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Advancing One Health

Local government training in One Health leadership for zoonotic diseases prevention, detection, and response.



Discussions in small groups are a key feature of Territory Administrator trainings. Photo Source: AFROHUN DRC



Background

The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is divided in 26 provinces. Each province is subdivided into four different entities: territory, sector or chiefdom, village agglomeration, and village. The village is the smallest entity. In total, there are 145 territory administrators assisted by 290 deputies. Cities are autonomous and run by a mayor and are divided into Commune. Each entity plays a key administrative, technical, economic, and political prerogative and is led by a person with a variety of competencies. Territory administrators and their deputies are trained in a specific curriculum.

Territory Administrators are key personnel working at the subnational level to provide leadership and oversight for the implementation of the government vision at the subnational level. They oversee all sectors for territory development. They are responsible for the health, security, and well-being of people and have a background or specific training in public administration.

Strengthening their capacities is at the heart of the Ministry of Interior's capacity-strengthening strategy. It's one of the priorities set out in the roadmap of the General Inspectorate of Territorial Agents (Inspection Générale de la Territoriale). DRC is increasingly challenged by epidemics and natural disasters with serious



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consequences on the health and well-being of communities. The unpreparedness of key actors, the weakness in coordination and communication but also and above all the absence of community engagement and commitment increase these consequences.

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Territory Administrators are local leaders acting as government representatives at the territory level. They oversee the management of all issues regarding the population they serve including outbreak management. Leadership is key in infectious disease management. Training territory administrators along with their

technical teams including district health officers, animal health officers, hygiene and environmental officers, and civil society representatives can strengthen leadership and collaboration in the management of health emergencies.

The management of epidemics has previously been considered a medical doctor's work. This training helped demonstrate the responsibility of Territory Administrators as heads of the territorial entities. It helped to reaffirm their leadership in working with the technical leads. This training helped everyone on the team to understand their role in risk analysis, preparedness, and response to health emergencies and risk communication for community engagement to involve their communities along the process.

The process

a) Developing a One Health Module

The development of the multidisciplinary One Health training module was an important process and starting point for the training. The process engaged faculty from the Kinshasa University School of Public Health, the School of Veterinary Medicine, the School of Social Sciences (anthropology), the Ministry of Health (Programme National des Urgences Humanitaires), and the Inspection Nationale de la Territoriale. Six workshops were supported by AFROHUN (OHCEA, then) to bring experts together to develop the content for the One Health Module. Drafts were developed and peer-reviewed during the workshops. This approach helped to refine the content according to the need and the level of Territorial Administrators. In this process, the Ministry of the Interior was involved not as consumers of the training but as owners, designers, and facilitators. The Ministry knows the territories and the capacity issues very well and they knew the targets for the training, so they were really in charge. For instance, according to Dr. Thierry Mukalakata, from the School of Veterinary Medicine, University of Kinshasa, who was one of the faculty taking part, this helped with understanding the new configuration of territories and provinces that had just been created at that time. The Activity Lead for this training, Mr. Didier Mulolo came from the Inspection de la Territoriale, Ministry of the Interior, which was a first since Activity Leads in all AFROHUN institutions were faculty based in the universities. It was an enriching experience for him and the others.

“There were heated discussions to determine the content, and agree on concepts and what they mean since people were coming from different backgrounds. But this was the price to pay, we had to be able to work in a team to train others to work in teams”, Mr. Didier Mulolo shared.

Despite a few challenges, Mr. Mulolo says as an activity lead, he was significantly impacted by this role. He was able to participate in the designing of a training that meets real needs and becomes not only an important means for improving prevention and response to health emergencies but also an incentive for group work at the level of basic entities under the leadership of the local authority. Reports from the Ministry leadership also indicate that there is a difference in the way Territory Administrators do their work now compared to before the training. There is a reported ‘high understanding of the issues of prevention, response, and management of health emergencies; the development and implementation of the contingency plans; a high sense of responsibility and leadership’.

The partners in developing this training program brought together different expertise and professional backgrounds that helped develop training that addresses real-life capacity issues.



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b) The delivery

This training was delivered in a series of five-day in-person trainings. During Day One participants are exposed to the leadership module with group work discussing real-life case studies. During these sessions, participants reflected on their day-to-day responsibilities to share leadership skills applied in health emergencies. The second day of the workshop was devoted to a discussion of the roles and responsibilities of Territory Administrators. The sessions were facilitated by the Territory Administrator Inspectorate. Using their experience, the key staff at the Ministry of the Interior highlight the roles and responsibilities of Territory Administrators according to the law. From day 3 to 5, participants

would be involved in risk analysis where they would work in groups to identify health emergency risks in their communities. Groups would present their work during the plenary to get comments and additions from other participants. Then using the risk identified and prioritized, a contingency plan is then developed according to the context of each territory. Thereafter, comes the session on the One Health approach for preparedness and response to health emergencies. Experts from the Ministry of

Health work with participants to understand how they can effectively increase coordination and information sharing during the response to these emergencies using case studies on Ebola, avian flu, and volcano eruption. After group work, each group presents to the plenary for discussion with other participants. The training ends on the fifth day with a session on risk communication and community engagement and a field visit to the local market and abattoir for participants to understand the risk of zoonotic disease transmission.



This training was delivered in a series of five-day in-person trainings



Participants during a plenary session in one of the trainings. Photo Source: AFROHUN DRC

Innovative Training

Territory Administrators said it was an innovative approach to capacity building, that provided knowledge on innovative ways to manage health problems in their jurisdictions. The training provided space for sharing experiences across sectors, something that had never happened before.

Follow-up training and evaluations have been conducted for Congo Central and Kwango provinces during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was interesting to see Territorial Administrators chairing response meetings while involving communities and local leaders during the response activities. The follow-up training covered risk communication for community engagement, gender and collaboration, and information sharing. A field visit was organized for participants to see if COVID-19 prevention measures were followed by their communities and think of how they can use risk communication and community engagement to involve them.

Results and Outcomes

Over the course of implementing this training, we have registered significant outcomes and results.

Only 14% of the Territory Administrators, or 60/435 have been trained through this training support. These are in 25 territories (in the provinces of Kongo Central, Kwango, and Equateur) out of the 145 territories in the country.

Enhanced Reporting by the Territory Administrators

Since the training, reporting parameters by the Territory Administrators have been broadened to include more data, including that related to One Health issues. For instance, there has been the integration of data relating to risk mapping; improvement of the functioning of territorial committees for the management of natural disasters, epidemics, and epizootics, among other areas of improvement.

Improvement in Skills and Competencies

"I rightly believe that the skills acquired during the training are very helpful for our work. Good planning, risk identification, and contingency plan development are key to avoiding improvisations when epidemics or natural disasters come. Thus, as the leader of the territory, everything will have to be coordinated in spontaneity when we now know who does what and at

what point of the intervention considering the realities of our communities." **Mr Charles Iloankoy Kake N'Songe, Territory Administrator of Tshela in Kongo-Central.**

The exposure to the One Health approach through the training empowered the Territory Administrators to do things they had never imagined doing. "The One Health approach has allowed us to develop prevention initiatives and identify local skills while involving our communities to effectively manage public health emergencies at the human-animal and environmental interface. We are equipped and able to elaborate the contingency plans of our territorial entities. I hope that this training will also be provided to other executives of our administration, including governors and provincial and national ministers." **Mr Lelo Alupambu Fidel. Feshi Territory Administrator, Kwango province.**

One area of competency-building mentioned is risk mapping. At the end of the training sessions, mapping of risks was done by the Territory Administrators for their areas of jurisdiction, and contingency plans were developed. In all the entities supported, multi-risk and specific contingency plans were developed with the participation of the various departments and sectors. Now Territory Administrators are able to manage health emergencies using a multidisciplinary One Health approach as seen during the Ebola outbreak and the COVID-19 pandemic, in the territories and sectors covered by the training. Mr. Mulolo points this out as a key area of delivery for the training as it also enhances teamwork.

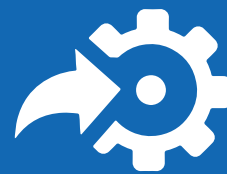
Dr. Cecil Kutenalu was one of those trained. A few years later, she was part of a team from the Ministry of Health to head the National Ebola response, for she relied very much on the knowledge from the training to identify gaps in the response structure. The training also equipped her with knowledge of how to manage teams and partners.

In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic happened, the administrators and their technical staff were able to use their contingency plans to manage the pandemic. The training enabled them to effectively play their role as leaders in coordination during the prevention, response, and recovery phases.

"After this training, back to my territory, I was able to map the risk of health emergencies in my region. Together with communities, church leaders, and technical staff, we developed a contingency plan to mitigate the priority risks. When COVID-19 came, I worked with the same team to respond, the community

was at the center of all our activities”, **a Territory Administrator narrates.**

“The training was very important and interesting, we learned how to effectively manage health emergencies in our territory. I recommend and request that this training is organized for all Territorial Administrators and all their technical staff.” **Mr MONYANO Wamuntuli Luc, Territory Administrator of Basankusu Territory, Equateur province.**



The Territory Administrators' training is now being integrated into the curriculum of the National School of Administration (NSA)...

Institutionalization of the Training

In 2022, the training module was reviewed to include gender and risk communication for community engagement, and learning from the COVID-19 management.

The Territory Administrators' training is now being integrated into the curriculum of the National School of Administration (NSA) which is a government training facility for this cadre of public administrators. AFROHUN has trained teachers at the NSA as trainers who will be able to deliver this training. This strategy addresses the sustainability of the training program. This was a result of the way the planning for the training program was done, with close collaboration with the National School of Administration. This collaboration was a real asset and has led to this interesting development that demonstrates value for money as well.

Unexpected outcomes:

a) Impact on the Facilitators

While the expected impact was on Territory Administrators, facilitators were not spared the impact of this training. Several shares the unexpected ways in which they were professionally impacted.

“This was an enriching experience for the facilitators, especially for us from the universities. We usually do curriculum development in our offices. This process was different. We started by

describing the profile of the people to be trained and then we identified the missing competencies. This is different from how we do it here at the university”, **Prof. Diangs Kimpanga, UNIKIN.**

“As a vet, working with the Ministry of Interior enabled me to learn a lot, especially how territories are administered. The professional exchanges were very enriching. Working with many disciplines, participants shared a lot of their experiences, and this was a very enriching experience for them. We also ended up learning a lot from them.

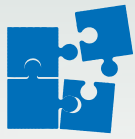
The first ones to be trained went back and shared with their colleagues which created demand for the training”, **Dr. Thierry Mukalakata.**



A female Territory Administrator cheerfully displays her certificate to the rest of her colleagues. Photo Source: AFROHUN DRC

b) A Template for other countries

The DRC Territory Administrators' One Health Training Module has provided a template for similar training in other countries. For instance, it has been reviewed and adapted for similar training in Cameroon and Uganda. Uganda is working on a decentralization strategy of the One Health approach and structure.



Challenges

One challenging aspect is the low retention of the trained Territory Administrators and their technical staff, as they get transferred from one duty station to another as is the norm in public service. However, with the NSA taking over the training, which is now effectively owned by the Government of the DRC, all Territory Administrators will be able to go through this training before they are deployed for duty.



Lessons/ Recommendations

We have learned that engaging government MDAs right from the planning stage is a strong strategy for ensuring the relevance, ownership, and life-long survival of such training programs.



A trainee receives his certificate at the end of one of the trainings. Photo Source: AFROHUN DRC.

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*. AFROHUN 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

Plot 20B Kawalya Kaggwa Close, Kololo-Uganda

P.O Box 100953 Kampala

☎ +256 392 001 642 ✉ secretariat@afrohun.org 🌐 www.afrohun.org 🐦 @AFROHUN



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