

The West African Consortium for Clinical Research on Epidemic Pathogens (WAC-CREP)

Statement on the ongoing MPOX outbreak in the African Region Following a two-day strategic meeting in Abidjan

Ibrahim F. Kamara¹, Alhaji U. N'jai^{2,3}, Cheick O. Tangara⁴, Gloria Mason⁵, Abdul N'jai⁶, Seydou Samake⁴, Alexandre Delamou⁷, Abdul H. Beavogui⁷, Mohamed L. Yansane⁷, Joseph A. Bore⁷, Petronille A. Zengbe⁸, Isaac Tiembre⁸, Mahamadou Diakite⁴, Moses Massaquoi⁹, Stephen Kennedy¹⁰, Seydou Doumbia⁴

¹World Health Organization, Freetown, Sierra Leone, ²Fourah Bay College, University of Sierra Leone, Freetown, Sierra Leone, ³Koinadugu College, Kabala, Sierra Leone, ⁴University Clinical Research Center of the University of Sciences, Techniques and Technology of Bamako, USTTB, Mali, ⁵National Research Ethics Board of Liberia/WACCREP/PREVAILE, ⁶Ministry of Health, Sierra Leone, ⁷University Gamal Abdel-Nasser of Conakry, Guinea, ⁸University Felix-Houphouet-Boigny, Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, ⁹WACCREP Liberia, ¹⁰University of Liberia/National Public Institute of Liberia (NPHIL)

Monkey Pox (Mpox) has been declared a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) on August 14th, 2024. This followed an earlier declaration of Mpox as a public health emergency of continental security by Africa CDC due to the upsurge of Mpox in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and a growing number of countries in Africa being affected. As of August 26, about 13 African countries have reported 3,381 confirmed Mpox cases and 590 deaths (26 August 2024: Mpox Situation in Africa, Africa CDC). In the Western Africa region, Cote d'Ivoire (28 cases, 1 death), Nigeria (39, 0 death) and Liberia (6 cases, 0 death) are the most affected countries.

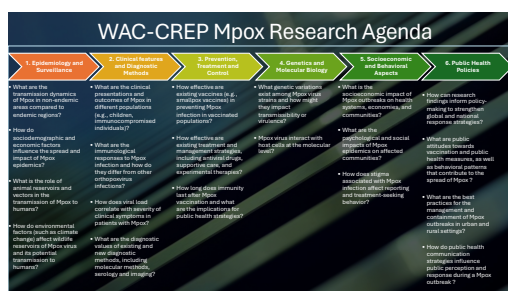
Mpox is a viral illness caused by the monkeypox virus, a species of the genus Orthopoxvirus. Two clades exist: Clade I, endemic to East and Central Africa, and

Clade II, endemic to West Africa. However, Clade IIb has also emerged.

The West Africa Consortium for Clinical Research on Epidemic Pathogens (WAC-CREP) has followed the 2022 mpox (Clade IIb) outbreak reported outside of Africa in countries without previously documented Mpox transmission. Due to sustained outbreak measures in these countries, the outbreak was declared over in 2023. However, the resurgence of the Mpox viral has occurred since the start of 2024, when countries in Africa started reporting cases of Mpox. The identification of a new strain that is rapidly spreading in the region is a concern that requires a concerted effort to prevent our health systems from being overwhelmed. In Cote d'Ivoire, one of the most affected West African countries, cases have been identified in 13 health districts with a high proportion of children under 15

(25%), but the epidemiological link between the different epidemic foci has not been established. However, new cases have been identified among registered contacts, highlighting the high risk for human-to-human transmission and the geographic expansion into previously unaffected areas, given population movement across borders. The current epidemiological situation raises several knowledge gaps in transmission, prevention, and treatment that require well-coordinated multidisciplinary, multicountry Research to inform and guide policy-making decisions and public health response to the mpox epidemic.

WAC-CREP, a clinical research consortium created in the aftermath of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, has a decade of technical and leadership experience in clinical research. This includes vaccine and therapeutics trials during epidemics, epidemic disease surveillance, and ethics research. Following a two-day strategic meeting in Abidjan on 27-28th August 2024, the consortium has set a comprehensive research agenda for Mpox. This agenda aims to address several key areas to understand better and control the disease, including Epidemiology and Surveillance, Clinical characteristics and Diagnostics, Prevention and Treatment and Control, Virology and Genomics, Socioeconomic, Behavioural Aspects, and Public Health Policy Methods.



WAC-CREP has notable achievements in clinical research related to preparedness and response to outbreaks. The consortium is committed to collaborating with other research initiatives, such as the MpoxRec, to support the efforts of governments, ministries of health, and national public health agencies in preparing and responding effectively to the Mpox outbreak in the region.

Research Institutions and Universities

Institutions	Country
National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL)	Liberia
Ministry of Health Liberia (MoH)	Liberia
National Research Ethics Board (NREB)	Liberia
Partnership for Research on Vaccines and Infectious Diseases in Liberia (PREVAIL)	Liberia
University of Liberia (UoL)	Liberia
University of Sciences, Techniques and Technology of Bamako (USTTB) The University Clinical Research Center (UCRC) and Malaria Research Training Center (MRTC) program	Mali
Ministry of Health of Mali	Mali
National Institute of Public Health Mali	Mali
Center for Vaccine Development, (CVD)	Mali
Center of Research and Biomedical Analysis (CRAM) Macenta	Guinea
National Center for Training and Research in Rural Health of Maferinyah (NCTRRH)	Guinea
National Institute of Public Health Guinea	Guinea
Gamal Abdel Nasser University of Conakry (UGAN)	Guinea
Ministry of Health of Guinea	Guinea
College of Medicine and Allied Health Sciences, (CMAHS) University of Sierra Leone	Sierra Leone
Ministry of Health	Sierra Leone
Fourah Bay College (FBC)	Sierra Leone
National Public Health Agency (NPHA)	Sierra Leone
University Felix Houphouet Boigny (UFHB)	Cote d'Ivoire

Partners Institutions

1. National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Disease (NIAID), National Institute of Health
2. National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM)
3. John Snow Institute (JSI)
4. National Public Health Institute of Liberia (NPHIL)
5. Africa One Health University Networks (AFROHUN)
6. The Global Health Network (TGHN)

7. Tropical Disease Research Special Project (TDR)
8. West African Research Network in Infectious Diseases (WARN-ID)
9. International entities: The World Bank; World Health Organization.