

Research Networks for Health Innovations in Sub-Saharan Africa

Funding initiative of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF)

Based on the German Federal Government's Strategy for the Internationalization of Education, Science and Research and the implementation of the "Neglected and Poverty-Associated Diseases" funding concept, up to 50 Million Euros are earmarked for strengthening health research in sub-Saharan African countries between 2016 and 2023. The funding initiative "Research Networks for Health Innovations in Sub-Saharan Africa" directed at African and German research institutions intends to contribute to the improvement of diagnosis and treatment of neglected and poverty-related diseases. GIZ has been commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) to support the African partners and acts for the first time on behalf of the BMBF as an implementing organisation in the capacity of a project-executing agency. The implementation of the project is characterised by close cooperation between the BMBF, the DLR Project Management Agency (DLR-PT) and the GIZ.

DLR-PT has many years of experience acting as a project management agency for the BMBF. It coordinates the technical conception and implementation of the network projects. Further, DLR-PT supports the German research institutions. GIZ supports the African partners, respectively.

As an implementation organization, GIZ is tasked with ensuring the application of German budgetary law as well as the technical and financial monitoring of African grantees. In this context, GIZ assumes the financial and contract management of the BMBF funding program in Africa. In order for the African partners to be successful in the networks and to use the funds properly, GIZ is specifically strengthening the grantees' personnel resources and institutional capacities.

With the support of its external structures, GIZ is also responsible for on-site visits as well as the review of financial statements.

By 2023, 26 research institutes in 14 African countries will be supported as grantees based on the respective grant agreements (see figure). The main goal of the funding initiative is the expansion of German-African research consortia based on existing structures (networks, partnerships, centers and universities). To this end, German research institutes (for example, universities and clinics, German centers of health research) were integrated into the research consortia. The prioritization of the research objectives and the regional focus was primarily realised by the African partners. The networks have the following thematic focuses:

The **ANDEMIA** network is dedicated to the research, detection, treatment and prevention of acute respiratory and gastrointestinal infections as well as acute febrile diseases with unknown causes. For this purpose, an observation program is being implemented in the African partner countries, using meaningful data at strategically relevant hospitals. Subsequently, analyses based on the database will be conducted and appropriate countermeasures developed.

CEBHA+ collects and analyzes care-related data on diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Primary research and evidence synthesis in the areas of diabetes and hypertension will provide the basis for an evidence-based policy. Furthermore, CEBHA+ centers of excellence will be set up, nationally or transnationally, which will provide advice to healthcare institutions in the future.

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CYSTINET-Africa investigates cysticercosis, especially the infestation of the nervous system by parasites, as it is the most common cause of epilepsy in Africa. The project pursues the one-health concept, i.e. the simultaneous treatment of the human and veterinary aspects. Another important component of the project is the development of education materials for schools and the wider public in order to increase knowledge about disease pathways and infection prevention among the population.

TAKeOFF researches the lymphatic filariasis, a parasitic disease, in its most severe form known as elephant disease. The TAKeOFF network has set itself the goal of establishing a platform for clinical studies and research in the field of filarial infections (F-CuRE). The task of the platform is, on the one hand, the preparation and execution of clinical trials on new treatment and diagnostic options; on the other hand, the platform will promote training for scientists and clinicians, with the involvement of the African Ministries of Health and WHO control programs.

TB-Sequel researches comorbidity, risk factors, and long-term complications of tuberculosis with regard to those affected, their families, society, and public health. At the center of the scientific activities is a prospective cohort study with up to 1600 tuberculosis patients. Patients are followed up for at least two years after initiation of therapy. A further main objective of the project is the expansion of the structural and human capacities for the successful research and treatment of tuberculosis in the African partner countries.

In the interests of the sustainability of the projects, the African institutions will be supported and resources for capacity building of African scientists and their administrations will be provided. In addition, financial contributions and / or asset contributions will be expected from the African partners and verifiable development targets set.

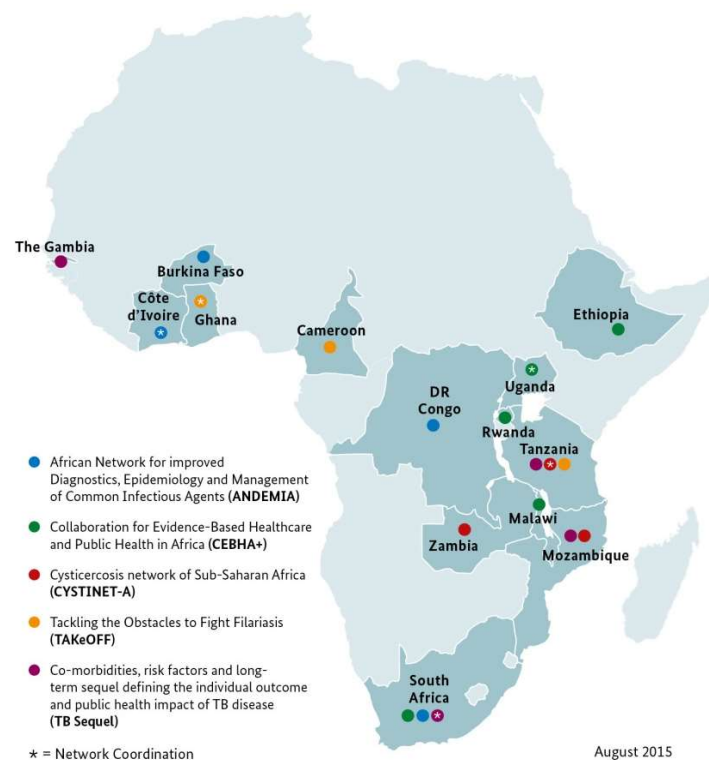


Figure: Geographical location of the supported health networks

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Deutsche Gesellschaft für
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Registered offices
Bonn and Eschborn, Germany

Friedrich-Ebert-Allee 36 + 40
53113 Bonn
T +49 228 44 60-0
F +49 228 4460-17 66

Dag-Hammarskjöld-Weg 1 - 5
65760 Eschborn
T +49 6196 79-0
F +49 6196 79-11 15

Publisher's address:
Potsdamer Platz 10
10785 Berlin, Germany
T +49 30 - 40 81 90 - 0
F +49 30 - 40 81 90 - 301
E giz-berlin@giz.de
I www.giz.de

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healthafrica@dlr.de
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