

The Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development in Mali

Improving access to primary healthcare



Novartis Foundation
for Sustainable Development

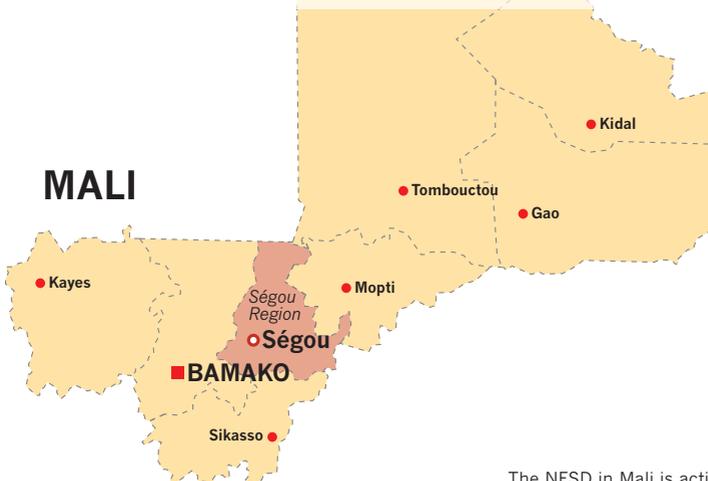


Over 30 years of Malian-Swiss collaboration

The Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development (NFSD) was founded in 1979 in Basel, Switzerland. The first project the foundation's predecessor supported started in Mali the same year. Following the great drought of the 1970s, the foundation helped set up an agricultural research station in the rural municipality of Cinzana. Now, over 30 years later, the Novartis Foundation continues to work actively with local communities, municipalities and state authorities in Mali, particularly in the area of access to healthcare with the aim of contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The main project in Mali, the Initiative Accès, is one of nine healthcare projects the NFSD currently supports in developing regions.

The Novartis Foundation for Sustainable Development operates in three overlapping areas:

1. **Healthcare projects** in developing countries to improve access to healthcare, to strengthen human resources in health systems and to empower vulnerable groups;
2. **Think-tank activities** involve carrying out research and publishing papers in the areas of business and human rights, corporate responsibility and access to medicines and healthcare, among others; and
3. **Dialogue and networking** through symposia, workshops and other events, acting as a bridge between the private sector, international organizations, governments and NGOs.





The team of the Novartis Foundation in Ségou

The Novartis Foundation in Mali

The Novartis Foundation in Mali is registered locally as a delegation. With an annual budget of about CFA 210 million (USD 430,000), the delegation staff manage and help implement NFSD-supported initiatives in collaboration with regional and district authorities in the region of Ségou, focusing on improving access to healthcare for rural populations through the Initiative Accès. In addition to running the Initiative Accès, the Novartis Foundation in Mali supports the implementation of specific small-scale initiatives, including a school for aurally handicapped children, and an initiative focused on improving access to healthcare and primary education for disadvantaged children. The Novartis Foundation in Mali is represented by a Head of Delegation, who is joined in the Bamako office by a Financial Manager. The Initiative Accès is managed by a Regional Coordinator, along with a specialist in community participation and an accountant in Ségou.



The Initiative Accès: improving access to primary healthcare services in rural areas

The core of Novartis Foundation activities in Mali is the Initiative Accès. The decision to launch this initiative recalls the established history between the Novartis Foundation and the Malian government.

Obstacles to healthcare access are especially pronounced in rural areas with large geographical distances, such as in the region of Ségou, Mali. In light of this situation, the Novartis Foundation, together with its Malian partners, developed the Initiative Accès. The initiative covers 13 health areas in the region of Ségou, reaching a population of 200,000 people in 210 villages. The main beneficiaries are pregnant women, young mothers and children under five years of age.

In order to adequately improve access to healthcare, the Initiative Accès intervenes on both the supply and demand sides of access, by

- (1) improving the availability and quality of healthcare services,
- (2) bringing healthcare services closer to patients,
- (3) strengthening health insurance schemes,
- (4) providing microcredit to women's savings groups, and
- (5) introducing income-generating activities for farmers.

These interventions have been selected based on the assumption that access is defined as the degree to which a healthcare system's services and providers (supply) are aligned with a patient's resources, needs and expectations (demand). Hence, access to healthcare and medicines can only be sustainable if the local healthcare system and services meet demand.

(1) Improving the availability and quality of healthcare services

To improve the availability and quality of healthcare services, the Initiative Accès strengthens the infrastructure, management and human resources in health centers. Healthcare staff are trained in specific clinical and public health areas.

Annual performance assessments of health services and their management indicate that from 2007 to 2011 the eleven community health associations increased their average score by 42% from 67 to 130 out of 150 possible points. Internal governance and support to healthcare personnel have demonstrated notable improvement. However, progress in administrative and financial management has been stagnating. For this reason, the Initiative Accès conducted tailor-made capacity building for the weakest community health associations. In terms of quality of care, the match between diagnosis given and treatment prescribed improved substantially by 15% (from 71% in 2010 to 86% in 2011).

To support and scale up training of healthcare personnel working with sick children, the NFSD, together with the World Health Organization (WHO), developed an e-learning tool for Integrated Management of Childhood Illness (IMCI). IMCI is a WHO/UNICEF strategy that aims to significantly and rapidly reduce infant and childhood mortality. The new software is thus called ICATT (IMCI Computerized Adaptation and Training Tool) and is available free of charge. The Initiative Accès helped introduce ICATT in Mali, aiming to strengthen training in childhood diseases.

(2) Bringing healthcare services closer to patients

Within the framework of an outreach strategy, healthcare personnel offer vaccinations, prenatal and some curative services directly in the villages. In addition, the Initiative Accès trains village health workers to offer basic promotional services for child nutrition and hygiene in communities.

(3) Strengthening health insurance schemes

To make healthcare more affordable and ensure people seek immediate care in the event of illness, the Initiative Accès strengthens existing health insurance schemes, provides grants to women's savings groups and supports farmers in setting up viable income generation activities. The biggest rural health insurance scheme in the area, the *Mutuelle de Santé of Cinzana*, has almost doubled its number of beneficiaries from 1,151 to 2,400 people between 2004 and 2011. Yet, enrollment rates remain low. Therefore the catchment area of the Cinzana scheme has been extended to three neighboring health areas in order to increase the pool of beneficiaries. Furthermore, a professional insurance administrator has been employed and the benefit package improved: 75% of primary healthcare costs and 100% of costs related to child birth are now covered. Finally, the Initiative supports the scheme by strengthening its administrative and financial management, and assists with the sensitization of potential members.

(4) Microcredit for women's savings groups

In collaboration with the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture, the Initiative Accès supports women's savings groups with loans to increase their income. Group members can take out small loans to invest in viable business activities such as poultry, sheep or peanut seed production. The additional income can then be reinvested in education and healthcare for the children. 3,200 women in 52 groups have access to credit. The repayment rate of the women is nearly 100%. From 2008 to 2011, the groups have increased their accumulated usable resources from approximately CFA 12,000,000 (USD 23,000) to CFA 45,000,000 (USD 88,000) of usable resources. While 77% of women interviewed used the credit for productive activities, 23% invested in social issues (health, education). The average net gain per month per woman amounts to around USD 18. In return for credit, the women's groups conduct sensitization meetings on preventive health and nutrition; many are trained village health workers.

(5) Income-generating activities for farmers

In five health areas, farmers are being supported by the Initiative Accès and the Syngenta Foundation with the setting up of viable income generation such as jatropha (used for bio-diesel production) and rubber tree plantations. The partners conduct capacity building for plant breeders' and planters' cooperatives as well as for planters through technical trainings. To date, 226 hectares have been planted, of which 186 ha are jatropha and 40 ha are rubber trees. The main challenge continues to be the survival rate of young jatropha plants. However, through better maintenance of the fields and effective protection against termites, the survival rate improved from under 20% for the plantations of 2007 to over 70% for those planted in 2010.

How the Initiative Accès contributes to the Millennium Development Goals

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger



Income-generating activities for rural communities, such as jatropha cultivation, poultry and milk production; income-generating activities for women's groups; and measures against malnutrition in children

5. Improve maternal health



Quality of care improvement (incl. maternal health); health insurance protection; prenatal consultation; and village-based preventive services

2. Achieve universal primary education



6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases



Improvement of access to healthcare; health insurance protection; and village-based preventive services

3. Promote gender equality and empower women



Loans for women's groups; training women as village health workers to conduct health education campaigns

7. Ensure environmental sustainability



Installation of incinerators in health centers; contribution to carbon sequestration and reforestation through jatropha plantations

4. Reduce child mortality



Child vaccination, village-based preventive services; quality of care improvement (incl. child health); health insurance protection; and measures against malnutrition in children

8. A global partnership for development



Collaboration with regional and district authorities for health and social development, municipalities, the University of Geneva, and the MicroInsurance Centre





Improving primary school enrollment of aurally handicapped children

In addition to the Initiative Accès, the Novartis Foundation in Mali is implementing a project to improve primary school enrollment of aurally handicapped children in Ségou, using funds collected by the Novartis Vaccines and Diagnostics division in the United States.

The project aims to increase the number of aurally handicapped children who complete the first six years of primary school and to improve the quality of their education. In 2011, the school buildings were constructed, the teachers were trained, including further tuition in sign language, and the necessary educational materials were purchased. Importantly, sensitization campaigns were launched using the radio and other channels to alert parents to the availability of schooling for aurally handicapped children. Additionally, the school management committee was trained in its role and responsibilities, and audiometric analyses were conducted with the children. Currently about 60 children are enrolled in the school.

Future activities will focus on the training of teachers, specifically on approaches to teaching aurally handicapped children. A system of supportive supervision for teachers, with regard to their teaching practices, will also be initiated. In addition to assessing the children's specific needs, efforts will be focused on organizing informative activities for the parents and strengthening the supervisory role of the authorities.



Primary education and health for disadvantaged children

The Novartis Foundation in Mali also manages an initiative for disadvantaged children in rural Mali, funded by the ALDAVA Foundation.

In order to increase the literacy rate and to improve the health condition of the population in the long run, it is particularly important to reach children and enable them to access affordable, quality healthcare and primary education. These are key elements for improving the future prospects of the next generation. With this in mind, the NFSD supported the ALDAVA Foundation to initiate a project in 2004, which provides primary education to children and healthcare services to the general population of Garna, in the Ségou region.

In the area of **primary education**, the objective is to increase the school enrollment rate in Garna and immediate surrounding areas toward realizing the Millennium Development Goal associated with achieving universal primary education. Moreover, a high quality of education must be offered in order that students are able to complete primary school and then have the opportunity to continue with a secondary education. Funds from the ALDAVA Foundation have made a significant contribution toward constructing classrooms, staff-rooms, latrines and accommodation for teachers, as well as providing the latest teaching materials. Together with the authorities and the *Association des Parents d'Elèves*, the Foundation has also made it possible to pay and train the teachers on a regular basis. About 245 students are enrolled in the school.

In the area of **healthcare**, the initiative in Garna aims to improve the local population's access to essential health services, focusing on children under the age of five, pregnant women and young mothers to help reduce infant and maternal mortality. Through financial support, the ALDAVA Foundation helped to construct and equip the local health center. In addition to recruiting a medical doctor, other healthcare personnel were also hired. These healthcare workers conduct visits to all eight surrounding villages twice a week and administer early childhood vaccinations and offer pre-natal examinations for pregnant women.

Today, the health center in Garna is so well accepted by the local population that on average nearly half of the inhabitants get treated there at least once a year. This is far above the national average. Between 2010 and 2011, the match between diagnosis given and treatment prescribed increased from 43% to 70% for the evaluated cases.

Voices from the field



Dr. Mohamed Keita – Chief Physician, Health Center, Cinzana

“We’ve really benefitted from the partnership with the Initiative Accès. The support not only consists of advice and financial contribution. It has really helped us understand the place and role of each of the health workers in the healthcare system. This has really contributed to the improvement of our services.”



Djeneba Bouaré – Mother in Cinzana

“This is the third time I bring my child to the health center. The first time I came, everyone thought that she will die. She was very tired, even I didn’t have any hope left. But when we came to the health center, the treatment worked and the child was feeling better. I have had a satisfying experience here every time.”



Assitan Coulibaly – Member of a health insurance scheme, Cinzana

“The Health Insurance Scheme gives us many benefits. It means that people pool the treatment costs to take care of their illnesses. The health insurance allows us to get immediate treatment without spending too much.”



Magassa Diaratou Sow – Member of a women's savings group, Cinzana

“The women’s savings group is helping me a lot. With the money I borrow, I can buy animals. During festivities I resell them and with the profit I can provide for my children.”



Contact



Dr. Oumar Niangado, Head of Delegation
B.P. 1449, Bamako, Mali
oniangado@afribonemali.net
+223 20 28 14 78



Dr. Aly Barry, Regional Coordinator Initiative Accès
B.P. 453, Ségou, Mali
barry.nfsd@gmail.com
+223 21 32 33 76

For more information:
www.novartisfoundation.org