



A decisive leap IN THE RESPONSE TO PANDEMICS



2023 ACTIVITY REPORT

Myanmar. A community health worker is testing for malaria a young girl showing symptoms in a remote area of the country.

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"A TOOL to serve populations"

With **ANNE-CLAIRE AMPROU**, French Ambassador for Global Health, and **JÉRÉMIE PELLET**, CEO of Expertise France

What is your vision of this year's use of L'Initiative following the decision to considerably increase its resources?

A.-C. A: The increase in funds allocated to L'Initiative is a vote of confidence in Expertise France and L'Initiative's teams. The results achieved prove that France can be more active not only in the fight against the three pandemics of HIV/ AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria but also in the strengthening of health systems. This increase allowed us to build up the tools necessary to implement the French global health strategy, especially in the fight against communicable diseases. Our support to the most fragile countries remains crucial and requires a tailored approach regarding the achievement of

the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Finally, our action and that of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria call for complementarity and synergies.

J. P.: We want to live up to the confidence the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs has placed in our teams. The resource increase for L'Intiative was decided after an ambitious evaluation process, which demonstrated the agency's added value and gave us directions as to how to improve. We've reviewed our strategy to make sure it stays consistent with the global health strategies of both France and the Global Fund, We've also overhauled the team's organization, in particular by relocating members to the field

in certain eligible countries. In 2023, L'Initiative showed it could readily prepare new funding requests for the Global Fund's upcoming 7th cycle: a record number of 37 countries were supported. And I'd like to highlight L'Initiative's capacity to help countries in crisis, such as Myanmar, Ethiopia, and Ukraine.

There are many challenges on the path to roll back HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria. How can one be present on all fronts?

A.-C. A.: First of all, we need to uphold the principle that we are acting at eligible countries' request. To make sure that our action is adapted to the situation and effective, we must recognize and take into account the vision of field actors, who know what kind of technical or financial assistance they truly need. We must also further develop how we communicate with

these countries to assess their desire to benefit from and support new investments in areas insufficiently addressed so far and that are said to be neglected. Let's take pediatric care, for example: this area is underdeveloped-verv underdeveloped-in the context of the three pandemics. We must be proactive in examining new approaches, in order to integrate services for infants and children, into an improved primary health care.

J. P.: We don't have to choose between prevention, testing, and treatment. On the contrary, we must be present at all stages of the pandemic response continuum. Therefore, increased efforts in supporting health systems allow for better integration of the fight against these diseases while offering health services for all that are more affordable and easier to access. Finally, in

co-morbidities such as cervical cancer are key to showing the path toward universal health coverage centered on the needs of people while respecting their dignity.

How would you summarize L'Initiative in a few words?

J. P.: L'Initiative knows how to reach the last mile to strengthen health services and guarantee their quality. Its team is willing to take risks with innovative approaches. This is a testimony to France's historical commitment alongside the Global Fund.

A.-C. A.: L'Initiative is an agile tool to serve people. Its growing commitment to serving the most vulnerable populations, human resources in health, and countries in crisis showcase how its massive investments combine with those of the Global Fund to implement tailored action. "Supporting the most fragile countries remains crucial and requires a tailored approach regarding the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals."

"L'Initiative showed it could prepare new funding requests for the Global Fund's upcoming 7th cycle." **JÉRÉMIE PELLET**

L'INITIATIVE in action



A recognized and innovative structure, L'Initiative is at the heart of the global health system and geared to serve health systems and aims to accelerate the fight against pandemics, thanks to close collaboration with partner countries and stakeholders.

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Cameroon. A nurse collects a sputum sample from a child who shows symptoms of tuberculosis for diagnosis.

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L'INITIATIVE, ambition, commitment, and values



ÉRIC FLEUTELOT, Technical Director of the Major Pandemics Unit, Health Department, Expertise France

In 2023, L'Initiative increased its commitment, expanding its activities dedicated to beneficiary countries and to the Global Fund's strategy against AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. By increasing its financial support, we intensified the fight against pandemics while simultaneously helping to strengthen local health systems.

s Expertise France's most long-lasting program, L'Initiative maintained its unwavering commitment to serving the most vulnerable populations, health-

care systems and values upheld by France. This border-transcending commitment is carried forward by the strategic vision of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria.

Actively contributing to reducing pandemics

Thanks to the increased support of the Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs, we were able to significantly build up our impact. The Ministry's renewed trust allowed us to respond to technical assistance requests, and thereby be present on the field during this year of preparation to the Global Fund's new funding cycle.

For Global Fund's recipients, putting together quality funding requests is an absolute necessity, a prerequisite. It is the first step toward launching activities that will intensify the fight against pandemics between 2024 and 2026.

But our commitment does not stop at this first step: we also support and strengthen health systems in partner countries by investing specifically in human resources in health. This cross-cutting theme was identified as a key factor in optimizing the efficiency of health programs deployed in the field to strengthen local capacities and to guarantee the sustainability of actions undertaken, thus contributing to the consolidation of healthcare systems in partner countries.

Serving our convictions

In 2023, contexts of unprecedented complexity put our resolve to the test. With major crises in Ukraine and Myanmar and alarming gaps in human development, we faced immense challenges. Far from discouraging us, these obstacles strengthened our will to pursue our mission. At the heart of our action lies a deep-rooted motivation: France's unrelenting commitment to fight the pandemics of HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. We have the power to change the future for children, men, and women, the power to replace the despair inflicted by illness with the hope of good health. This belief motivates us every day and pushes us forward to meet the most difficult challenges with courage and determination.



Kinitiative Vinitiative Supports Medical Action Myanmar in the training of community health workers who will be dispatched in remote and isolated areas.

Innovating to meet future challenges

In keeping with the Global Fund's strategy and France's international commitments to global health, L'Initiative is increasing its support through several strategic and operational developments. Its revised strategy aims to prepare L'Initiative to better respond to the major challenges in the fight against pandemics.

To support the expansion of our activities, we hbave implemented a new portfolio organization in five geographical sectors allowing interventions with a more focused coverage while strategically stressing regional specificity. The team has simultaneously strengthened itself by creating new key positions, thereby increasing operational capacity and field reactivity.

Thanks to innovative approaches, the deployment of technical assistance and financial support is now more flexible and targeted. The creation of L'Accélérateur in January 2023 showcases L'Initiative's capacity to respond quickly when an intervention is required urgently and to focus on neglected challenges.



In 2023, L'Initiative continued to help meet the needs of the most fragile countries in the fight against pandemics. The agency is deploying, in synergy with the Global Fund, complementary methods of intervention for greater effectiveness.

THREE COMPLEMENTARY INTERVENTION METHODS

The Expertise Channel provides technical assistance at the request of the Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) or any other stakeholder to strengthen national actors' capacity for the duration of the Global Fund's cycle. This year, these expertise missions represent 21% of L'Initiative's total commitments.

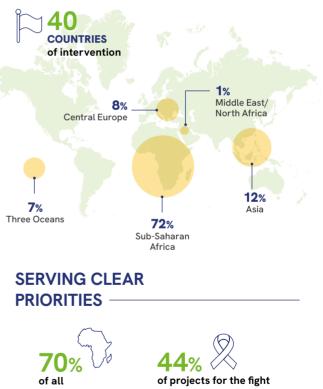
The Project Channel funds catalyzing interventions through yearly calls for projects covering three main themes.* Projects are generally funded for three years. There are 119 projects currently running for a total budget of 165 million euros.

L'Accélérateur acts as a

transformative force to address strategic issues, highlighting neglected challenges in the fight against pandemics and human resources in health (see pages 10-11). In 2023, 32% of the funds committed by L'Initiative used this channel.

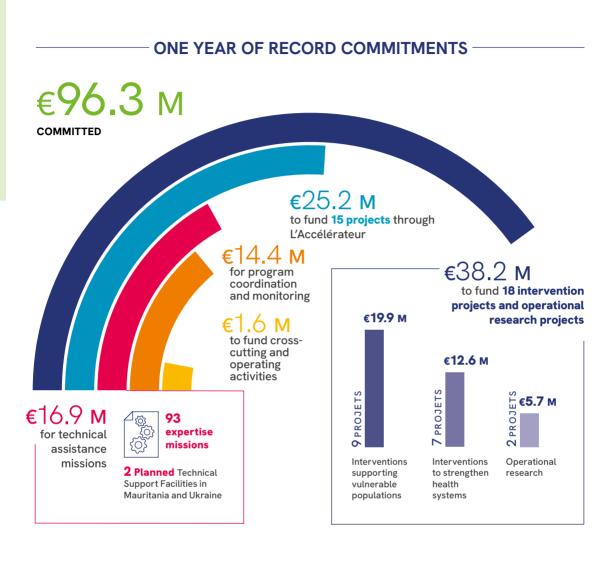
* Key and vulnerable populations, strengthening of health systems, operational research.

INTERVENTIONS PER REGION —



of all contributions in Sub-Saharan Africa of projects for the figl against HIV/AIDS or co-infections HIV/ tuberculosis

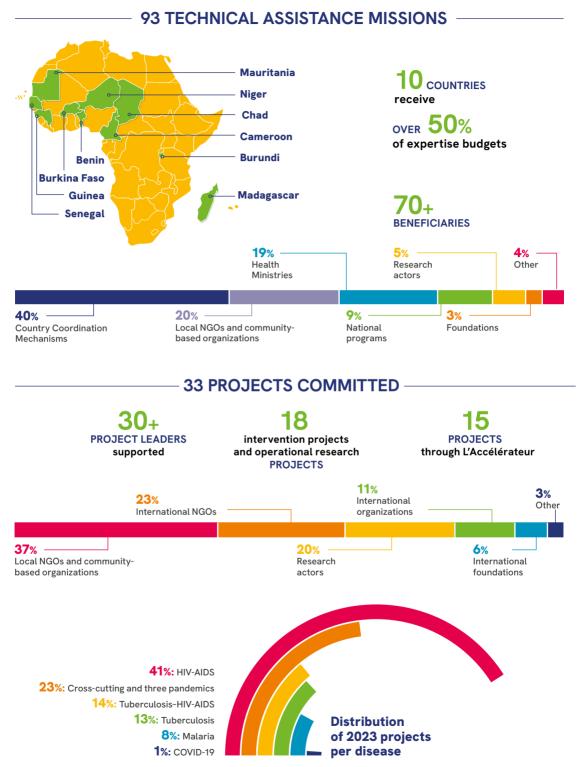
of support missions dedicated to health system strengthening





It was a new record year for L'Initiative, with financial commitments reaching over 90 million euros, to which were added nearly 6 million euros of renewed contributions for gaps that were found. This made the Expertise Channel's upscaling possible, with 16.9 million euros dedicated to technical assistance, as well as an increase in contributions dedicated to project funding, through whether calls for projects or L'Accélérateur. This remarkable growth allows L'Initiative to make its strategy operational while innovating to meet the neglected challenges, especially in human resources and health.

YEARLY REPORT



MULTI-FACETED GOVERNANCE embodied by the Steering Committee

L'Initiative's strategy is promoted by its Steering Committee, composed by a variety of actors from the public service sector, French research institutions and civil society. This multi-faceted governance gives it a multi-sectoral dimension.



ADRIAN LUTY, member of the research branch, Research Director at the Insitut de Recherche pour le Développement (IRD)



JEANNE DE WENDEL, Head of Global Partnerships in health, Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs

T E S T I M O N I E S

Scientific expertise

I joined the Steering Committee in March 2023. This was the opportunity for me to find out about L'Initiative's calls for projects and funding channels. We are a team of four in the research branch. As researchers, we bring our expertise, a scientific approach to projects, which is complementary to that of other members of committee.

The French strategy in global health

I have been presiding over the Steering Committee under the tutelage of the Ministry since September 2022. As a dynamic and multifaceted governance mechanism, the Steering Committee selects technical assistance missions and projects to be funded by L'Initiative, in collaboration with the Global Fund. Together, we contribute to the implementation of the French strategy in global health 2023-2027 and the international solidarity principle.



HÉLÈNE ROGER,

Director of analyses and advocacy, Sidaction

Guarantee the involvement of beneficiaries

There are six of us representing civil society (three members and three alternate) on the Steering Committee. Our role is not only to participate in the selection of the most relevant

projects but also to make sure that the people involved and the beneficiaries remain at the center of the programs. We also pay close attention to human rights, ethics, and governance issues.

L'ACCÉLÉRATEUR: Acting for health systems and neglected challenges

L'Accélérateur is a tool to complement other L'Initiative support mechanisms. It strengthens the agency's arsenal in the fight against pandemics by focusing on neglected challenges and building up human resources in health.

Cameroon.

The TB Masterclass provided thirty young researchers with the opportunity to learn about crucial issues in the fight against the disease. Accélérateur, L'Initiative's new tool of contribution to the fight against the pandemics, had a 25.5-million-euro
budget for this first year.

Responding to neglected issues and emergencies

30% of this package is dedicated to neglected challenges in the fight against pandemics, to



help build resilient and sustainable systems for health. Several themes were identified by the Steering Committee, such as pediatric health, malaria, or climate change. A call for expression of interest will be launched to address them in 2024.

In 2023, L'Accélérateur supported one of the projects addressing neglected challenges by providing assistance for the response to the stigmatization and discrimination of HIV patients in six West and Central African countries. The community-based support was designed in the context of a partnership with UNAIDS (see page 12).

L'Accélérateur also allows for a flexible and rapid response, adapted to geopolitical contexts requiring urgent intervention. The Ukraine emergency fund against tuberculosis and HIV benefited from it, as the resources allocated to the fight against pandemics in the country had been suddenly and drastically reduced with the ongoing war (see page 20).



Training health professionals

The strengthening of human resources for health is a cross-cutting priority for L'Initiative (*see page 22*). Therefore, half of L'Accélérateur's budget is dedicated to it, with priority given to the initial and continuing education of health professionals in 2023. The TB Masterclass, organized with the Pasteur Institute in Yaoundé, shows this intention: in this course, thirty young researchers from 16 French-speaking countries, had the opportunity to learn about crucial issues in the fight against the disease. L'Accélérateur has also invested 3 million euros in a university master's program, based at the University of Lomé in Togo, aimed at training field epidemiologists from ten West African countries. The funds will provide for thirty scholarships and the purchase of stateof-the-art equipment for the program. The objective: to initiate a structuring catalyzing effect to address the lack of trained personnel in a region that is currently facing waves of emergencies and a reemergence of infectious pathologies (*see page 23*).



"We are launching young researchers' careers with a multidisciplinary approach," interview with Dr Sara Eyangoh about the TB masterclass, June 2024 bit.ly/masterclass-tuberculosis

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

STRENGTHENING CIVIL SOCIETY In the face of pandemics

Through the SOFIA mechanism, L'Initiative helps civil society to contribute to fighting pandemics, with tailored financial support and technical assistance.

aunched in 2023, SOFIA or the "Structuration of civil society organization: funding, impact, and support," was integrated to L'Accélérateur. With its own initial budget of 6 million euros for three years, its objective is to support local civil society organizations (CSOs) of relatively small size that do not have access to traditional international funding. These organizations play an essential role in the fight against pandemics, the strengthening of health systems, and the application of sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Strengthening CSOs' capacities

SOFIA supports these local CSOs to help them improve their structural and operational



efficiency. The mechanism offers them grants, with a tailored approach to capacity building: the format, frequency, and means are defined to suit the needs of the structure. In 2023, 11 CSOs were preselected among 138 candidates. Nine were eventually selected, and nine others will be in 2024. Burundi. L'Initiative supports the Nyumviriza Center, which offers risk reduction services to women who are drug users.





"The experience of a CSO to become a principal recipient of the Global Fund-the example of Arcad Santé PLUS in Mali," Capitalization, February 2023: bit.ly/CSO-GlobalFund

2023, A YEAR OF COMMITMENTS

rance engagée utte contre la tuberculos es maladies respire



France. L'Initiative coordinated the strong mobilization in French and French-speaking countries for the Union World Conference on Lung Health conference in Paris, in November 2023. Signing key partnerships agreements, participation in international conferences, continued mobilization for the Global Fund's new funding cycle... In 2023, L'Initiative was unfailingly committed to functioning as an agile mechanism at the heart of global health's ecosystem.

A mechanism strengthened BY ITS PARTNERSHIPS

L'Initiative fostered strategic collaborations, a testimony to the trust our agency inspires. These partnerships translate into the implementation of innovative and efficient interventions ensuring better access to quality health service for populations.

n 2023, L'Initiative partnered with three major international organizations: Stop TB Partnership, Unitaid, and UNAIDS. These exceptional collaborations show the recognition enjoyed by L'Initiative's expertise. Each of these partnerships aims to fight infectious diseases and build joint strategies and coordinated actions with a strong impact on global health.

The partnership between L'Initiative and Stop TB Partnership reflects our desire to work within a Global Fund ecosystem, with the ambition to strengthen the fight against tuberculosis in West and Central Africa, where urgent needs are not sufficiently addressed (see next column). Another example is the program Scale Up Cervical Cancer Elimination with Secondary Prevention Strategy (SUCCESS), a common initiative between UNAIDS and Expertise France aiming to eliminate cervical cancer (see page 25).

A common response in the fight against AIDS

The partnership agreement signed between L'Initiative and UNAIDS in six West and Central African countries exemplifies a mutual commitment to global health based on principles of human progress and the championing of just and united societies.

Stigmatization and discrimination against people with HIV are significant obstacles to accessing prevention, testing, and treatments. This first collaboration between Expertise France and the UNAIDS office for West and Central Africa aims to support community response in the face of these human rights issues and to promote access to inclusive health services for the most vulnerable populations. Support for legislative reforms, improvement of legal and social responses provided to targeted populations, fundamental rights enforcement, fight against gender-based violence and inequalities: as many issues targeted by this agreement of nearly two million euros.

A new partnership TO ELIMINATE TUBERCULOSIS

L'Initiative and Stop TB Partnership are building a partnership aiming to accelerate and implement their common vision of a world without tuberculosis, thereby strengthening France's commitment to global health.

uberculosis is the second deadliest infectious disease in the world after COVID-19: 1.3 million deaths and 10.6 million of people diagnosed in 2022. L'Initiative is partnering with Stop TB Partnership, a key organization in the fight against tuberculosis, to create a synergy between their complementary sets of expertise, thereby contributing to eliminating the disease. This action takes the shape of civil society support and the granting of subventions to local communities and organizations, aiming to support the development of technically robust and innovative interventions.

First tangible achievements

Through this partnership, L'Initiative is now co-funding Challenge Facility for Civil Society (CFCS). This tool's purpose is to support projects led by civil society organizations from West and Central African countries. This partnership also facilitates the funding of initiatives pertaining to advocacy, community mobilizing, human rights promotion and protection, and gender equality. Support to Stop TB Partnership is also providing technical assistance services and tools that are adapted to the needs of countries and organizations who request it, with a focus on French-speaking countries.



Burkina Faso. Community health workers provide antimalaria medicine to children under five, who are among the most affected by the disease.



JÉRÉMIE FORRAT-JAIME, Deputy Director of Human Development, French Ministry of Europe and Foreign Affairs

L'Initiative readily responded to eligible countries' petitions to prepare quality funding requests for submission to the Global Fund. Technical assistance foregrounded the implementation of a national discussion, the review or updating of national strategic plans against the three diseases, funding requests preparationsometimes for the grant-making phase-, allowing each country to be better prepared for grant negotiations. Never had L'Intiative supported so many countries, with a focus on West and Central Africa, and mobilized so many days of expertise, nearly 12,000!

STRONG MOBILIZATION for the new **Global Fund** funding cycle

After 2022, a year dedicated to the preparation of this new cycle, L'Initiative has continued to support countries in accessing Global Fund grants, integrating gender priorities, human rights, and community health.

n 2023, L'Initiative supported its partner countries preparing their funding requests during the Global Fund's new funding cycle. L'Initiative's team, who was already mobilized in September 2022 for the Replenishment Conference and during the grant allocation phase, has initiated a new course of action. Beyond expert training, the agency has been focusing even more on integrating the Global Fund's and countries' expectations in their requests.

Preparing experts

In partnership with the Global Fund, L'Initiative organized a seminar in January to prepare about a hundred experts to assist with the request process, specifically in the early stages of the Global Fund's financing cycle, Grant Cycle 7. The seminar's ambition was to help experts to hone the skills necessary to draft fund requests in support of partner countries, highlighting submissions standard and practices.

L'Initiative's added value lies in its implementation of coordination mechanisms dedicated to this support and to crucial technical assistance missions, mostly in West and Central Africa. One of this coordination's aims is to prioritize the assistance's recipients and to design tailored interventions, with the ultimate goal to strengthen partners' capacities and help countries to take ownership of these projects. Special attention is given to the global issues of health systems strengthening and human and gender rights approaches.

Strengthening community participation

For L'Initiative, integrating communities and civil society organization's specific perspectives and priorities in their requests is how we amplify the impact of Global Fund grants. To do that, L'Initiative has developed a toolkit. It consists of flashcards summing up the steps of the funding cycles and thematic documents that help experts to allow recipients to include

L'INITIATIVE'S SUPPORT TO THE GC7

An unprecedented total of **66 technical assistance missions,** with interventions in **36 countries,** mostly in West and Central Africa.



actors from health communities and key populations, as early as the funding request stage.

Therefore, L'Initiative has also been supporting the study on representation, inclusion, sustainability and equity (RISE) conducted by the community NGOs network, Coalition Plus and its partners. This study, conducted among community representatives within Country Coordinating Mechanisms, offers multifaceted recommendations based on close collaboration between all parties to better include organizations.



SERGE DOUOMONG YOTTA, director of advocacy, Coalition Plus The Global Fund and L'Initiative do not just rely on the impact of their past achievements. They are reinventing themselves by updating their mechanisms. The RISE study fully reflects this modernizing dynamic, aiming to make Country Coordination Mechanisms more resilient and more protective of key communities and populations. The study highlights the challenges communities are facing and offers real-world solutions to overcome them.



Interview with Serge Douomong Yotta, advocacy director at Coalition Plus, author of the RISE Study, June 2024 bit.ly/community-involvement-RISE



A SPECIAL PARTNERSHIP with the Global Fund

L'Initiative is a major actor working together with the Global Fund. The partnership uniting them strengthens their capacities to fulfill global health needs and meet challenges in the fight against pandemics.

> ince its creation, L'Initiative has fostered close connections with the Global Fund for the Fight Against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. These connections have become more robust, supported by common goals and the implementation of coherent strategies. L'Initiative assists its partners in the design, deployment, and the monitoring of the funding allocated by the Global Fund, thereby strengthening their capacities and contributing to reaching global objectives.



CATY FALL SOW, Head of the Global Fund's Africa and Middle East Department



MARIA KIROVA, Head of the Global Fund's High Impact Africa 1 Department

The close collaboration between the Global Fund and L'Initiative allowed us to better respond to population needs. The agency was able to assist countries in accessing funding during the 2024-2026 cycle, which includes new challenges (pandemic anticipation, strengthening of laboratory and monitoring systems, waste management, etc.). The complementarity of this strategic partnership is an asset for the Global Fund in its response to today's issues and its preparation for tomorrow's challenges. The robust partnership between L'Initiative and the Global Fund allows us to move closer to SDGs, mostly thanks to increased access to integrated services and more efficient means to fight HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. This close collaboration takes the shape of systematic conversations about projects, their added value, and their complementarity. Lessons and feedback are essential and benefit both organizations. The recent inclusion of the Global Fund's secretariat in L'Initiative's strategic Steering Committee and its participation in monthly strategic meetings greatly contribute to improving our collaboration's efficiency.

A GREATER RANGE OF ACTION **in two countries**

L'Initiative increased its support to countries receiving less coverage from French development aid, such as Equatorial Guinea and Ghana. This showcases L'Initiative's capacity to adapt to meet specific needs in various health contexts.

he equatorial-Guinean health system is one of the most vulnerable and the least efficient in the world. To meet increasing needs in the fight against pandemics, Equatorial Guinea is drafting funding requests for HIV/AIDS and malaria programs to apply for financing from the Global Fund in 2023. L'Initiative is assisting all parties involved in the process, mostly civil society representatives and key populations. Together with the drafting committee, the agency put together an effective and complementary intervention approach to the alternate funding Equatorial Guinea was able to obtain. The country's health system strengthening strategy aims to guarantee service continuity, with special attention paid to gender and human rights.

To support Ghanaian actors in the response to pandemics, better address their needs, and improve performance in health activities: those are L'Initiative's objectives. In 2023, it strengthened its partnership with the country through large-scale technical assistance to prepare for the Global Fund's new funding cycle, and by dedicating 4.1 million euros to two main projects launched during the



Ghana. Collecting patients' requests at Accra's Akramaman Health Center. This quarterly collection takes place in the context of Health System Strengthening through Ghana's Community Scorecard. L'Initiative supports the project's expansion promoting user-evaluation of community-based planning and services (CHPS), available in 2,400 centers across the country.

mission. The first one, whose project initiator is the Ghana Health Service, aims to improve access to healthcare for the most vulnerable and marginalized populations. The second, initiated by the Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, is an operational research project focusing on secondary cervical cancer prevention for women living with HIV.

CRISIS CONTEXTS: Agility and responsiveness

To ensure project continuity and sustainability and the fight against pandemics, L'Initiative is adapting to all geopolitical contexts. In collaboration with civil society, it implements tailored interventions to respond to global emergencies.



Myanmar. A health worker for Medical Action Myanmar (MAM) is collecting sputum to screen an elderly woman for tuberculosis in a remote community in the Naga region. This project aims to improve equitable access to health services and to overcome gender barriers.

Renewing the fight against pandemics in the Tigray region

From 2020 to 2022, the Tigray conflict in Ethiopia caused a stark intensification of the three pandemics. Global Fund support was no longer implemented; screening, treatment, and monitoring were interrupted. Two experts, dispatched by L'Initiative to the Tigray Regional Health Bureau, visited the field in late 2023 to assess the needs in the communities and health systems. This preliminary mission's objective was to kick-start the resuming of the Global Fund's activities.

COMMUNITY HEALTH WORKERS, A bulwark against diseases in Myanmar

n Myanmar's isolated and underprivileged northern regions of Naga and Putao, access to health services is extremely limited. L'Initiative is funding a project initiated by Medical Action Myanmar (MAM), which trained 485 community health workers (CHW) to address this issue.

The objective is to provide populations with quality primary care, enabling equitable access for men and women. With an integrated approach, CHWs facilitate access to prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of HIV/ AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, as well as non-infectious diseases, thereby contributing to improving the population's overall health.

This strategy, deployed by MAM, succeeded in slowing down the progression of pandemics. In three years, over 350,000 medical consultations were conducted and nearly 3,000 patients in need of emergency care were registered. ●



With **OLEKSANDRA DENYSENKO,** executive director of TBPeopleUkraine

"L'INITIATIVE'S SUPPORT to TBPeopleUkraine is a lifeline."

Thanks to the Ukraine Against TB and HIV Emergency Fund, L'Initiative has quickly deployed its impactful support to continue, despite the conflict, the fight against tuberculosis in the country.

How does the war affect the fight against tuberculosis in Ukraine?

Russia's invasion of Ukraine created significant challenges to tuberculosis prevention, detection, and management. Many health infrastructures were destroyed; health workers, the shortage of which is significant, are exhausted and underequipped. Military activities keep us from implementing our programs throughout the country. But tuberculosis prevalence is rising; Ukrainians are more vulnerable to the disease. Their immune response decreases with malnutrition and stress. They spend much time in overpopulated shelters, especially in areas close to the front lines.

How does L'Initiative's support allow you to keep your activities going despite the context?

L'Initiative's support, amounting to 500,000 euros, allowed us this past year to maintain and strengthen the progress achieved in mitigating the pandemic. The agency supported our national program for the fight against tuberculosis, as well as civil society and community organizations, including TBPeopleUkraine. The response was fast and adapted to actual needs in the field. We suggested a set of priorities for missions and, following a field visit by some members of L'Initiative's team to assess issues, we have jointly chosen which actions to implement and started to deploy

them. This support is a lifeline that allows us to repair and equip medical facilities close to the frontline. We can now monitor the disease and help to ensure continuity of care and access. There are considerable challenges, but we're sticking to our ambition to eliminate tuberculosis in the country. Before the invasion, despite significant progress, Ukraine was still one of the most impacted European countries. Beyond its assistance to our organization, L'Initiative offers overall support to the Ukrainian medical system.



Vukraine. A social worker is helping a sex worker in a mobile clinic in Kyiv. The Ukraine Emergency Fund, funded by L'Initiative, aims to guarantee access to healthcare for vulnerable populations in the context of humanitarian crises.



Participation in INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

L'Initiative's involvement in international conferences dedicated to addressing issues in the fight against pandemics illustrates the agency's commitment to global health, facilitating knowledge sharing, and paving the way to new collaborations.

∧ Zimbabwe.

L'Initiative participated in the 22nd International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA), December 2023.

n 2023, L'Initiative participated in two international conferences addressing infectious diseases; one was dedicated to tuberculosis, and the other focused on HIV/AIDS and STIs in Africa.

The Union World Conference on Lung Health

Paris, France, 15-18 November, 2023 This conference followed discussions on

tuberculosis initiated during the United Nations General Assembly High-Level Meeting of September 2023, which resulted in an ambitious political declaration committing to ending the epidemic. Significant progress was highlighted: shorter treatment regimen, advances against tuberculosis and its multidrug-resistant forms, and more efficient preventive strategies. Issues of gender and human rights and the role of communities in the fight against tuberculosis were also largely discussed.

France, the host country of this important scientific conference, was represented by an expanded "Équipe France"–with all French actors on the subject. L'Initiative helped facilitate this participation. The event helped to highlight France's actions in global health, the strengthening of partnerships, and collecting experience from projects in the field with actors from the English-speaking world.

International Conference on AIDS and STIs in Africa (ICASA) Harare, Zimbabwe, 4-9 December, 2023

This 22nd edition of the ICASA was dedicated to the elimination of inequalities and the acceleration of inclusion and innovation. L'Initiative, which is involved and determined to look for innovative solutions in the fight against HIV/AIDS, actively participated to this conference by organizing three round tables. Standing out as key moments of the 2023 conference, the discussion addressed, in the context of the fight against HIV: the challenge of harm reduction for drug users; the strengthening of community involvement; and the integration of sexual and reproductive health care, as well as services concerning individual rights.

CHILDCARE: At the center of the first scientific day

Children's fate in the context of HIV/ AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria is alarming. In June 2023, L'Initiative organized its first scientific day dedicated to pediatric care and its pressing challenges.

n 5 June 2023, L'Initiative's first scientific day took place in Paris to address the issue of children facing the HIV/ AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria pandemics. About a hundred people attended. The event was in line with the priority given by L'Initiative to the production and sharing of knowledge, the valorization and capitalization of investments made, and collaboration between experts in the field.

The situation of children facing the three pandemics is alarming: indicators are systematically above those of adult populations. The main failings in treatment lie in the lack of access to care, with insufficient testing rates and treatment coverage.

Each disease has specific needs

Children are less able to fend off tuberculosis: once infected, they face a higher risk of rapidly developing the disease. They also are more susceptible to developing extrapulmonary complications. Screenings are the main recourse to fight lung infection: 96% of the children who die from tuberculosis weren't diagnosed.

The event foregrounded malaria's specific challenges. In their presentations, many



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▲ France.

L'Initiative's first scientific day in Paris on 5 June 2023, gathering about 100 participants to discuss the challenges and advances in the fight against HIV, tuberculosis and malaria in children.

researchers reminded attendees of the importance of efficiency when actions for prevention are deployed in the field. Many obstacles were identified, such as the Seasonal Malaria Chemoprevention (SMC). This preventive treatment must be administered to children during the peak in transmissions, but this moment coincides with higher farming activity during which parents are less available.

Pediatric HIV was the subject of multiple presentations during the event. 270,000 children and teenagers from 0 to 19 were tested HIV positive in 2022. In addition to discussing infant formulation, the distribution of which is taking too long, discussions also raised the question of mental health support for youth, mostly during the transition from child and adult care.



Interview with Gérès Ahognon, executive director of the Children and HIV Network in Africa (EVA) about the mental health of children living with HIV, June 2024: bit.IV/EVA-children-HIV

RESPONDING TO vital health challenges



HUMAN RESOURCES FOR HEALTH, the bedrock of health systems

Support for human resources for health (HRH) is at the core of L'Initiative's strategy of intervention for 2023-2025. Its contributions in this sector have a direct effect on the quality of health services in partner countries. Using its various means of support, L'Initiative is fully mobilized to serve strategic priorities addressing the global issues of public health, health systems consolidation, and the defense of the right to health for all.

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Thailand. A health worker is conducting an ultrasound on a Burmese woman as part of a project aiming to improve access to health services for marginalized women.

y 2030, there will be a shortfall of 6.1 million health workers in Africa, which will heavily hinder the future of health systems on the continent. Those are the findings of a study commissioned by the World Health Organization, published in June 2022. Conducted through 47 African countries, it shows that the ratio of health workers in the region stands at 1.55 for 1,000, while the threshold to achieve universal health coverage is set to 4.45.

L'Initiative is mobilized to address this shortage. Its objective is to help build strong and resilient health systems by supporting HRH policies. L'Initiative also contributes to the strengthening of knowledge and skills, and to the improvement of working conditions for professionals with clinical responsibilities, such as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and the staff who assist them, for example, administrative agents, lab technicians, or social workers.

Strengthen, structure, and support

This ambition translates into innovative projects, such as the one conducted with the Hanoi University of Public Health in Vietnam. L'Initiative is supporting seven of the country's provinces in the improvement of HR management aimed to address specific prevention needs and to deploy an efficient response against HIV/AIDS as part of the country's commitments. L'Initiative also supports community organizations engaged in the fight against the pandemics, facilitating staff management, thereby helping them increase their impact on public health.

In another example in Rwanda, a technical assistance aimed at strengthening local skills in tuberculosis diagnosis. The tuberculosis division of Rwanda Biomedical Center, Rwanda's health central agency, received training on the identification of mycobacteria-responsible for transmission-the use of chest X-rays and antibiograms to test for antibiotic sensitivity.

SUPPORTING HUMAN RESOURCES IN 2023



PROJECTS SUPPORTED with an HRH component

COMMITTED to interventions with an HRH component





TRAINING at the core of the HRH strategy

With L'Initiative's support, dozens of health workers received training in field epidemiology at the University of Lomé in Togo.

nticipating and responding to the epidemics threatening populations and health systems requires qualified health workers. Therefore, L'Initiative, through its Accélérateur mechanism, provided a 3-million-euro support package for the development of a program aiming to train field epidemiologists. In partnership with Adera, a branch of the University of Bordeaux, and the Public Health Institute for Epidemiology and Development (ISPED), this master's level program relying on practical training is being implemented at the University of Lomé. The University is currently hosting about sixty epidemiology and public health workers coming from ten West African countries.

Deployed over 39 months, this program addresses the needs expressed by these ten francophone countries facing infectious disease resurgence. Its ambition is to strengthen health workers' skills to ensure better epidemiological monitoring in their home country and to contribute to more efficient responses against pandemics. The training is part of the One Health approach, an integrated and cross-cutting vision of healthhuman, animal, and environmental-which aims to better prevent and respond to global health threats through the mobilization of various sectors and disciplines.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH RIGHTS: **A global priority**

L'Initiative is fully committed to the defense of sexual and reproductive rights. This commitment raises three challenges: human rights and individual liberties, gender equality and societies' sustainable development, and public health.



Chad. A midwife is moderating a workshop on family planning and birth control methods. She is also raising awareness on the consequences of early marriages, still very common and considered to be violence against women.

Promoting gender equality to strengthen access to health

Gender inequalities directly influence access to SRHRs. Women and young girls are facing social, cultural, and economic obstacles, while men are bound to traditional norms of masculinity. L'Initiative fully integrates gender in its projects to promote equality and the evolution of social norms. Currently, 50% of funded projects take gender into account, with an objective of 75% in the coming years. L'Initiative assists project leaders, helping them include this dimension prescriptively as part of an ongoing dialogue.



"Gender inequalities, a determining factor of health," Women's Rights' Day, Mars 2024 bit.ly/gender-inequalities-interview exual and reproductive health rights (SRHRs) cover a broad spectrum of rights: contraception, safe abortion, IST testing and treatment, and screenings for reproductive cancers. They are generally associated with the recognition and protection of fundamental individual rights in matters of sexuality, reproduction, sexual health, and well-being.

L'Intiative has coordinated efforts deployed against HIV that fulfill the commitment to SRHRs, thereby facilitating an integrated approach to these subjects. The SUCCESS program (see next page), for example, specifically aims to reduce mortality related to cervical cancer while foregrounding women living with HIV.

HPV and HIV: Combined screening strategies

This cross-cutting strategy translates into three projects aiming to generalize human papillomavirus (HPV) screenings and the early treatment of precancerous lesions. These programs innovate in sexual education, rethink consultations, and experiment with new diagnosis methods. In Ghana, a project is currently integrating cervical cancer screenings into routine care for women living with HIV. In Cameroon, two research programs aim to optimize screening and fight this cancer through raising awareness among women who live with HIV in communities and hospitals.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

SUCCESS 2: Accelerating the fight against cervical cancer

L'Initiative, with the support of Unitaid, is implementing part of the second phase of this innovative program dedicated to fighting cervical cancer. Given the program's efficiency, the project is being deployed through six additional countries.

n Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Guatemala, and the Philippines, 182,000 women underwent cervical cancer screening during the first phase of the Scale Up Cervical Cancer Elimination with Secondary Prevention Strategy (SUCCESS) project, funded by Unitaid. These good results allow for scaling and ushering in the deployment of SUCCESS 2, adding six new countries: Guinea, Benin, Burundi, Togo, Cameroon, and Ghana, with additional support from L'Initiative.

This second step aims to create a path toward the elimination of cervical cancer-it is the 4th most common cancer in women throughout the world, killing 342,000 of them every year. The secondary prevention strategy relies on HPV screening and the treatment of precancerous lesions, with priority given to women with HIV/AIDS. These women are six times more likely to develop the disease. This integrated approach is being included in existing care services, in close collaboration with local partners, and promotes awareness and community involvement to increase the demand for prevention.

This project is jointly funded by L'Initiative, contributing 5 million euros through its



Côte d'Ivoire. At the National Blood Transfusion Center, Abidjan, an awareness and screening consultation for cervical cancer.



Côte d'Ivoire. A midwife examining the results. of a patient being screened for cervical cancer.

Accélérateur mechanism and Unitaid. It illustrates the impact of international collaboration on the development of efficient prevention models and the elimination of cervical cancer.



"Several opportunities to engage in the fight against cervical cancer," Toolkit, July 2022 oit.ly/cervical-cancer-<u>toolkit</u>

CHILDREN AND PANDEMICS, **a major issue**

Pandemic diseases particularly impact children. L'Initiative is fully committed, with both a cross-cutting and tailored approach, to address the major challenges of pediatric HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria.



Côte d'Ivoire. Community health workers from Menekre are screening a boy with malaria symptoms.

alaria kills 500,000 children each year; one child dies every five minutes of AIDS-related causes; over a million children are infected by tuberculosis yearly. Despite children's

vulnerability in pandemics, significant failings remain in screening and diagnosis, as well as care and treatment. To meet these challenges, L'Initiative has multiplied its actions. In June 2023, it organized its first scientific day dedicated to pediatric health (*see page 15*). In December 2023, it also released a call for projects, focused on children, to support operational research for better access to prevention and health services.

A call for expression of interest was also published in May 2024 to improve the effective access of children younger than five to quality health services (prevention, diagnostics, treatment).

Specific projects, adapted to each pandemic and each context

L'Initiative supports pediatric programs specific to each pandemic, such as the Réseau des associations congolaises de jeunes (RACOJ), whose goal is to raise awareness among 17,000 youth to issues in STI and HIV/AIDS prevention. L'Initiative also supports the Centre de solidarité et d'action sociale (Centre SAS) in Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire, engaged in the fight against child HIV through the involvement of families to improve screening and medication adherence. L'Initiative also created a toolkit and made it available to mobilized experts to address the transition of pediatric treatment regimen to Dolutegravir, a universal first-line HIV treatment. This medication, more efficient and easier to take, has fewer side effects than those used previously.

L'Initiative is mobilized against child tuberculosis by supporting the TB_PEC@2.0 project in Cameroon (see next page). The agency also funded TB-Speed Pneumonia, a research project aiming to reduce child mortality through better-suited diagnoses and the systematization of early tuberculosis screening in children with severe pneumonia. Finally, L'Initiative contributes to operational research addressing malaria in children, through the project SMC-RST conducted in Burkina Faso, which increases the efficiency of preventive treatments (see page 28).

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT



Meeting the challenge of PEDIATRIC TUBERCULOSIS

The TB_PEC@2.0 project fights pediatric tuberculosis in Cameroon, focusing on screening for children. Its ambition is to contribute to the eradication of tuberculosis in the wake of Sustainable Development Goals.

o improve pediatric tuberculosis' statistics for vulnerable children among internally displaced persons in Cameroon": the TB_PEC@2.0 project addresses a major public health issue. In Cameroon, nearly 80% of infected children remain undiagnosed. Children younger than 15 represent 11% of new cases and 16% of tuberculosis-related deaths in 2020. It is crucial to decrease mortality, morbidity, and gender inequality related to pediatric tuberculosis by improving access to diagnosis among children from 0 to 14.

Proven in the field

Led by the For Impacts in Social Health (FIS) organization, the project was deployed in 21 health districts in the capital Yaoundé and its periphery. It addresses critical needs to counter the lack of prevention, the issue of screenings, and pediatric treatment. Simultaneously, health workers are taught the crucial importance and the effects of early and systematic screenings. Early results are encouraging: in districts where the project was implemented, the detection of tuberculosis cases increased by 50% among children, while it remained stable in districts where the FIS organization is not active.

FIGHTING MALARIA with operational research

L'Initiative's important commitment to operational research aims to develop efficient tools and strategies for the fight against malaria and to ultimately achieve the goal of eradicating the disease set by the World Health Organization.



Cameroon. This mother and her child use insecticidetreated mosquito nets to be protected from malaria. ntimalarial drug resistance, changes in the distribution of the disease because of climate change... The fight against malaria is facing multiple and increasing threats. Investing in operational research appears as a crucial step to address these issues: it facilitates the testing of innovative mechanisms adapted to specific epidemiological contexts and local health systems. Since 2018, L'Initiative has established itself as a major donor in research. In early 2023, the agency released a call for projects dedicated to malaria, to focus on projects addressing care access and the implementation of efficient prevention programs for the most vulnerable populations.

New strategies for the field

The propagation of malaria is influenced by political instability, which always affects health systems. Therefore, L'Initiative supports the Reach Out project, which aims to improve access to antimalarial treatments in Cameroonian regions impacted by conflicts. In this country, one where the disease is the most prevalent, population displacements worsen access to health services: less than a quarter of children under the age of 5 are diagnosed and treated if necessary. The operational research project, built with local communities, aims to improve the coverage and efficiency of antimalarial interventions. Several actions were identified: health vouchers distribution for antimalarial treatments within the community, monthly community discussions, and community health workers supervision.

L'Initiative also supports innovative strategies aimed at improving access, quality and efficiency of malaria-prevention services, such as the SMS-RST project conducted in Burkina Faso. To prevent malaria in children under five, antimalarial treatments are administered during the rainy season. This project aims to increase its impact through the combination of complementary preventive strategies; one of the hypotheses that are being tested is that the treatment of all malaria cases in the child's close environment, asymptomatic cases included, can reduce the incidence of the disease. The community approach is completely integrated to raise awareness and foster increased involvement among the local population.



"L'Initiative and operational research on malaria," Focus, April 2024: bit.ly/OR-malaria

PROJECT HIGHLIGHT

Controlling viral transmission DJIBOUTI

L'Initiative has been funding the training of Djibouti University Hospital technicians to help them use monitoring tools to fight malaria more efficiently.

s Djibouti was ready to eradicate malaria in 2012, a new species of mosquitoes capable of transmitting the disease, the *Anopheles stephensi*, gained ground in the Horn of Africa. Its resistance to most insecticides and its capacity to adapt to high temperatures caused malaria cases to increase, boosted by climate change.

This resurgence is even more alarming considering that some parasites circulating in Africa are now resistant to first-line antimalarial drugs and that the usual screening tests cannot always detect all cases. It is, therefore, essential to adapt both the response to and the monitoring of parasite resistance. As part of the National Program for the Fight against Malaria in Djibouti, L'Initiative deployed a technical assistance mission to train hospital teams in the capital to use tools for resistance surveillance. Technicians learned to use the sequencer-purchased with a Global



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Fund subvention-and to implement sequencing protocols for the parasite, adapted to monitoring antimalarial treatments' efficiency.

The data obtained through sequencing cover the lack of information on the circulation of resistant parasitic strains and the efficiency of drug molecules. These results facilitate the reliable identification of strains circulating in the area. The surveillance of the disease will be more effective and local authorities will be able to adjust the antimalarial strategy and choose the most adequate treatments to fight the disease.



"To contribute to better control of malaria transmission in Djibouti," Perspectives, April 2024: bit.!//Dibouti-malaria Burkina Faso.

A lab technician collects and analyzes mosquitoes as part of malaria surveillance.



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Thailand. Thanks to the M-fund project, migrant workers have access to an affordable health coverage.

EVALUATION as a tool to optimize actions

Through rigorous monitoring and evaluation methods, L'Initiative analyzes its support mechanisms and their actual impact to optimize their efficiency, thereby contributing to informing global strategies in world health.

> s it is funded by public resources, L'Initiative must guarantee transparency and accountability to all stakeholders-recipients, governance, citizens... To meet its standards, the agency relies on Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) to assess the impact of its actions on populations, health systems, and global health. A multidisciplinary team is dedicated to drawing lessons from relevant data. Since the MEAL unit was created in 2021, new performance indicators have been devised for better monitoring and to evaluate the performance of deployed means and resources,

and the evolution of risks, and tools that improve strategic and operational steering. Almost all completed projects are assessed externally, and cross-cutting evaluations are also conducted for an exhaustive analysis.

The MEAL strategy also aims to produce knowledge, capitalize on past experiences, and encourage learning while highlighting and promoting good practices. This is done through accessible documentation in L'Initiative's online library, with toolkits, summaries and project evaluation reports, thematic publications or guidelines. This corpus is shared throughout L'Initiative's ecosystem to inspire strategies against tomorrow's pandemics, transfer knowledge so it can be translated into public health policies and support the efforts of all global health actors.



Our documentary resources: linitiative.expertisefrance.fr/en/ our-documentary-resources/

SPREADING KNOWLEDGE in the fight against pandemics

L'Initiative's shares knowledge in various ways. These multi-format resources illustrate and help to grasp the great challenges facing the fight against pandemics and the mechanism's role.

The fight against pandemics in Sub-Saharan Africa

In Sub-Saharan Africa, vulnerable populations are the most impacted by pandemics. To address this situation, L'Initiative supports the strengthening of the region's health systems. The document "Key Figures" (*chiffres clés* in French) highlights the actions that are implemented, the challenges on the way, and the expected results.



To find out more: "Chiffres clé #3: Le soutien de L'Initiative à la lutte contre le VIH, la tuberculose et le paludisme en Afrique subsaharienne," May 2024, (in French) bit!//uitte-pandémies-Afrique-subsaharienne

Climate change and malaria

Climate change, through the temperature and rainfall pattern variations it causes, could have an impact on the epidemiology of malaria. L'Initiative drafted orientations to help approach these issues and explain how the agency contributes to strengthening entomologists' capacities and to the deployment of surveillance strategies.



To find out more: "Climate change and malaria: how to prepare for radical reconfigurations of the epidemic," April 2024 bitly/climate-change-malaria

Tuberculosis, the voices of research

Tuberculosis kills 1.3 million people every year. Researchers play a pivotal role in the response against the disease. Clinicians, anthropologists, economists... L'Initiative lets their voices be heard in a podcast, with an approach combining social sciences and medicine.



In the podcast "Tuberculose, les voix de la recherche," researchers present the issues of the fight against this pandemic in their own

words



To find out more: "Tuberculose, les voix de la recherche" (in French only) bit.ly/tuberculose-les-voix-de-la-recherche

The strengthening of human resources for health

Human resources for health (HRH) are a priority for L'Initiative. After a call for projects launched in 2016 to "implement resistant and long-lasting health systems," actions were conducted in four African countries and Ukraine. The projects were subjected to cross-cutting evaluations summarized in this report.



To find out more: "Cross-cutting project evaluations: Human resources for health skills," January 2023 bit.ly/evaluation-capacities-hr

Activity Report - L'Initiative - 31

$\bigcap \bigcap \bigcap \bigcap \bigcap \bigcap$ REPORT 2023

TOTAL EXPENDITURES FOR 2023

€48,612,851

€23,260,045 to support catalytic projects and the answer to neglected challenges

This figure represents expenditures to finance catalyzing interventions for projects covering priorities (strengthening of health systems, key and vulnerable populations, operational research) and the answer to neglected challenges through l'Accélérateur.

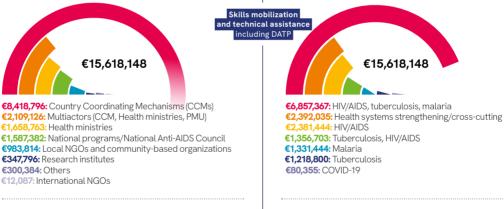
€9.734.658 Others

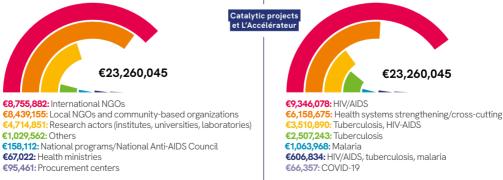
€15,618,148 for skills mobilization and technical assistance missions

Expenditures per pandemic

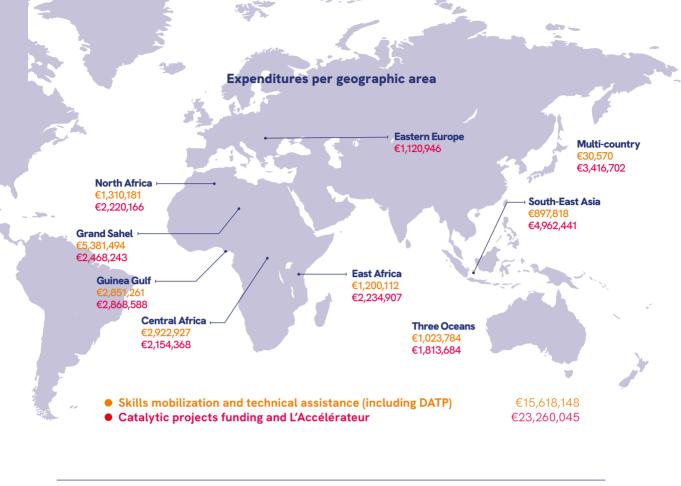
This figure represents total expenditure for the Expertise Channel in 2023, including residential support (DATP) to Global Fund grant management units in Mauritania and Chad.

Expenditure per beneficiary

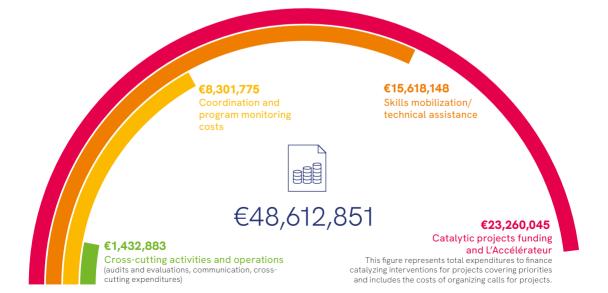




€300,384: Others







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