

Establishment and implementation of the West African biorisk management network: A progress report of the West African Health Organization

Olivier Manigart^{1,2,*}, Chinelo Ebruke^{1,2}, Nancy Adjami¹, Djibril Sangare³, Abiodun Denloye⁴, Maureen Ellis⁵, Issiaka Sombie¹, Abdourahmane Sow^{6,7}

¹West African Health Organisation, Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, ²GFA Consulting Group, GmbH, Hamburg, Germany, ³Malian Association for Biosafety and Biosecurity, Bamako, Mali, ⁴Nigerian Biological Safety Association, Lagos, Nigeria, ⁵International Federation of Biosafety Associations, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, ⁶Institut Pasteur de Dakar, Dakar, Sénégal, ⁷Département de Médecine Préventive et de Santé Publique, Faculté de Médecine, Pharmacie, Odontologie, Université Cheikh Anta Diop, Dakar, Sénégal

&Corresponding author: Olivier Manigart, West African Health Organisation, Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso **Email:** Olivier.Manigart@gfa-group.de

Citation: Olivier Manigart et al., Establishment and implementation of the West African biorisk management network: A progress report of the West African Health Organisation. *Journal of Interventional Epidemiology and Public Health*. 2025;8(ConfProc5):00235.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37432/JIEPH-CONFPRO5-00235>

LINK: <https://afenet-journal.org/establishment-and-implementation-of-the-west-african-biorisk-management-network-a-progress-report-of-the-west-african-health-organization/>

Received: 01/05/2025 **Accepted:** 09/07/2025 **Published:** 04/08/2025

Keywords: Biosafety, Biosecurity, Biological Waste Management, IFBA certified professionals

This is part of the proceedings of the ECOWAS 2nd Lassa fever International Conference in Abidjan, September 8 – 11, 2025

© Olivier Manigart et al. *Journal of Interventional Epidemiology and Public Health*. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution International 4.0 License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Introduction

In response to persistent gaps in Biorisk Management (BRM) implementation in West Africa, a unified effort among biosafety and biosecurity (B&B) stakeholders led to the creation of the WABNet. Coordinated by WAHO, WABNet brings together representatives from all 15 ECOWAS Member States, alongside partners such as GFA, Global Affairs Canada, IFBA, Africa CDC, WHO AFRO, ASLM, Fondation Mérieux, and others. Its mission is to build and sustain regional capacities for the safe and secure handling of high-consequence pathogens.

Methods

WABNet's establishment was guided by a series of stakeholder consultations, resulting in the formation of a Technical Working Group and the development of a five-year strategic plan. Regional workshops, involving representatives from all ECOWAS countries and partner institutions, were held to define strategic objectives and strengthen BRM. Training sessions and IFBA certification

workshops in BRM and Biological Waste Management (BWM) were conducted in partnership with Africa CDC, aiming to develop a skilled and certified B&B workforce across the region.

Results

Formally launched in 2021 during an online workshop, WABNet's five-year strategic plan and governance manual were technically validated in 2023. Since then, 70 professionals from both human and veterinary sectors across 15 countries have been trained and certified in BRM — including in eight countries that previously had no trained personnel. In BWM, the number of IFBA-certified professionals has increased from 2 to 36 across 11 countries. Furthermore, in addition to the five existing biosafety associations in the region, two new associations have recently been established.

Conclusion

The growing cadre of certified professionals is now positioned to cascade training and reinforce biosafety practices at national and subnational levels, supporting laboratories in aligning with international standards. The establishment and expansion of national B&B associations will also enhance advocacy, intersectoral collaboration, and policy engagement with relevant ministries across the ECOWAS region.