

Breakthrough ACTION-Mali

Breakthrough ACTION is an eight-year cooperative agreement of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) created to lead its program for social and behavior change around the world.

Breakthrough ACTION is led by the Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs (CCP) in collaboration with partners Save the Children, ideas42, ThinkPlace, Camber Collective, and Viamo.

The vision of Breakthrough ACTION is to inspire collective action using next-generation social and behavior change approaches to empower households and communities to become healthier and more prosperous. To inspire lasting change, the project harnesses the power of communication- ranging from media campaigns to community activities - along with other innovative approaches such as marketing science, behavioral economics and human-centered design. Breakthrough ACTION has had projects in 44 countries to date; it has been active in Mali since 2018.

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In Mali, Breakthrough ACTION's portfolio has included ~\$5.3 million for Global Health Security (GHS) activities, ~\$3.1 million for COVID-19 response (prevention and vaccination) funded through the American Rescue Plan (ARP); and \$300,000 in short-term regional Ebola response funding in 2021.

The project's core focus is on increasing national capacity for effective "One Health" risk communication and community engagement (RCCE), as measured by the WHO's Joint External Evaluation (JEE) 3.0 indicators, for country- prioritized zoonotic diseases as well as for other real-time, infectious disease outbreaks like COVID-19.

Objective: Strengthen Core RCCE Capacities

Breakthrough ACTION works to sustainably improve Mali's performance against WHO International Health Regulations (IHR) criteria, focusing on the three RCCE indicators in the JEE:

Risk Communication Systems: The project supports the establishment and strengthening of norms, standards, plans, strategies, tools and mechanisms that enable RCCE in emergencies, including ensuring inclusive, multisectoral coordination of RCCE efforts across partners.

Risk Communication: The project enhances capacity for multichannel public communication around outbreaks, from traditional mass media to digital communication and social media channels. It also supports establishment of online and offline infodemic management tools and processes.

Community Engagement: The project strengthens capacities to ensure communities' rapid, full participation during outbreaks, including by training, supporting and mobilizing networks of community and civil society leaders.

Breakthrough ACTION takes a « One Health » approach, ensuring participation of human, animal and environmental health stakeholders in RCCE. GHS activities address priority zoonotic diseases in Mali (rabies, zoonotic influenza, anthrax, bovine TB, and viral hemorrhagic fevers), but strengthen country capacity to respond to any epidemic.

The project partners with the National Center for Health Information, Education and Communication (CNIECS), the National Agency for Telemedicine and Medical Informatics (ANTIM), the One Health Platform Ministries, and many other partners to achieve its results.



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Key activities and results: Global Health Security

Breakthrough ACTION's activities under GHS since 2018 have led to **increases in JEE capacity scores from 1-2 to 3** (in all areas) demonstrated on the September 2023 JEE exercise.

RCCE Systems and Coordination: Breakthrough ACTION supported development of a National RCCE Strategy, message guide, standard operating procedures, and training on RCCE principles, and trained cadres from One Health platform members to civil society on RCCE. The project also provided support to advocacy for One Health priorities, helped to establish a working group to coordinate RCCE efforts, and organized an emergency simulation exercise.

Risk Communication: Breakthrough ACTION trained journalists to cover PZDs and produced numerous public communication materials for PZDs and One Health, mounting an integrated campaign addressing cross cutting risk behaviors, grounded in its own innovative formative research on PZDs. The project also developed numerous standalone mass media products, including in sign language and braille, for specific PZDs. With project support, the country established a Rumor Management Unit and a set of processes to continuously collect and analyze information on public perceptions from social media, the call center, and communities and develop a response to the prioritized concerns.

Community Engagement: Breakthrough ACTION trained and built partnerships with many women's and youth organizations, across five regions, to support intensive mobilization of communities through regular dialogues around PZD-related risks. The project utilized human-centered design to develop new approaches to engage communities, including designing a hybrid radio/WhatsApp intervention for animal owners, *On Pense a Toi*, that proved popular and was later expanded.

Key activities and results: COVID-19

Through ARP, Breakthrough ACTION Mali has supported multiple phases of COVID-19 response, from the initial outbreak through introduction of vaccines; gradual expansion of vaccine eligibility from high-risk groups to all adults, adolescents, and pregnant women; and finally, to integration of COVID vaccines with routine health services. Project efforts contributed to a **vaccination rate of 56% of eligible people** by January 2024 (NIC Mali).

RCCE Systems and Coordination: The project supported development of COVID-19 communication plans, message guides, and other technical and advocacy guidance, and helped to maintain coordination via supporting the COVID-19 Commission and National Immunization Center to convene partners throughout the pandemic. The project supported the RMU (see GHS section) to continuously identify and address COVID-related misinformation surfacing online and in communities. It also trained journalists, community leaders and many other RCCE cadres to support COVID-19 response.

Risk Communication: With CNEICS, the project co-developed a wide range of diverse communication materials (Visuals, billboards, spots, microprograms, digital products, IVR messaging) to resonate with diverse target groups as eligibility for vaccines expanded. The project trained CNEICS to make strategic use of social media platforms to address misinformation at its common source.

Community Engagement : Breakthrough ACTION leveraged the same trained partner associations involved in GHS activities to address COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy in communities. The door-to-door community engagement approach championed and supported by the project was ultimately scaled by the government and partners.

For more information on Breakthrough ACTION's work in Mali, contact Chief of Party, Dr. Aoua Konare at akonar1@jhu.edu.

