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## EDITO – Strengthening Ethics Committees’ capacities

“African Ethics committees are facing, many challenges, both individually and collectively, even though the resources at their disposal are limited. Their responsibility is great: they enable research to progress while ensuring the best possible protection for research participants, as well as the respect for their rights. The AFREENET partners have in common that they have acquired considerable experience and knowledge in carrying out their duties, while sharing the same difficulties. The AFREENET project aims, over the next three years, to create synergies and a network, through knowledge transfer, sharing of good practices, and mutual capacity building. AFREENET, a shared adventure, a shared success. ”



**Virginie PIRARD**  
Coordinator  
Institut Pasteur (Paris)

## AFREENET : A project, A dynamic



"Ethics committees must discover and develop capacities to manage a system where opposing parameters, such as the strength of orality and the obligation to obtain a written signature, constantly coexist. Especially, in contexts where participants do not know the language used by the research, or can not read it. We start to adopt and like Ethics, by dedicating our time, our energy, our intelligence, and in fact our whole being."

**Prof. Flore GANGBO, President of CNERS of Benin**

## The AFREENET project Goals

The AFREENET project is a 3-year EDCTP funded project. Its goals are to support and reinforce the activities of three National Ethics Committees (NECs) located in West Africa : in Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea and Benin. In a collaborative and international effort to build-up a network between Ethics Committees, the project will aim :

- To implement a long-term based training programme for and by Ethics Committees’ members.
- To share good practices and reinforce SOPs including an Outbreak preparation plan.
- To reinforce the monitoring capacity of NECs.
- To increase the role of NECs in their interactions with Regulators, Research Institutes, Investigators.
- To create a Network of Excellence composed of NECs in Sub-Saharan African countries.

# AFREENET Project activities

The project is organised around 5 main activities, which will be deployed during the next three years (2018-2021), focused on the reinforcement of National Ethics Committees' capacities. Each activity will lead to results which will be shared with external stakeholders, among them ethics committees, research institutes, international organisations, etc.



## REINFORCEMENT OF LOGISTICS & SUPPORT

Contact : Samira OUCHHI (Institut Pasteur)

One of the daily challenges faced by many ethics committees is the lack of resources to conduct their activities. This action aims to establish a favorable **material environment and human resources support** needed in each National Ethics Committees, upon their needs. This action starts from the very beginning of the project, according a **"deployment plan"** developed in and by each National Ethics Committee, with the support of the Coordinator team.

## TRAINING PROGRAM & TRAINING CAPACITY

Contact : Virginie PIRARD (Institut Pasteur)

This action is at the core of the project, and implies a close collaboration between partners. First, a **"training curricula"** will be elaborated at the beginning of the project to define which path should be followed to integrate new members in an Ethics Committee, and maintain a high level of ethical skills. Second, an **ethics and participative training** will be organized with and at each NEC during the first months of the project on ethics basics, and on specific ethical issues such as clinical trials, genomics, etc. Third, a **"pool of ethics trainers"** will be trained in each NEC to establish a long-term internal "training capacity".



## SOPs & OUTBREAK PREPARATION PLAN

Contact : Oumou BAH SOW (CNERS of Guinea)

**Standard Operational Procedures** describe the functioning of Ethics Committees. AFREENET partners will share their experiences and good practices, to propose harmonization, to identify common challenges, and suggest solutions that may help the overall evaluation process established in each country. One major action will focus on **the preparation of NECs to outbreaks and emergency situations**. The CNERS of Guinea will organize a workshop with AFREENET partners to share its experience following the Ebola crisis, and elaborate jointly an Outbreaks preparation plan. Results will be disseminated to a wide range of stakeholders, and first of all, National Ethics Committees.

## STRENGTHENING THE GLOBAL ETHICS OVERSIGHT

Contact : Flore GANGBO (CNERS of Bénin)

NECs interact with different types of stakeholders: investigators, regulators and research institutes. They can sensitize them to reinforce the global ethics oversight. First, AFREENET partners will work together to reinforce their **monitoring capacity**, with the identification of good practices and their implementation during the project. Second, AFREENET partners will be involved in the **reinforcement of their interactions with regulators**. They will scrutinize what are the needs in terms of biomedical regulation, and following this, they will reinforce their communication with regulators. Third, each NEC will have **contacts with research institutions, hospitals**, where institutional ethics committees can be potentially established, to sensitize them and inform them on ethics committees' role.



## NETWORK & DISSEMINATION

Contact : Louis PENALI (CNESVS of Cote d'Ivoire)

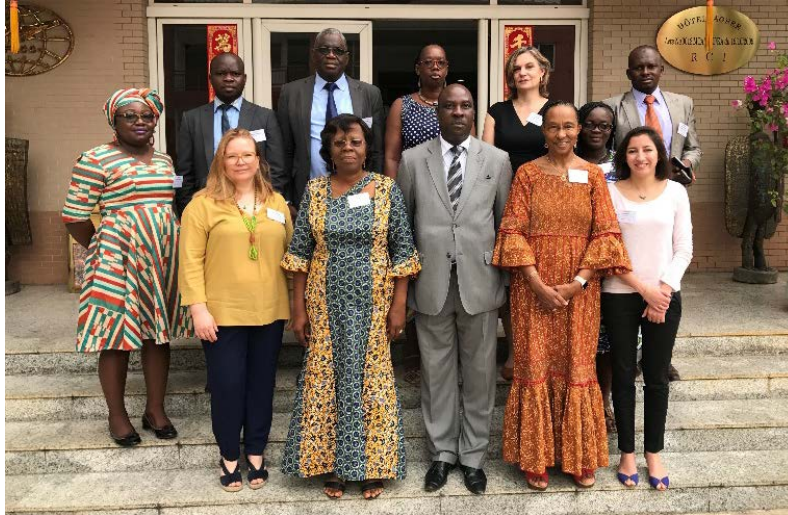
AFREENET aims to create **a network of NECs located in the French speaking West African region**. The purpose of this action is to support the establishment of a long-term network of ethics committees, sharing experiences and good practices, and building up their visibility. A dissemination of results will be managed in order to open the discussion with external stakeholders, such as the participation to **international conferences and publications**. Information on the project will be shared on each partners' websites, as part of the reinforcement of their visibility.

## AFREENET - PAST EVENTS

### ● AFREENET Kick-Off Meeting, March 27-28<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire

Organized by the CNESVS of Côte d'Ivoire, the AFREENET consortium attended its kick-off meeting on March 27-28, 2018 in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire). At this meeting, the President of the CNESVS of Côte d'Ivoire, the President of the CNERS of Guinea, the President of the CNERS of Benin, and the Ethics Unit of Institut Pasteur (Coordinator), and the Deputy Director of the Legal Department of Institut Pasteur, launched the project. A description of tasks and expected results were highlighted, next steps were scheduled and common challenges were identified during this first meeting.

<https://www.pasteur.fr/en/institut-pasteur/institut-pasteur-throughout-world/news/project-strengthen-national-ethics-committees-francophone-africa>



AFREENET consortium, March 27-28<sup>th</sup> 2018, in Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire)

### ● 12th Global Summit, 22-24<sup>th</sup> March, 2018, Dakar, Senegal

Supported by EDCTP, AFREENET partners attended the Global Summit organized by the Global Health Ethics Unit of WHO. This biannual event gathered National Ethics Committees, over the world, to discuss and develop consensus on a wide range of prominent ethical topics. In Dakar, under the theme of "Bioethics, Sustainable Development and Societies", this Summit focused on the following topics: (i) Bioethics, social justice and civil society, (ii) Bioethics in electronic data era, (iii) Bioethics, health emergencies and resilience. AFREENET partners also attended the workshop organized by ALERTT (EDCTP funded project) and WHO, on "Ethics preparedness".

<http://www.who.int/ethics/partnerships/globalsummit/en/>

<https://www.alerrt.global/content/joint-alerrt-who-workshop-ethics-preparedness-facilitating-ethics-review-during-outbreaks>

### ● 9th EDCTP Forum, 17-21 September, Lisbon, Portugal

The Coordinating team of Institut Pasteur, Virginie Pirard and Samira Ouchhi, and the President of the CNERS of Guinea attended the 9<sup>th</sup> EDCTP Forum to introduce the AFREENET project during a session dedicated to Ethics, which brought together several EDCTP-funded projects supporting Ethics Committees in Africa. It was the opportunity to discuss the key themes of the project with other participants and ethics committees from Africa.



## NEXT / ONGOING EVENTS

**In progress:** From October to December 2018, organization of a Training session entitled "The evaluation of research protocols by the National Ethics Committees: global approach and in-depth questions", specially designed by the Ethics Unit (Institut Pasteur, Paris) for the attention of the Research Ethics Committees in Benin, Côte d'Ivoire and Guinea.

**March 2019 :** Project Workshop in Guinea on SOPs and Outbreak Preparation Plan, and the Second Annual Steering committee meeting.

## AFREENET CONSORTIUM

AFREENET is a three year project involving 4 teams located in 4 countries, with the common aim to impulse a network of National Ethics Committees in West Africa. The project is coordinated by Institut Pasteur (France), and supports close collaboration between partners. Each partner is involved as leader of at least one activity, according its own expertise and experience. And all partners are invloved in all activities as contributors.



Picture : [link](#)

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<https://research.pasteur.fr/en/project/afreenet/>

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# AFREENET

Africa Ethics Excellence Network



EDCTP

AFREENET is part of the EDCTP2 programme supported by the European Union.



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