be key in applying preventive measures to control, if not limit, their circulation.

To reach this goal, the project seeks to (i) strengthen the sequencing or PCR-screening test capacities of target laboratories (via training and equipment); (ii) detect and monitor any emerging variants; (iii) rapidly alert health authorities and the international community in the event of the emergence of variants of interest; (iv) investigate the circulation of variants of interest in Africa; (v) improve the response to Covid-19; and (vi) prepare countries to deal with future outbreaks of infectious diseases.

RESULTS

Afro-Screen is a response to an urgent need to monitor the evolution of SARS-CoV-2 and to support laboratories and information systems.

By helping to strengthen the regional network for monitoring variants, the project provides national and regional health authorities with evidence-based data to help guide their prevention and Covid-19 response strategy.

Over the long term, the program will consolidate a sustainable network of technology platforms for virological surveillance in Africa. This network could be applied to many issues, including a "One Health" approach.



**BENIN, BURKINA FASO,
CAMEROON, CENTRAL AFRICAN
REPUBLIC, CÔTE D'IVOIRE,
DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC
OF CONGO, GHANA, GUINEA,
MADAGASCAR, MALI,
NIGER, SENEGAL, TOGO**
Countries



July 16, 2021
Date agreement signed



Health and social protection
Sector



2 years
Financing duration



Grant
Financing tool



€10 million
Financing amount

ANRS|EID, Institut Pasteur, IRD
Beneficiaries



**Key Sustainable
Development Goals targeted**

Project code: CZZ3209

Multi-country

Improving health security in the Indian Ocean region



This project, now in its third phase, aims to strengthen health security in the Indian Ocean region and improve people's living conditions through a "One Health" approach to disease surveillance that integrates human, animal, and environmental health.

BACKGROUND

The Covid-19 pandemic of 2020 put severe pressure on health systems, and especially on their human resources and medical equipment. The Member States of the Indian Ocean Commission (IOC), seeing that their region was not spared, have been working on controlling the epidemic and its ensuing health crisis.

Despite their varied epidemiological patterns, the countries of the region are interdependent when facing an epidemic. Following the Chikungunya epidemic, IOC Member States joined forces to create a regional network for epidemic surveillance and alert management (SEGA One Health Network), coordinated by the IOC. The objectives of this network are epidemiological surveillance, regional alert and response management, training, and collaboration with the research world, using a "One Health" approach. AFD has supported the network since 2008.

DESCRIPTION

Under AFD's supervision, the IOC ensures the management of the project and its funds, with technical assistance. A regional steering committee chaired by the IOC General Secretariat was formed to monitor the project. The committee is made up of national focal points who represent each Member State and are appointed by their governments.

The project builds on actions already financed by AFD in support of the SEGA One Health Network. It aims to strengthen and sustain the capacities of the IOC and its Member States to manage epidemic and zoonotic risks through two objectives:

- Improve public-health surveillance, alert systems, and the response of IOC Member States and at the regional level;
- Strengthen strategic preparedness and response-planning mechanisms for pandemics such as Covid-19.

RESULTS

For the IOC and its Member States, the project provides capacity building in several areas, including epidemiological surveillance, diagnostics (tests and laboratories), epidemic prevention and control, as well as patient management (via equipment and medicines) and communication capacity building if needed. The project also supports the IOC in strengthening its collaborative efforts with the World Health Organization, the World Organisation for Animal Health, and the African Union's Africa CDC.



**COMOROS, MADAGASCAR,
SEYCHELLES, MAURITIUS**
Countries



December 16, 2020
Date agreement signed



Health and social protection
Sector

5 years
Financing duration



**European Union
delegated grant**
Financing tool



€8.7 million
Financing amount

Indian Ocean Commission
Beneficiary and project
management



Key Sustainable
Development Goals targeted

Project code: CZZ2159

Bangladesh

Budget support: health system strengthening and non-contributory health insurance



As part of its response to the Covid-19 epidemic, AFD is providing support to the Government of Bangladesh via a public-policy loan focused on its vaccination campaign and on strengthening its national health and social protection system.

BACKGROUND

Bangladesh suffers from a high prevalence of vector-borne diseases made worse by climate change, as well as from an increase in non-communicable diseases. Its hitherto limited public investment in the health sector has led to a shortage of qualified human resources, to the unequal distribution of infrastructure across the country and to a lack of equipment, especially in laboratories. As there is no public system for health insurance or risk sharing, patients can face high healthcare expenses that may push them into poverty.

DESCRIPTION

The project takes the form of a public-policy matrix that includes measures and indicators determined jointly with the Bangladeshi authorities and aimed at strengthening the resilience of the health and social protection system.

Its activities help to (I) back up the medical personnel involved in the Covid-19 response, (II) improve the quality of human resources and healthcare facilities as well as epidemiological surveillance by laboratories, (III) set up non-contributory health-insurance mechanisms, and (IV) encourage the increase in public spending for health.

The project works holistically to help strengthen the capacity of healthcare services to adapt to climate change, by improving surveillance of climate-sensitive diseases, energy efficiency of their facilities, and disaster risk preparedness. The project also promotes gender equality in access to vaccines, quality healthcare services, and health insurance, as well as wage bonuses for female medical personnel.

RESULTS

The main expected outcome is the medium- and long-term strengthening of Bangladesh's health and social protection system, and particularly to achieve the following:

- A critical level of immunity against Covid-19 among the population, by supporting the health response to this crisis
- A quality healthcare offer, via investments in infrastructure, in training of human resources, and in enhancement of epidemiological surveillance to detect emerging pathogens (including climate-sensitive diseases)
- Extension of universal health coverage via non-contributory insurance mechanisms



BANGLADESH

Country



November 10, 2021

Date agreement signed



Health and social protection

Sector

20 years

Financing duration



Sovereign loan

Financing tool



€200 million

Financing amount

Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

Beneficiary



Key Sustainable
Development Goals targeted

Project code: CBD1051

Dominican Republic

Supporting the health and social response to the crisis



As the Caribbean country most affected by Covid-19, the Dominican Republic called on the international community to help it deal with its health emergency and to strengthen the resilience of its health and social protection policies.

BACKGROUND

The Dominican Republic has been hard hit by the Covid-19 crisis. Despite its rapid economic development in recent years, the country's social model and health system were too fragile and ill-equipped to deal with such an epidemiological crisis, which occurred at the height of the tourist season. To protect its population and its still vulnerable health system, the Dominican authorities quickly adopted preventive measures that will have a social and economic impact that will last into the future.

DESCRIPTION

AFD, the top bilateral donor in the Dominican Republic, has provided the country with a public-policy loan focused on the health and social protection sectors, in response to the propagation of Covid-19 and its impact. This program, co-financed with the Inter-American Development Bank, involves a two-phase public-policy matrix. Its main objectives are (i) to respond to the emergency by supporting the most vulnerable workers, communities and economic stakeholders, and (ii) to strengthen the resilience of health and social policies and their capacity to respond to crises. The program also benefits from a European Union grant of €8 million, which will help implement a structural program for technical assistance to strengthen the epidemiological surveillance capacities of the health system as well as the resilience of social protection programs to future shocks.

In this way, AFD is not only responding to stakeholders' needs, but also contributing to an agenda for structural reforms and a long-term strategy that will help economic stakeholders and the most vulnerable communities.

RESULTS

This operation aided the Dominican Republic's efforts to limit the health, social, and economic impacts of the Covid-19 crisis, all the while maintaining a healthy public finance framework in 2020. It helped to maintain a minimum income for more than 650,000 workers in the formal sectors and kept more than 1.5 million poor households from falling into poverty or extreme poverty. The program also provides support to the authorities in the long recuperation phase that will follow.



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
Country



November 17, 2021
Date agreement signed



Health and social protection
Sector

20 years
Financing duration



Budget loan
Financing tool



€200 million
Financing amount

Government of the Dominican Republic
Beneficiary

Inter-American Development Bank, European Union
Financial partners



Key Sustainable Development Goals targeted

Project code: CD01084

Multi-country

Supporting the Covid-19 vaccine supply in Africa



AFD approved the financing of the program led by the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) to support the African mechanism for Covid-19 vaccine procurement.

BACKGROUND

While the first waves of the Covid-19 pandemic largely spared the health of Africans, the third wave in 2021 showed that there was continued risk. In fact, as of October, 2021, the percentage of Africans who had been fully vaccinated against Covid-19 was only 5%, compared to 36% worldwide. In response to this situation, the African Union and Africa CDC launched the African Vaccine Acquisition Trust (AVAT) initiative. It is based on the pooling of orders from African governments, thereby allowing for affordable and rapid access to safe vaccines in Africa. Its actions come in addition to the multilateral Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) facility, which relies primarily on donations from developed countries.

DESCRIPTION

The funding aims to help protect the people of Africa from the health and socio-economic effects of Covid-19. The two specific objectives are as follows:

- Support AVAT in its efforts to ensure facilitated, accelerated, and affordable access to Covid-19 vaccines
- Support a reputable regional financial player in its ability to provide innovative financial instruments to respond to crises.

To achieve these objectives, the project provides a €50-million credit line to Afreximbank to support the payment-facility mechanism proposed as part of AVAT. The funds will then be allocated to African States according to the eligibility criteria set with AFD.

RESULTS

African governments will have facilitated, affordable, and rapid access to safe vaccines, either from Johnson & Johnson (via a contract) or that are at least WHO-approved.

Widespread vaccination should also promote a return to normal economic conditions and growth, at least on the same trajectory as before the pandemic.

AFRICA
Country

February 17, 2022
Date agreement signed

Banking and finance
Health and social protection
Sectors

8 years
Financing duration

Non-sovereign loan
Financing tool

€50 million
Financing amount

Afreximbank
Beneficiary and project management



Key Sustainable Development Goals targeted

Project code: CZZ3239

Multi-country

Strengthening African pharmaceutical sovereignty through investment in local production capacities



Unequal access to Covid-19 vaccines around the globe has made it essential to strengthen pharmaceutical sovereignty in Africa and thereby reduce its dependence on imports.

Together with its European partners, AFD supports the strategy of the African Union and Africa CDC to develop regional vaccine-production platforms, by strengthening local industries and their ecosystems.

ASPEN PHARMACARE HOLDINGS LIMITED

Proparco, in partnership with IFC (the World Bank's financing arm), DEG (the German Development Finance Institution) and DFC (the US International Development Finance Corporation), is providing loans to Aspen, a South African pharmaceutical group, to refinance its debt and improve its business results. These loans are supporting Aspen's operations, especially the production of vaccines and other therapies for African and emerging markets. The goal is to improve the availability of essential pharmaceutical products, such as Covid-19 vaccines and drugs for thrombosis, in developing countries.



SOUTH AFRICA

Country



August 19, 2021

Date agreement signed



Loans

Financing tool



€156 million

Financing amount

Aspen Finance Proprietary Ltd
Client

SUPPORT FOR THE PHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR IN SENEGAL

Based on its long-term partnership with the Institut Pasteur of Dakar Foundation (FIPD) for the construction of a new yellow fever vaccine-production unit, AFD has contributed to the seed fund for financing a regional vaccine-production platform initiated by the FIPD. European partners, DFC, and IFC are also participating in the project.

AFD funding goes beyond providing direct support for starting up this industrial project. To promote a more structured approach to strengthening local production capacities, it is supporting the Senegalese Government in the implementation of its recovery plan for the pharmaceutical sector, with the goal of meeting 50% of the country's needs in health products by producing them domestically by 2050. This public-policy loan has several specific objectives:

- Consolidate the regulatory framework and institutions to ensure the quality of health products
- Train the number of people necessary for a sustainable local pharmaceutical industry
- Boost Senegal's vaccine-production capacities via the FIPD
- Promote an investment environment conducive to the development of industrial projects in the pharmaceutical sector



SENEGAL

Country



June 30, 2021 and May 18, 2022

Dates granted



Grants and sovereign loan

Financing tools



€1.5 million and €25 million

Financing amounts

**Institut Pasteur of Dakar Foundation
and the Senegalese Government**
Beneficiaries



Health and social protection
Sector



Key Sustainable
Development Goals targeted

Agence Française de Développement (AFD) implements France's policy on international development and solidarity. Through its financing of NGOs and the public sector, as well as its research and publications, AFD supports and accelerates transitions towards a fairer, more resilient world. It also provides training in sustainable development (at AFD Campus) and other awareness-raising activities in France.

With our partners, we are building shared solutions with and for the people of the Global South. Our teams are at work on more than 4,000 projects in the field, in the French Overseas Departments and Territories, in 115 countries and in regions in crisis. We strive to protect global public goods – promoting a stable climate, biodiversity and peace, as well as gender equality, education and healthcare. In this way, we contribute to the commitment of France and the French people to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Towards a world in common.



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