

HAND IN HAND AT ALL LEVELS

Cameroon is one of the first African countries which has mobilised to implement the One Health approach by developing a National Plan of Action. The plan involves collaboratively tackling zoonoses and food safety issues. By collaborating with four global organisations that aim to guide countries in addressing complex One Health challenges, Cameroon ensures the plan's comprehensiveness.

As coordinator of a regional fund for health promotion in the rural northern region of Cameroon, Adamawa, Madame Aïssatou Fanta knows what One Health means in practice: “We were invited to one of the meetings of the GIZ Programme,” she says. “The One Health approach enabled us to bring all actors together.”

“As this is a holistic approach, we realised that health is not just about humans, but also about animals and the environment,” Aïssatou adds. This was a big plus for her organisation, which primarily works with rural communities to promote public health services. Numerous training sessions on hygiene, dairy farming, and infection prevention at markets were held through Aïssatou Fanta's Fonds Regional in cooperation with several partner organisations of GIZ in Adamawa and central Cameroon.



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Validation of the One Health Action Plan

At the same time, an exciting process with a lasting impact on the country is also taking place at a global level. The Global Programme Pandemic Prevention and Response, One Health supported Cameroon to align its National Plan of Action with the One Health Joint Plan of Action of the Quadripartite. The Quadripartite – the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) – set out to guide countries in coordinating and collaborating among the human, veterinary, environmental health, and agricultural sector.

If Cameroon – a country with a rich biodiversity on the one hand, and many zoonotic diseases and challenges due to climate change on the other

hand – is well prepared, humans, animals and the whole environment will benefit hand in hand.



By building on developments concerning the OH approach that the country had already started in 2012 – still with a focus on zoonotic diseases at that time – GIZ built a bridge between the national and global level and accompanied all the parties involved in the process.

This year, Cameroon collaboratively developed and endorsed its National Action Plan on One Health in alignment with the Joint Plan of the Quadripartite. “Being context-specific and addressing the needs and gaps in the country, it both guides national actors and international cooperation,” Elisabeth Dibongue, Deputy Permanent Secretary of Cameroon's OH Platform, summarises. However, achieving this goal still requires a few more steps at the political level.

For Aïssatou Fanta, the woman from rural Adamawa, One Health already got real. “To make the One Health approach become alive here on the ground, we managed to set up dialogue structures in the communities,” she concludes with satisfaction. Until the end of August 2024, her organisation will implement trainings on raising awareness among 3,750 market traders and educate multipliers. Like the politicians in Yaoundé who sat at the table to develop Cameroon's National Action Plan, she is already realising this for her region, step by step.