In 2013, in Bamako, Mali a meeting was held to transfer the coordination of animal health networks in West and Central Africa to regional coordinators. Networks involved included the Regional Network of National Epidemiosurveillance Systems for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) and Other Priority Animal Diseases In West and Central Africa (RESEPI) and the West and Central Africa Veterinary Laboratory Network for Avian Influenza and other Transboundary Diseases (RESOLAB).

Since 2005, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) regional Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Disease Operations (ECTAD) unit for West Africa and Central Africa based in Bamako has been providing support on the prevention and control of HPAI and other transboundary animal diseases (TADs), including building capacities of national veterinary services in the region in terms of disease preparedness, early warning, response and monitoring. FAO ECTAD Bamako has provided assistance to strengthen veterinary service capacities through organization of training activities in epidemiology and laboratory diagnosis, provision of epidemiological and laboratory equipment and reagents, support for regional experts to participate in international conferences, the organization of annual regional coordination meetings and the improvement of disease information sharing between countries.

This broad range of activities was mainly carried out through specialized regional networks of which the most active to date are the laboratory network (RESOLAB) and the epidemiological surveillance network (RESEPI). The networks have also fostered technical collaboration between the epidemiological surveillance networks and the laboratory networks, including strengthening the links between the regional support laboratories. It is now clearly established that both networks gather animal health experts who contribute effectively to the preparation and the implementation of regional control strategies for major animal diseases including HPAI, peste des petits ruminants (PPR), African swine fever (ASF), rabies and foot-and-mouth disease (FMD) in the region.

FAO ECTAD Bamako has been coordinating the two networks since their establishment by developing a multidisciplinary platform and a functional framework that have facilitated the prevention and control of TADs in West and Central Africa. For instance, the FAO ECTAD Bamako Web site (www.fao-ectad-bamako.org) is an interactive and user-friendly tool that provides visitors with important information.

Despite these inputs and achievements, challenges remain for an effective and sustainable ownership of the networks by the Member States and regional economic communities (RECs) to which they belong, namely the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) for West Africa and the Economic Community of African Central States (ECCAS) for Central Africa. Overcoming these challenges will depend on the capacity of RESOLAB and RESEPI members to take over the coordination of
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At the end of the meeting, participants endorsed a final communiqué (available at www.fao-ectad-bamako.org/fr/Final-Communique-Regional-meeting?lang=en) with 18 recommendations addressed to network regional coordinators, countries, RECs, donors, and FAO and its partners within the GF-TADs. 360

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3 RESOLAB/RESEPI networks are composed of Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Côte d’Ivoire, the Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, the Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo for West Africa; and Cameroon, the Central African Republic, Chad, the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Sao Tome and Principe for Central Africa.