



# Building One Health Club Capacity in Côte d'Ivoire: From Training Institutions to a Resilient Workforce

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## Introduction

In Côte d'Ivoire, addressing complex health challenges such as zoonoses, antimicrobial resistance, and environmental crises requires a workforce equipped with interdisciplinary collaboration skills. However, the country's student associative landscape has traditionally been dominated by sectoral organizations, focusing on religious, union-based, or sports orientations. These associations, while significant, often lack the platform to unite students across diverse academic disciplines and backgrounds. This gap limits the

opportunities for cross-disciplinary knowledge exchange, skill pooling, and collaborative problem-solving—essential components for tackling contemporary health and environmental issues. Furthermore, most university programs do not adequately emphasize the interdisciplinary approaches required to address such challenges, leaving graduates ill-prepared to navigate the complexities of public health and sustainable development.

To bridge this gap, AFROHUN Côte d'Ivoire, with support from USAID initiated the establishment

of Students One Health Innovation Clubs (SOHIC) in 2022. These clubs provide a dynamic platform for educating and training students on health-related topics, One Health competencies, and interdisciplinary research. SOHIC fosters collaboration among students from varied academic fields, promoting a holistic and integrated approach to addressing health challenges. By equipping students with practical skills and fostering a shared vision of global health, these clubs are creating a pipeline of professionals ready to address complex health challenges with innovative and sustainable solutions.

## Setup, Composition, and Activities of SOHICs

Student One Health Innovation Clubs (SOHICs) are strategically established within public universities across Côte d'Ivoire to serve as platforms for interdisciplinary collaboration. Each SOHIC is formally recognized by the respective university and operates under clear guidelines to ensure alignment with the One Health approach. SOHICs are initiated through sensitization workshops led by AFROHUN Côte d'Ivoire, where students and faculty are introduced to the One Health concept and its relevance to global health challenges. Clubs are institutionalized within their respective universities, gaining official recognition to operate on campus. Each club is managed by an executive committee comprising a president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and various committee heads, elected annually by the members.

### Composition

SOHICs are composed of students from diverse academic disciplines, fostering an environment of interdisciplinary learning and collaboration, ensuring inclusivity and diversity. Members include medical, veterinary science, environmental studies, economics, and humanities students. Efforts are made to encourage gender parity, with 35.3% of current members being women. As of 2023, SOHICs collectively boast 981 members across five universities.

### Stakeholder collaboration and support

SOHICs thrive due to the comprehensive support system provided by various stakeholders. AFROHUN Côte d'Ivoire funds club activities and provides technical assistance, including training materials and capacity-building workshops.

University authorities offer logistical support, such as meeting spaces and access to campus resources. Academic researchers and mentors provide guidance on project implementation and skill development. External organizations and local communities contribute through collaborations, resources, and technical expertise.

SOHICs play a pivotal role in addressing health challenges through:

- **Awareness Creation:** Educating university communities about One Health challenges and solutions.
- **Capacity Building:** Training members in leadership, public speaking, and technical skills relevant to One Health.



*Training on One Health competencies, leadership and risk communication and community engagement*

- **Research and Advocacy:** Conducting research projects and advocating for policy changes to promote integrated health approaches.

SOHICs undertake a variety of activities to advance their mission including:

1. **Training Workshops:** Organizing sessions on topics like rabies control, AMR, and zoonotic diseases, often culminating in certifications.
2. **Awareness Campaigns:** Leading initiatives on global health issues, including COVID-19 prevention and sanitation drives, reaching thousands of community members.



*Student engage in a clean up activities on a university campus (left) and at the beach (right)*

3. **Conferences and Seminars:** Hosting events to discuss interdisciplinary approaches to health challenges, involving experts and stakeholders.
4. **Community Engagement:** Collaborating with local communities to promote disease preventive behaviors and sustainable practices.



*Night and Day Rabies Awareness in the village of Bromakoté, 7 km from Bouna*



Night and Day Rabies Awareness in the village Bromakoté, 7 km from Bouna

5. **Skill Development:**

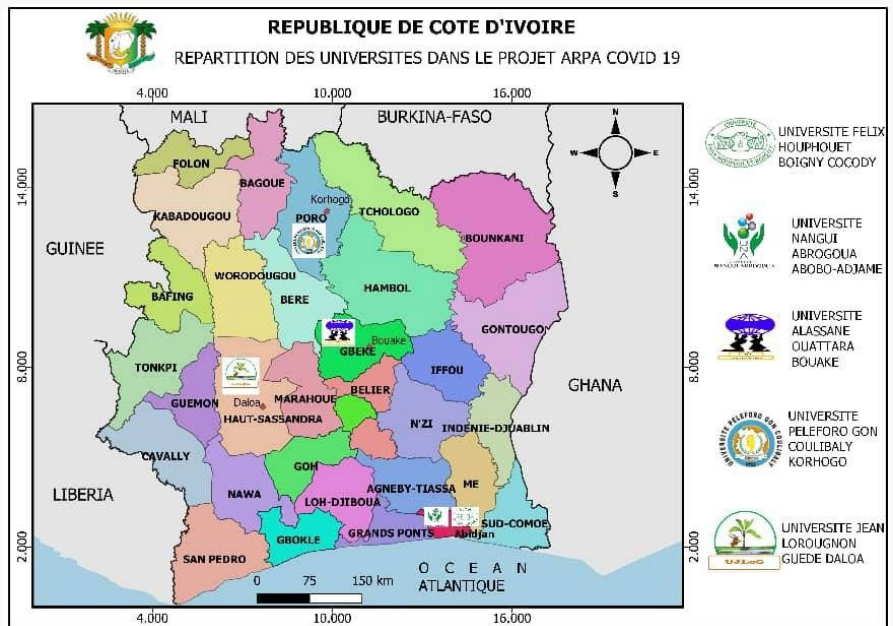
Offering training in essential tools like Microsoft Office, as well as public speaking and leadership.

Students hold discussion during a planning meeting for an activity



**Key Successes and outcomes**

**Establishment and Membership:** Five SOHIC clubs were institutionalized in public universities, including Félix Houphouët-Boigny University, Nangui Abrogoua University, Peleforo Gon Coulibaly University, Jean Lorougnon Guédé University, and Alassane Ouattara University. These clubs collectively have 981 members, with 35.3% women and 64.7% men. *“For every student who joins a One Health Club, a new opportunity arises to contribute to a world where human, animal, and environmental health harmoniously come together to*



address global health challenges.”  
— **POUHO Lewis**, Master’s student in Philosophy at Peleforo GON Coulibaly University in Korhogo, President of SOHIC-UPCG

**National Recognition:** SOHICs are recognized by the National One Health Platform as an initial training body and are invited to participate in events like World Rabies Day, Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Awareness Day, and One Health Day.

**Independent Initiatives:** The clubs organized workshops, conferences, and awareness campaigns on global health issues, such as COVID-19, rabies, sanitation, and AMR. These activities have fostered connections between human, animal, and environmental health.

**Community Impact:**

SOHICs reached over 11,842 people through COVID-19 and Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) awareness campaigns and trained 510 individuals, who earned the GARC rabies trainer certification. This certification empowers them to combat rabies through community awareness and prevention strategies. *“SOHICs represent much more than an academic framework; they are a true springboard for interdisciplinary collaboration, essential for building a sustainable future.”*

— **AHOUE Merrill Sephora**, undergraduate student in Economics and Management Sciences at Félix Houphouët-Boigny University in Cocody

**Capacity Building and local leadership development:**

Members gained skills in public speaking, leadership, and the use

of office tools like Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. The clubs have identified and trained young leaders capable of positively influencing their environment by promoting innovative solutions to health challenges.

**Model for Other Institutions:** SOHIC has become a reference for other universities, encouraging replication of this model in different regions.

**Network of Engaged Youth:** By uniting students from various universities under a common vision, SOHIC has built an active and dynamic community that strengthens social cohesion while addressing global health needs.

## LESSONS LEARNED

- 1. SOHICs underscore the value of engaging students from diverse academic disciplines to address complex public health challenges.** By fostering an environment of collaboration, these clubs enable the sharing of ideas and the development of innovative, interdisciplinary solutions. This inclusive framework enhances students’ ability to approach health issues from multiple perspectives.
- 2. Student Capacity Building** - Training sessions focused on leadership, public speaking, and technical tools like Microsoft Office have demonstrated that investing in students’ transferable skills enhances their effectiveness as agents of change. These skills benefit SOHIC initiatives and equip students for broader professional and societal contributions.
- 3. The autonomy displayed by SOHICs in organizing workshops, conferences, and awareness campaigns highlights the potential of youth-driven initiatives.** Empowering students to take responsibility for their activities fosters a sense of ownership and accountability, which is crucial for the sustainability of such programs.
- 4. Institutional Support** - The success of SOHICs has been significantly bolstered by the financial and technical backing from AFROHUN Côte d’Ivoire and the logistical and moral support provided by university authorities. This partnership illustrates the importance of creating enabling environments through institutional support to advance One Health initiatives.

## CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Challenges: The long-term future of clubs

- **Financial support:** One of the biggest challenges is the availability of stable funding to support club activities. Clubs are often dependent on AFROHUN grants, making long-term planning difficult.
- **Member commitment:** Ensuring active, ongoing member participation is a major challenge, as initial enthusiasm can wane over time.

### 2. Recommendations :

Identify and solicit local and international financial partners to support club activities.

- Organize regular team activities, symbolic rewards for the most committed members, and opportunities for personal visibility.
- Offer regular training to members to enhance their skills and maintain their interest in club activities.
- Set up a mentoring system and succession plan to identify and prepare new leaders within the clubs.

## CONCLUSION

The establishment of Student One Health Innovation Clubs (SOHICs) across Côte d'Ivoire's public universities by AFROHUN CI has been a resounding success. These clubs have proven that student engagement, fueled by a shared passion for improving health outcomes, can drive positive

change. By uniting students from various academic backgrounds under the One Health vision, SOHICs have effectively promoted awareness, fostered collaboration, and enhanced community health. With institutional support and the unwavering commitment of its members, SOHICs have achieved

remarkable milestones, including increased community engagement, leadership development, and the establishment of a dynamic youth network. They continue to play a pivotal role in advancing integrated health approaches, setting a benchmark for other institutions and regions to emulate.



## ABOUT AFROHUN

Africa One Health University Network (AFROHUN) is an international network, currently in 28 higher education institutions of public health, veterinary medicine, pathobiology, environmental sciences, medicine and global health, in 10 countries in Africa. The countries are *Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania and Uganda*. AROHUN is formerly OHCEA.

AFROHUN is working to transform the training environment and approaches in universities and allied institutions in Africa, to develop a One Health workforce: a workforce with no disciplinary boundaries. AFROHUN is building a workforce with competency to predict, detect and respond to the kind of complex health challenges we are witnessing today. To achieve this transformation, we are reviewing curricula, designing new and exciting experiential learning multidisciplinary training programs, re-tooling teachers and trainers, educating communities on existence and transmission of zoonotic and infectious diseases, while engaging national and sub-national governments to integrate One Health into national policy and strategic planning.

### For More Information about AFROHUN

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