






Q CASE STUDY

FAST-TRACKING FUNDING FOR EPIDEMIC PREPAREDNESS IN THE DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO (DRC)

SUMMARY

- 

The government of the DRC has taken important steps to focus on epidemic preparedness and response by proactively working to expedite the absorption of The World Bank's funding of 150 million USD as part of the Regional Disease Surveillance Systems Enhancement (REDISSE) project and drive implementation of their National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS).
- 

The Resolve to Save Lives-supported dedicated preparedness team (or Acceleration Team) embedded within DRC government worked with the national government counterparts and World Bank Project Implementation Unit to improve planning, strengthen stakeholder engagement, clarify processes and establish management systems which resulted in quicker approval of disbursement requests.
- 

The World Bank approved seven times more of DRC's requests for funding disbursement in 2022 than it did before the arrival of the dedicated preparedness team in 2021, providing the DRC with more than \$47 million USD in REDISSE funding.



THE CHALLENGE

Infectious disease burden in DRC is extremely high. In 2022 alone, the country faced several ongoing and concurrent outbreaks including Ebola, cholera, measles, monkeypox, bubonic plague, yellow fever, vaccine-derived polio, typhoid fever and malaria. Additionally, ongoing protracted crises and conflicts have exacerbated vulnerability to disease. According to the latest assessment of DRC's preparedness capacity (JEE 2018), the country is not well-prepared to prevent, detect and respond to epidemics.



Launch of the training workshop on the development and validation of Terms of Reference (ToR) and Needs Assessments (NC), Kinshasa, March 2022.

The World Bank awarded the country 150 million dollars in funding as part of its REDISSE project. Estimated to contribute about 50% of the budget for health security activities in DRC, REDISSE is a vital source of funding to drive forward priorities identified in the country's National Action Plan for Health Security (NAPHS).

However, an award is only the first step to receiving funds. To utilize awarded funds, governments must follow World Bank accountability protocols designed to ensure appropriate use (e.g., submission of proposals for funding requests). RTSL's experience in multiple countries has helped identify three main drivers for incomplete disbursement of awarded funds: misalignment between award-specific workplans and NAPHS due to poor prioritization, stakeholder misalignment and confusion regarding assigned roles and responsibilities. These problems are often compounded by an absence of dedicated staff within the government to support project implementation and help coordinate the different actors. Designated national focal points who oversee and contribute to the development of proposals are not always familiar with the processes and documentation requirements for disbursement of funds, leading to significant delays, confusion and wasted effort. Finally, without even a simple monitoring system to track disbursement requests and chains of approval, it becomes difficult to generate consistent accountability and momentum for the pipeline of projects.

Key Innovation: Aligning plans, people and processes

Epidemic preparedness efforts are often overlooked as countries focus on responding to emergencies. But since August 2021, DRC has had a dedicated preparedness team: [a multidisciplinary team dedicated to accelerating epidemic preparedness efforts](#). The dedicated preparedness team, funded and supported by RTSL, is housed in the Ministry of Public Health, Hygiene and Prevention and works closely with NAPHS and REDISSE coordination teams. The team is comprised of experts in public health, animal health, law, communication and program monitoring and evaluation. With this breadth of expertise and a good grasp of the technical, operational and political challenges in the public health sector, the team was well-positioned to work across and in tandem with the various government ministries and departments to accelerate REDISSE disbursement.



Developing prioritized annual workplans: The dedicated preparedness team helped their national counterparts develop well-prioritized annual REDISSE workplans by identifying critical and realistic activities that would meet World Bank criteria to approve funding disbursement. The team also worked to ensure that the activities to be financed through REDISSE reflected the national priorities defined in the country’s NAPHS.

Aligning stakeholders: Working with the REDISSE PIU and the World Bank country team, the dedicated preparedness team helped clarify disbursement procedures and further refine roles, so people understood and felt confident about their responsibilities in this effort. The team analyzed delays in approval by collecting real-time data on the creation, submission and approval of the documents between the government entities, the PIU and the World Bank. This was made possible through agreement and collaboration across stakeholders to share data and use data analysis to improve implementation of the program. The introduction of a [new tracking system](#) has helped improve coordination and accountability by clearly assigning responsibilities. It also strengthened communication and trust between actors and sustained positive momentum for implementation.

“There was a time when we could no longer move forward with the implementation of REDISSE activities due to confusions and lengthy procedures. But with the arrival of the dedicated preparedness team, we were able to speed things up, particularly regarding drafting disbursement requests. The team also advised us to start developing a roadmap so that as soon as the funding is available, we know exactly what the next steps should be.”

— Tatiana Mbanze, REDISSE IV Focal Point at the Kinshasa Veterinary Laboratory

Accelerating processes: The dedicated preparedness team also helped improve the quality of disbursement requests creating templates for MOUs, Concept Notes, TORs and other common documents that government staff would be expected to draft. They also offered training on writing quality and “office hours” to provide real-time feedback and direct support. These adjustments cut down on unnecessary back-and-forth and reduced World Bank’s request processing and approval time by about 50% on average.

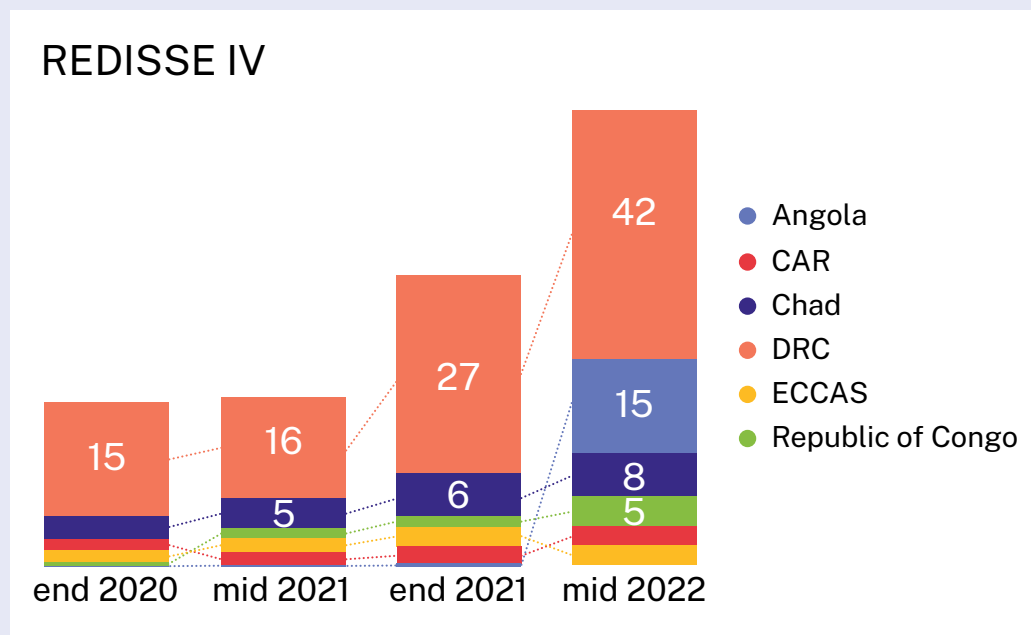


Preparedness team leading a workshop with technical focal points on the REDISSE Implementation Tracker



As a result of these innovations, government entities were better able to develop proposals that met the World Bank’s requirements and thus received approval for the disbursement of funds with greater ease and efficiency. **The World Bank approved seven times more of DRC’s requests for funding disbursement in 2022 than it did in 2021.** Though other countries also saw an improvement in approval rates as they gained experience with the REDISSE program, DRC’s trajectory was among the most dramatic.

REDISSE DISBURSEMENTS (in millions of dollars)



Source: World Bank Implementation Status and Results Report (ISR)

The REDISSE funds accessed by DRC contributed to the rehabilitation of laboratories in several provinces, the purchase of real-time surveillance equipment, human resource reinforcement and funding for routine meetings to strengthen multisectoral coordination. In early 2023, disbursement is expected to jump by an additional \$20 million through a memorandum of understanding with the International Organization for Migration to reinforce capacity at points of entries.

As country government and development actors look towards the creation of new financing programs, the lessons and innovations from DRC provide insight into how to improve a country’s capacity to access and use new resources by improving and clarifying processes and building accountability mechanisms into program design and implementation. Dedicated preparedness teams provide a promising model not only for countries that wish to improve focus and momentum on epidemic preparedness, but also for other development sectors looking to improve program implementation. [Learn more about dedicated preparedness teams.](#)