



MSF/Epicentre Niger Research Center



Primary outcome

Strengthen the capacity of Epicentre Niger’s medical and scientific staff, reinforcing Epicentre’s ties to the local authorities to guarantee an effective and rapid response to health crises and improve fundraising capacity.

Overview

In Niger, infectious diseases and child malnutrition are the principle causes of mortality. In 2009 Epicentre, MSF’s research and training arm, established its third [research center in Niger](#), adding to the existing ones in Paris and Uganda. Their goal was to create a West African hub to develop implementable solutions to clinical and public health issues. Since then, the Niger Research Center has developed a strong research portfolio and built capacity to investigate epidemics, conduct clinical trials and prevalence surveys and implement alerting and monitoring systems while working closely with the Niger Ministry of Health. However, Niger and the Sahel remain one of the least developed regions in the world with poor academic, research and health infrastructure.

The Elsevier Foundation partnership supports the visibility and policymaking engagement of the Niger Hub within the West African health community as well as the training of Epicentre Niger’s staff. Key scientific staff such as field investigators, lab technicians, epidemiologists and clinical statisticians have received advanced individual and institutional training in technical areas and have been able to present at Epicentre’s Scientific and Medical Days, attend courses and conferences, build international networks, and take up other training assignments in MSF programs and African research centers.

Location: Niger

Target group: Epicentre Niger staff, local communities, health researchers and policymakers in West Africa.

Budget: \$100,000 a year (2016-2022)

Goals

- Provide opportunities outside of Niger for Epicentre’s staff to receive additional training to further their careers, develop their own research programs and lead locally relevant research.
- Encourage medical and scientific staff from Niger and surrounding countries to be mentored and mentor others to sustain a vibrant research culture.
- Provide opportunities for staff to promote Epicentre’s visibility and encourage discussion on pressing medical research issues.
- Provide internet infrastructure to improve capacity to conduct research, including access to Elsevier's in-kind content contributions: ScienceDirect, Scopus, Scival, Embase and Clinical Key.

Activities and milestones

- In April 2022, the [Organization for Women in Science for the Developing World](#) established its Niger National Chapter. The launch was hosted at the Epicentre Research Centre for Epidemiology in Maradi and Dr. Mariama Issoufou, Epicentre Niger’s Senior Site Physician was appointed Chapter Chair. The Chapter aims to raise awareness about STEM careers and the significance of higher education among researchers, provide entrepreneurship training, and increase visibility & recognition of the vital role women scientists play in Niger’s development.
- Build capacity through conference and educational support:
 - 2 staff members participated in the annual Multi-Stage Malaria Vaccine Consortium meeting funded by the European Union and the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCPT) to review and discuss ongoing malaria vaccine trials.
 - 1 staff member participated in an Advanced Course of Vaccinology (ADVAC) for decision-makers, including academia, industry, governmental and NGO agencies.
 - 1 staff member provided support and guidance to the Medical and Health Research Center (CERMES) in Niger
 - 1 staff member from Epicentre Niger has been accepted into the Public Health Doctorate (PHD) program at the University of Florida.

- All Epicentre Niger’s research staff now have a functioning level of the English language, Epicentre has launched a series of monthly seminars to provide a platform for researchers to enhance their English communication skills and engage with anglophone researchers from across other organizations.
- Epicentre Niger's Staff participated in Maradi University's 2022 Scientific Day in Maradi, located in Epicentre Niger’s headquarters.
- The Maradi based laboratory team at Epicentre Niger has collaborated with the Maradi’s Regional Hospital Center through a joint effort to share technical knowledge and expertise, contributing to enhanced quality of healthcare services in the Maradi Region.

Sustainability and future plans

Through early-stage funding from the Elsevier Foundation, Epicentre Niger was awarded a grant from the African Academy of Sciences for professional development in Niger together with a consortium of institutions including KEMRI. This joint capacity building grant will tackle target three key areas: support the research environment, training environment, and competence development.

“We are so proud to open the Niger chapter of OWSD thanks to the support of the Elsevier Foundation. It provides an important space for us to discuss and share how to navigate a scientific career as a woman in Niger.” — ISSAKA SOUMANA, Deputy Head, Epicentre Niger