



WEST AFRICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
ORGANISATION OUEST AFRICAINE DE LA SANTE
ORGANIZAÇÃO OESTE AFRICANA DA SAÚDE

PRESS RELEASE

Bobo-Dioulasso, March 06, 2025

WAHO to Convene 2nd Lassa Fever International Conference to Enhance Regional Health Security, September 22–26, 2025, Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), through its specialized health institution, the West African Health Organisation (WAHO), will host the 2nd ECOWAS Lassa Fever International Conference (LIC) from September 22–26, 2025, in Côte d’Ivoire. Themed “***Beyond Borders: Strengthening Regional Cooperation to Combat Lassa Fever and Emerging Infectious Diseases,***” the conference aims to advance sustainable preparedness and regional coordination for Lassa fever through enhanced research and development (R&D) capacity, improved outbreak management systems, and multisectoral collaboration.

Lassa fever is a viral haemorrhagic illness endemic to West Africa, with Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea among the most affected countries. Since its discovery, the disease has exposed critical weaknesses in the region’s health systems. Despite being classified as a priority disease by the World Health Organization (WHO), Lassa fever outbreaks follow a recurring pattern of temporary containment followed by fresh outbreaks, underscoring the urgent need for sustainable preparedness that focuses not only on response but also on research, coordination, and stronger health systems.

Building on the foundation laid during the first edition hosted by the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control in Abuja in 2019, the 2025 edition will bring together policymakers, researchers, healthcare professionals, and key stakeholders to foster regional coordination, share scientific progress, including promising Lassa vaccine candidates entering clinical trials, and shape a more sustainable and collaborative approach to Lassa fever prevention and control across West Africa.

No single country can address challenges posed by Lassa fever and emerging infectious diseases alone, as globalisation, faster travel, and frequent cross-border movements have significantly increased the spread of infectious diseases across borders. Countries can significantly improve their response speed and effectiveness by sharing data, resources, and expertise. This collaborative approach will reduce Lassa fever’s impact and enhance regional health security.



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According to **Dr. Melchior Athanase AÏSSI, Director General of WAHO**, “Lassa fever remains a persistent threat to our populations, severely impacting our lives, health, and economic systems. Endemic in several West African countries, it causes between 100,000 and 300,000 infections each year, with around 5,000 deaths. Recent predictions indicate that factors such as climate change could put up to 600 million people at risk of contracting Lassa fever. This projection underlines the need for increased vigilance and preparedness”.

Dr Katrin Ramsauer, Lassa Disease Programme Lead at the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), said:

“The world has made great progress in recent years in the fight against Lassa fever. This upcoming conference is an important moment for scientists and global health experts to come together, under WAHO’s leadership, to both share new knowledge about the disease and spot the remaining research gaps where we need to act. Their discussions will help shape the Lassa fever research agenda in years to come which is set to have a direct impact on our future response to Lassa fever outbreaks - now becoming larger and more frequent as climate change and population growth in the region continue.”

The conference will feature diverse sessions, including plenary discussions led by regional and international health leaders and key partners to explore financing mechanisms, cross-border and multisectoral coordination, panel discussions on vaccine research, community surveillance, and parallel sessions that offer deep dives into operational research, and environmental topics.

Additionally, there will be interactive workshops on outbreak communication and abstract presentations showcasing the latest scientific findings on Lassa fever. Moreover, this second ECOWAS LIC will provide cross-country learning opportunities where experts will exchange insights from the management of other emerging infectious diseases (such as MPOX) to inform more effective and sustainable approaches for Lassa fever prevention and control.

A Call to Action

WAHO invites researchers, policymakers, healthcare professionals, and stakeholders to join this critical conference and contribute to strengthening regional health security against Lassa fever and other emerging infectious diseases.



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About West African Health Organisation (WAHO)

The West African Health Organisation (WAHO) is the Specialised Health Institution of ECOWAS, established in 1987 to coordinate regional health initiatives across West Africa. Headquartered in Bobo-Dioulasso, Burkina Faso, WAHO works to harmonise health policies, pool resources, and foster collaboration among Member States. Its core mandate is to improve health standards and strengthen health systems across the sub-region. Guided by its vision, WAHO strives to be a proactive driver of regional health integration, delivering high-impact and cost-effective health interventions for West African communities.

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For further information and sponsorship, Kindly contact:

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