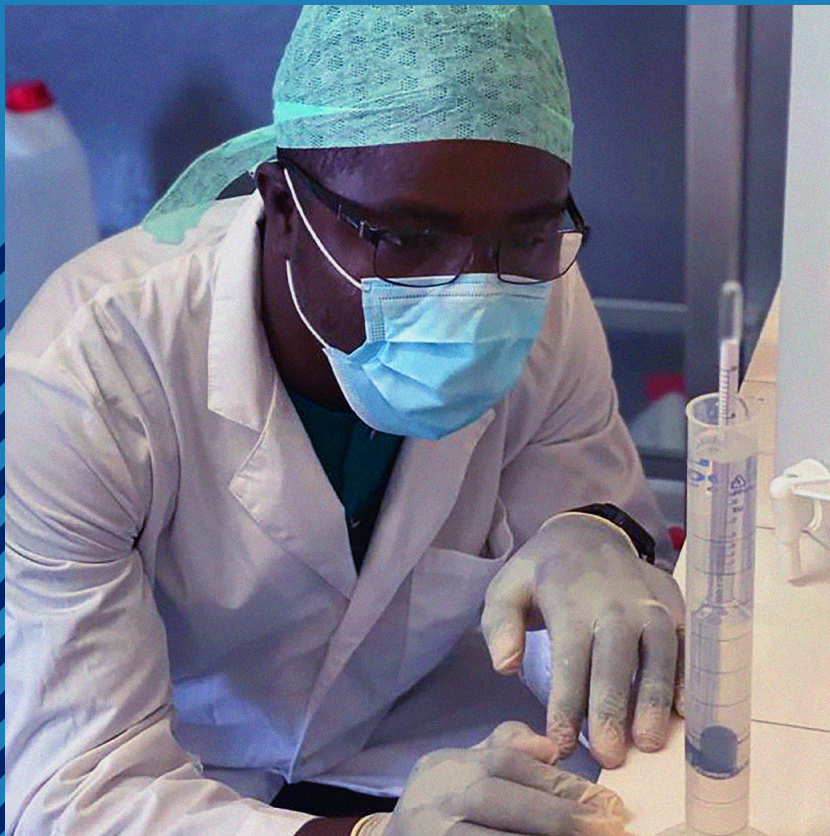


Success story: Sierra Leone

‘Local solutions for local problems with local ownership’: protecting health workers and communities in Sierra Leone



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SO RT IT
Improving health systems through research

The AMR-SORT IT programme supported the production of alcohol-based hand rub solutions for preventing infections



The challenge

Sierra Leone is faced with the challenge of poor hygiene and sanitation in households and health facilities due principally to the lack of soap and clean running water. Only 2% of the population has access to clean running water.^{1,2} This exposes health care workers, patients and communities to antimicrobial resistance and infectious diseases such as Ebola and COVID-19.



The solution

The AMR-SORT IT programme helped address this challenge through the AMR-SORT IT officer and operational research fellow who provided technical and operational support to the Ministry of Health and Sanitation to propel the local production of alcohol-based hand rub solutions. These individuals used the skills and core competencies acquired through the SORT IT training³ to lead operational research studies that provided robust evidence on infection, prevention and control in health facilities. Technical and operational support was provided through the WHO country office to:

- Catalyse the local production of alcohol-based hand rub solutions which are effective in ensuring hand hygiene and preventing infection.
- Support the Infection Prevention and Control team of the Ministry of Health and Sanitation and the Pharmacy Board of Sierra Leone to coordinate efforts for the local production of approximately 45 000 litres of hand rub solutions per year. A sustainability plan for continued production of these solutions has also been drafted by the Ministry of Health and Sanitation with support from the WHO country office.



The importance

Finding 'local solutions for local problems with local ownership' such as the production and promotion of alcohol-based hand rub solutions should encourage behaviour change and improve hand hygiene practices in health facilities. Additionally, it should help to reduce the burden of healthcare-associated infections, including COVID-19, Ebola and antimicrobial resistance.⁴

Sierra Leone produces alcohol-based hand rub solutions locally which are seven times cheaper - costing around US\$ 3 for 500ml compared to approximately US\$ 10⁵ on the local market.



Through several operational research studies conducted through SORT IT, the AMR-SORT IT programme has played a vital role in demonstrating gaps in Infection, Prevention and Control in health facilities and providing solutions. Proper implementation of Hand Hygiene and Infection prevention and control is a priority in all our health facilities to reduce infection transmission in our Health Care system and to the community at large.

Ms Christiana Kallon,
National IPC Coordinator, Ministry of Health and Sanitation of Sierra Leone.

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