

Strengthening Infection Prevention and Control Capacities in West Africa: From National Trainings to Regional Preparedness

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Introduction

Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) remains a major challenge in West Africa due to persistent healthcare-associated infections (HAIs) and recurrent outbreaks like Mpox. Training is vital to build the capacity of health personnel and ensure patient safety. The West African Health Organization (WAHO) launched IPC strengthening initiatives focused on standardized healthcare worker training, improved outbreak preparedness, and systematic evaluation of national IPC systems. This paper highlights key outcomes and lessons from these efforts.

Methods

A mixed methods approach was used to assess outcomes and lessons from national and regional IPC trainings held from April to October 2024 in Togo and The Gambia. Health workers were purposively selected for the national sessions, which used the WHO-endorsed “Clean Box” method. A regional workshop with 13 ECOWAS countries used the WHO IPC Assessment Framework (IPCAF) to evaluate IPC programs. Pre- and post-training data were collected nationally, while the regional meeting included stakeholder consultations. Data analysis combined descriptive statistics with thematic content analysis.

Results

A total of 320 participants were trained at the national level. Post-training tests indicated that 85% of participants demonstrated proficiency in IPC skills, including PPE usage and environmental decontamination. In Togo, 60% of health centres adopted standardized waste disposal practices, compared to 33% in The Gambia. Regionally, the workshop produced 55 IPC trainers and harmonized Mpox response strategies, including triage protocols and border surveillance. IPCAF results revealed critical gaps in 70% of countries, especially in surveillance and resource allocation.

Conclusion

These initiatives strengthened alignment between national IPC efforts and regional preparedness. The Clean Box model proved adaptable, while IPCAF enabled targeted system improvements. This multilevel strategy highlights how standardized training and regional collaboration can enhance IPC systems, even in limited-resource settings. Sustained mentorship, funding, and institutionalization of best practices will be essential for long-term impact.