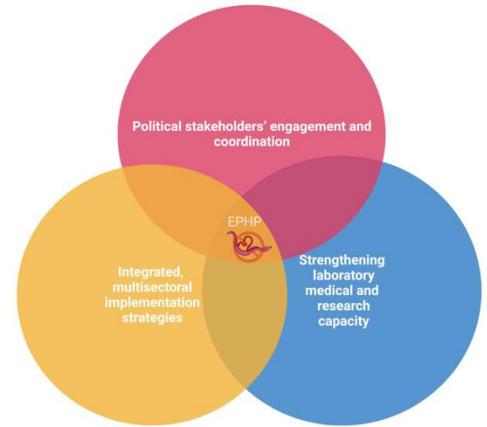


A strategy to boost the fight against schistosomiasis in Madagascar: the first result of our collaboration with the national schistosomiasis control programme in the frame of the ABCdM project

Recently, the Fusco group in collaboration with the National Schistosomiasis Control Programme (NSCP), national and international WHO representatives and members of the academy, developed and published a policy brief for the introduction of the novel WHO guidelines for schistosomiasis in Madagascar.

In this document the informal working group assessed challenges and opportunities of the National Healthcare System for the introduction of the new WHO recommendations for schistosomiasis. We proposed a three-pillar-based strategy focused on political engagement, multisectoral implementation strategies and strengthening biomedical and research capacities.

The document is one of the first results of the intensified collaboration with the NSCP that began in 2023. This collaboration includes logistical support and scientific partnership for the development of projects and activities to combat schistosomiasis. Since the beginning of the year the cooperation facilitated the prevalence assessment of the disease through the donation of five microscopes and supported the first Malagasy celebrations for the NTD day, raising awareness in the general population. In the future, the scientific collaboration will continue with the implementation of targeted projects to combat schistosomiasis in the country, particularly against female genital schistosomiasis.



Recommended actions to align Madagascar with the WHO 2030 NTD roadmap. EPHP, Elimination as a Public Health Problem.

The initiative is part of the activities of the project ABCdM (Assessing and Building Capacities: decentralized structures of the Madagascar Public Health System) started in 2023. In this project the BNITM collaborates with Robert Koch Institute (RKI) and local partners to assess the needs of the Malagasy health system, to improve surveillance and diagnostics for infectious diseases, and to develop a structured academic education plan for the country's future health personnel. ABCdM is a project financed in the frame of the Global Health Protection Program (GHPP) sponsored by the German Ministry of Health. Schistosomiasis, which has one of the highest worldwide prevalence in Madagascar, will be used as a paradigm for the need assessment. The BNITM is specifically involved in the decentralization of services for infectious diseases. Indeed, the Malagasy health system has a strong centralization of services that predisposes to inequalities, since 60% of the population lives in rural areas. With this project we will provide recommendations to guide the development of a National Centre for Disease Control (CDC) for communicable diseases such as plague, neglected tropical diseases (NTDs), and malaria, contributing to the overall improvement of the public health system.

To find out more about the analysis and the strategy we proposed:

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC10432657/pdf/bmjgh-2023-012598.pdf>



First Malagasy NTD day celebrations in Ampefy (11 February 2023). On the left: spectators waiting for the puppet show to begin. On the right: queue for free screening and treatment for NTDs