

GRET

A farmer on her family farm

KEY FIGURES

- 3 inclusive communal “One health” platforms are operating.
- 9 village terroir management committees integrating One Health issues.
- 54 rural households and 8 processing groups in the rice, pork and palm oil value chains integrating One Health issues in their practices.

One Health

Implementation of the One Health concept at local level: feedback from experiences in Forest Guinea

The One Health concept consists of a transversal and global approach to health, taking account of the close links between environmental health, animal health and human health.

Between 2021 and 2024, village communities in the **Guinean communes of Womey, Gouecké and Palé** participated in an innovative initiative aimed at making this One Health concept operational at territorial level. This project, conducted by GRET in partnership with the Guinean Entrepreneurs' Centre and the French National Research Institute for Sustainable Development, and funded by Agence française de développement, made it possible to **support local stakeholders to carry out our collective actions to improve global health in their territory**.

In 2019, Guinea defined a national “One health” strategy with a view to boosting prevention and management of all public health events taking a One Health approach. Multi-stakeholder platforms were rolled out at commu-

nal level, with a focus on monitoring of and responses to epidemics.

The Nzérékoré prefecture, which is close to Mount Béro classified forest, was one of the epicentres of the Ebola epidemic in 2015, which made One Health issues crucial. Although it is supported, the healthcare system remains fragile and vulnerable in this region, particularly in the event of an epidemic risk. Demographic pressure, development of infrastructure, and agricultural intensification are generating detrimental effects for the environment, contributing to land degradation, the emergence of pollution, depletion of forest cover and erosion of biodiversity.

Taking account of local communities' preoccupations and pre-existing consultation dynamics, the approach taken by the project consisted of **strengthening stakeholders' capacity to take action on healthcare in their territory**. This approach included agricultural and livestock farming practices, land and natural resource management, and healthcare governance.

Approach

Agricultural and livestock farming practices that reduce risks

To overcome their socio-economic challenges and deal with the health and environmental risks they face, 54 households and 8 agricultural groups working in the rice, palm oil and pork value chains tested new practices in collaboration with the State's technical services. They subsequently shared their results with their peers and within village and communal consultation spaces. The objective was to inform the latter's action plans. These practices included planning of activities at farm level and agroecological techniques aimed at reducing the use of polluting pesticides and chemical inputs, in order to favour maintenance of forest cover. With regards livestock farming, improvements were tested to keep animals healthy and better manage effluents to conserve the environment.

Lastly, more respectful practices for palm oil extraction and rice parboiling were put in place, reducing impacts on waterways and forests, in particular through waste treatment and reduction of the use of firewood.

Dynamic community-based planning to sustainably manage land and natural resources

Land and natural resource management at village level is another lever to protect human, animal and environmental health. In light of this, nine village committees developed and implemented community plans for collective management of soil and natural resources (forests and waterways), taking a commons-based approach.

These inclusive forums of consultation engaged in collective dialogue on land use, transformation of soil and the implications of these changes in terms of managing risks of disease transmission and environmental protection. Management rules were defined in collaboration with the State's technical services. These management plans strengthen cooperation between communities and local authorities, and complement the change of practices implemented on individual farms.

Communal platforms that are more inclusive and capable of supporting village initiatives

By engaging in dialogue throughout the project with stakeholders in the nine villages supported, the members of three communal One Health platforms dealt with a broad range of issues raised by communities, extending beyond responses to zoonotic epidemics.

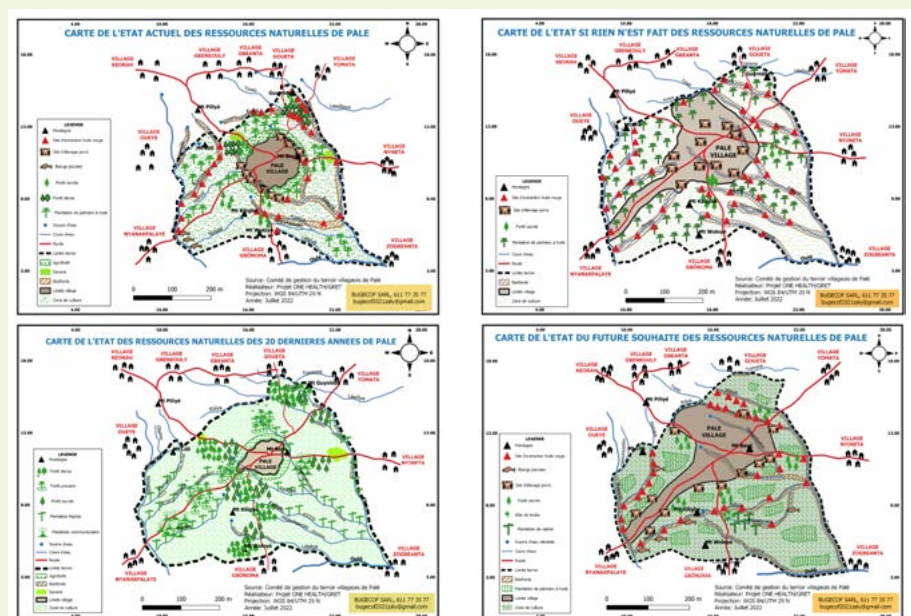
These platforms strengthened their capacity to provide support to village initiatives, and facilitated dialogue between communities and institutions, for example on the management of wood cutting. They worked directly in villages on the prevention of a large range of health and environmental risks. In order to consolidate their actions over the long term, apart from outbreaks of epidemics, the three platforms also implemented autonomous financing mechanisms, with support from the project.

Thanks to an approach taking account of the gender dimension, numerous women from diverse social and economic sectors became long-term members of these platforms, actively contributing to the various initiatives.

THE IMPORTANCE OF COLLECTIVE MAPPING



IN EACH VILLAGE, a session was organised to collectively map the village terroir, illustrating the current situation, evolution over the last twenty years, projections for the coming twenty years if no action is taken, and the preferred situation for the coming twenty years.



3 questions to Dr Dobo ONIVOGUI, project manager



As a doctor and epidemiologist, what marked you most about this remarkable project working in the area of One Health?

The One Health High-Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) proposes the following definition: “an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems”. To target optimal health, all public health interventions in communities should take account of the three spheres of health.

In Guinea, the national One Health strategy focuses on monitoring and responding to zoonoses, and sometimes neglects communities' priorities, such as the fight against abusive wood cutting, pollution of waterways or contaminations related to the use of phytosanitary products. By working in an integrated and multi-sectoral manner, based on local preoccupations, projects taking the One Health approach can initiate highly promising dynamics to take sustainable preventive action for all three spheres.

What are the main changes you've observed in the local context since the project ended?

The various stakeholders are now aware of several elements: firstly, on the multiple interrelations between the three areas of health, on the capacity of each person to take action and on the legitimate role of all parties, and lastly, on the potential for change offered by certain promising technical innovations.

But above all, we are now observing a dynamic of consultation that did not previously exist, which is continuing beyond the project's action between community stakeholders (village terroir management committees, households, agricultural groups, associations) and communal officers (members of the decentralised One Health platform).

Is there a methodology to make the One Health approach operational?

The project did not invent a “One Health method”, but it enabled lessons to be learned about the conditions necessary to make the concept operational at territorial level. Although they were drawing on their own expertise, at the outset, GRET and its partners weren't proposing solutions to pre-identified needs. It is thanks to the thorough facilitation work conducted by the project team that local stakeholders became the first to take part in reflections and the actions implemented.



IN COMMUNES, more inclusive One Health platforms, working in communities outside of epidemic outbreaks, sourcing autonomous, sustainable financing for their actions.



IN HOUSEHOLDS AND FARMERS' ORGANISATIONS, changes in agricultural and livestock farming practices making it possible to overcome socio-economic challenges, while addressing environmental and health issues.

Photo: treating crops with bio-pesticides to protect them from caterpillars.

USER PORTRAITS

Jean DELAMOU

Palm oil planters' representative and secretary of the Guélagbozou Village terroir management committee (VTMC), in the commune of Gouécké



"I come from a family of planters, my father taught us to understand the importance of the forest. Previously, in the event of excessive wood cutting, the community issued a small fine, it took place between parents. There was no trust between the forest cantonment manager¹ and the community. We used to think they only came to penalise or swindle us. Now, everything is regulated. A citizen from the community cannot cut wood without first informing the VTMC, which then forwards the information to the forest cantonment manager, who has the power to authorise, and then transfers to the VTMC, which in turn monitors the activity. The project supported us so that we could manage our resources ourselves, through dialogue, and with the help of forest cantonment, which taught us the importance of wood cutting for the health of our village."



Mamady KABA DIAKITE

Community health worker, secretary of the central Gouécké VTMC and member of the commune's OH platform

"I joined the communal One Health platform when it was created in 2020. I represented the Red Cross,

for safe, dignified burials during epidemics. A lot of people were appointed in these platforms to represent the various institutions. With Ebola, there was a divide between health officers and the population. Before the project, access in communities was still difficult, and women weren't getting vaccinated. With the "One Health" project, we understood that the platform can support us for our own good, we can see the benefits of this approach. It's easier now to convey health messages, for vaccination, this facilitated the activities of community health workers. It is vital to ensure that the VTMCs participate in decision-making, because they represent the population. People can see it's useful if we understand diagnoses and make decisions."

1. Officer in charge of environmental conservation in the commune.

3 QUESTIONS TO...

Yeli Yeli MONEMOU

Sub-prefect and chairperson of the Womey communal One Health platform



As the sub-prefectural authority and chairperson of the communal One Health platform, how did the collaboration go with communities on health and environmental issues as part of the project?

The members of the Womey sub-prefectural OH platform travelled to villages to speak with communities. These missions were generally carried out with the members of the project team. The subjects discussed included, for example, the consequences of excessive wood cutting in terms of waterways drying up and animals moving away, the pollution of waterways from palm oil extraction, the reduction of phytosanitary products in agricultural fields and the elimination of their use in villages, reduction of straying by animals, etc. All these community activities by the OH platform were carried out in direct collaboration with the village terroir management committees.

What challenges need to be overcome to make the dynamics initiated as part of the project sustainable?

The main challenges to be overcome are firstly the extension of this type of approach to other localities and prefectures in Forest Guinea, because if we all have the same level of information on OH issues in communities, the impact can be broader. But it is also necessary to support certain significant changes, such as developing alternatives to phytosanitary products in agriculture, or supporting farmers to move their pigs away from waterways.

Why is participation by women important and how can it be boosted?

The involvement of women in OH platforms and their participation in community forums of dialogue has proved crucial. For example, when waterways are polluted by household waste, palm oil extraction, traditional fishing or spreading of pig manure, women are often the ones who suffer the consequences most. They are responsible for household tasks and often wash clothes in these creeks. However, if they are well informed on issues and participate in exchanges, they can play a central role in raising awareness in communities.



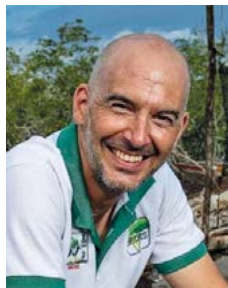
Laying traps to fight against tsetse flies

THE IMPORTANCE OF RESEARCH

Jean-Mathieu BART

Research officer at IRD

“IRD, via its researchers at the Intertryp research unit, has been collaborating with the Guinean Ministry of Health and the National programme to combat neglected tropical diseases in order to eliminate sleeping sickness. At a time when this elimination is about to be validated by the WHO, the issue of the role of animals as a reservoir of the disease must be examined. Between 2022 and 2024, several missions were conducted in partnership with GRET and pig farmers in Gouécké to address this One Health issue”.



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A community health officer conducting a session to raise awareness on prevention of diseases

Dr Pepe BILIVOGUI

Permanent secretary of the national One Health platform in Guinea



What marked you most about this project? What new contribution does it make to the One Health approach in Guinea?

The project showed that it is possible to develop the One Health approach at community level. It also demonstrated that the One Health approach covers way more aspects than one might think at first. The concept of One Health concerns the main aspects of community life: social, cultural, economic, etc. Everything takes place at the base, including monitoring of health events, strengthening of collaboration between the various stakeholders, and the prevention of and fight against health problems in all their forms.

In this project, the local One Health platforms extended their areas of intervention. What is your assessment of this?

This extension enables better understanding of the role that the community can play in monitoring, prevention and responses to epidemics, which will make it possible to build the resilience of this same community to deal with public health issues, in particular regarding poverty in the population. Often, interventions responding to public health events encounter reticence from the population. The community platform plays a crucial role, because it can facilitate collaboration with communities for numerous multi-sectoral public health interventions.

Guinea's national One Health strategy is about to be revised. In your opinion, what major evolutions should it feature? What challenges will need to be overcome at national level?

The evolutions to be included in this strategy primarily concern the institutional anchoring of the One Health platform. This aspect must be clarified so as to facilitate the operation of One Health platforms at all levels of the country's administration, notably monitoring, prevention and response to public health threats. Another evolution will be to consider the strategic orientations provided internationally by the Quadripartite One Health partnership, in particular its action plan. The most significant challenge to be overcome at national level is developing the community aspect in the operationalisation of the One Health approach. We intend to go beyond the current restricted vision of One Health.

This project conducted by GRET provided us with a model from which we can draw inspiration. And fortunately, it was constructed with full participation by the main national stakeholders, and facilitators of the implementation of the One Health approach in Guinea.

Lessons learned from the project

In an international agenda marked by increased focus on the subject of One Health, a growing number of actors are examining the concept and taking progressive steps for its concrete implementation. Multi-sectoral One Health platforms exist in various forms in several countries. The decentralisation of their action to the most local level possible is sometimes a priority subject for public authorities and their partners.

The pilot project conducted in Forest Guinea provides some insights into **the “territorialisation” of the One Health approach**. Which factors facilitate collective action around this approach, in particular on this territorial level?

FOCUSING ON ISSUES THAT ARE RELEVANT LOCALLY

To date, One Health approaches are quite top-down. However, through participative diagnoses and community-based planning, based on perceptions of interrelations between the three areas of health, it is possible to ascertain which issues are considered as priorities, apart from zoonoses, and to examine practices in order to overcome the different challenges.



A farmer on his family plot

In so doing, the concept of One Health becomes a lever for a social demand for better health in the territory, making it possible to address prevention for the three areas of health in the broad sense.

SUPPORTING CONSULTATION DYNAMICS ON SEVERAL LEVELS

Encouraging consultation between different levels and within each level (households, villages, communes), while taking account of health and environmental risks, and socio-economic challenges encountered by populations, enables stakeholders to better understand their role and their capacity for action.

In Guinea, feedback of information and spontaneous requests from communities to the One Health platforms, and their active role as relays and supports on a broad range of subjects, demonstrate their gratitude. They also highlight their new legitimacy to exercise their mandate for action. It is essential that these bodies support existing consultation mechanisms, while ensuring they are as inclusive as possible.

TAKING FUNDING CHALLENGES INTO ACCOUNT

While support must begin at the right time — once roles have been well defined —, it is important from the outset to plan two types of funding for projects:

- on the one hand, sustainable funding to support consultation forums (such as the communal platforms and village committees);
- and on the other hand, funding for concrete changes (developments, infrastructure, support for transition, etc.) through action plans presented to the decision-making bodies at each level.

ONE HEALTH PROJECT OPERATORS ACTING AS FACILITATORS

In such a vast thematic domain, in order to meet the challenges of making the One Health approach territorial, the job of “territorial facilitator” is crucial, in addition to technical and sectoral jobs that must decompartmentalise and collaborate.

In light of the experience in Guinea, the commons-based approach is particularly relevant to strengthen populations’ resilience in terms of overall health. Dynamics must be rolled out and supported over sufficiently long periods.

Prospects



Extracting red palm oil



Provision of improved rice parboiling kits

This project was a first pilot phase, which made it possible to initiate highly promising dynamics. The latter must be continued and extended to progressively larger territories, in order to simultaneously overcome the challenges of health security and sustainable development.

WHICH LEVERS CAN BE USED FOR UPSCALING?

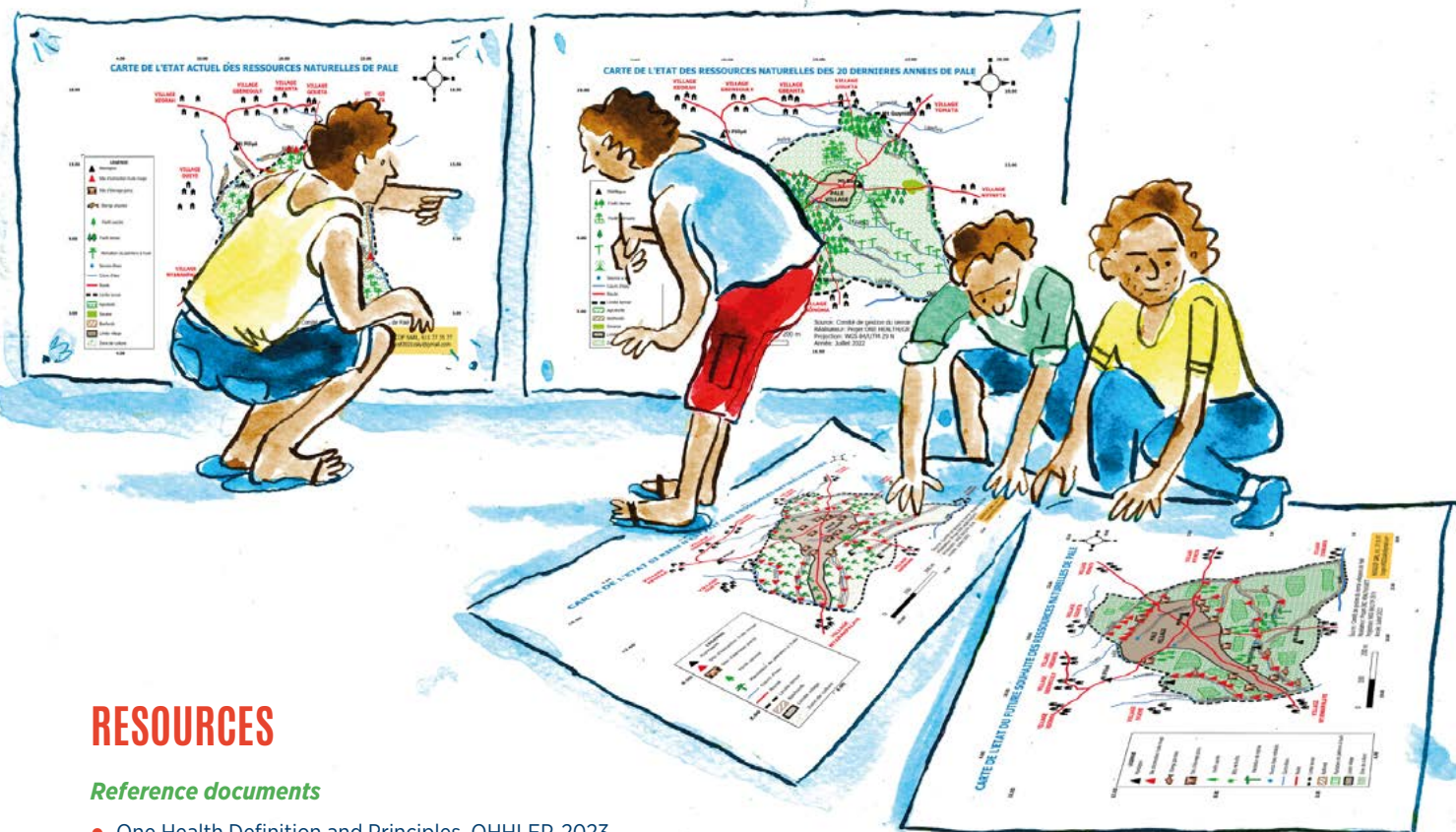
Drawing on the experience of the three communes concerned by this project, it is possible to support different types of local consultation mechanisms, such as decentralised One Health platforms or other communal existing frameworks dealing with the issues of health and the environment. As they are rooted within populations, these frameworks facilitate dialogue and coordination between the various levels of planning (village, commune, prefecture, region) in order to improve overall health.

In Guinea, as in other countries, community-based health monitoring systems have been set up in various forms, taking the One Health approach, in order to prevent and reduce the risk of epidemics. These systems, which are focused on feedback of data and alerts, can be combined with or enriched by participative mechanisms, including ecological data. This enables communities themselves to evaluate and measure the impact their planning and their change of practices has on the three areas of health, and thereby inform their future actions. Lastly, it is essential to provide quality services that are accessible, de-compartmentalised, and capable of meeting populations' needs in the areas of agriculture, livestock farming and the environment, as well as health.

At primary and community level, healthcare system actors have a very important role to play in terms of prevention and promoting health, in consultation with all local stakeholders.

Village assembly on community regulations for the use of land and resources





RESOURCES

Reference documents

- [One Health Definition and Principles, OHHLEP, 2023](#)
- [One Health joint plan of action \(2022-2026\) of the quadripartite organisations – WHO, FAO, WOA, UNEP, 2022](#)
- [One Sustainable Health for All Declaration, 2024](#)

Documents relating to AFD's 2020-2024 One Health Sectoral Innovation Facility for NGOs (FISONG)

- [One Health : contribuer à la résilience des populations dans le domaine de la santé globale, 2024](#)
- [Prendre en charge les enjeux de santé à l'échelle communautaire – Des communautés engagées pour la santé de leur territoire – Retours d'expériences, 2024](#)
- [Intérêt d'une approche territoriale de One Health – Retours d'expériences, 2024](#)
- [Enjeux de genre dans les projets One Health, FE3, 2020](#)
- [Manuel de la Formation à distance à l'intégration du genre dans les projets sélectionnés pour la Fisong 2020 One Health, F3E, 2020](#)

GRET's commons-based approach

- [A commons-based approach for a fairer, more sustainable world](#)

ABOUT GRET

For more than twenty years, GRET, an international solidarity organisation, has been conducting health actions in the field, developing specific know-how on community health. To design and implement the One Health project in its territorial dimension, and make the local ecosystem more resilient while encouraging all parties to take action, a transversal approach was taken, mobilising three areas of expertise: natural resource management, food systems and, of course, health.

Founded in 1976, GRET is present in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Its objective is to improve the most vulnerable populations' living conditions and promote social justice, while conserving our planet. It has multiple areas of expertise: natural resources, essential local services, cities and housing, professional integration and employment, nutrition and health, food systems, land governance, inclusive finance and economy.

Learn more about the One Health project:

<https://gret.org/en/projet/promoting-a-global-approach-to-health-at-territorial-level-in-forest-guinea>

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