

Strategies to Prevent (STOP) Spillover

Introduction of new tools and support for biosafety practices among wild meat handlers and processors in Côte d'Ivoire to prevent zoonotic diseases risks



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Introduction/Background

Strategies to Prevent Spillover (STOP Spillover) is a multi-country project funded by USAID, aiming to strengthen their capacities to identify, assess, and monitor risk associated with emerging zoonotic viruses through developing and introducing proven and novel risk reduction measures.

In Côte d'Ivoire, STOP Spillover intervenes in the wild meat sector where there is a lack of mechanism to preserve the health of people working in, despite the wild meat trade and consumption remain common in markets and restaurants.

Project intervention location

STOP Spillover is implemented at the human-wildlife interface within the District des Montagnes to mitigate the risk of pathogen exposure.

This area, located in the Western part of the country is characterized by a widespread wild meat trade, both within the region and across neighboring countries which experienced Ebola outbreaks.



Map showing the District des Montagnes bordering Guinea and Liberia

Gaps in wild meat processing

- Lack of use of personal protective equipment during processing operations
- Insufficient safe practices for meat handling
- Inadequate infrastructure and practices for safe management of fluids and solid wastes



Evisceration of a hedgehog on a table in a restaurant in Guiglo, District des Montagnes
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Effluent from wild meat processing area on the ground at the Yopougon market, Abidjan
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Objective

To ensure the safety of wild meat handlers, STOP Spillover is introducing a package of innovative biosafety tools and practices among wild meat handlers and processors in markets and restaurants.

Methods

The activities within this package of innovative tools and practices are implemented in alignment with the Social Behavior Change (SBC) strategy.

TOOLS FOR SAFE HANDLING OF WILD MEAT

Guidelines for the Safe Handling of Wild Meat

In collaboration with researchers and government agencies in the public health and animal health sectors, guidelines and protocols were developed for training of wild meat handlers and processors on biosafety and hygiene.

Training for Safe Handling and Processing of Wild Meat

Two cohorts of 50 market and restaurant workers were trained in September 2023 and May 2024.

Training topics included:

- Proper use of protective personal equipment (PPE),
- Cleaning, disinfection and sanitization,
- Zoonotic disease and behaviors that increase risk,
- Conservation, recognition and reporting of endangered and vulnerable wildlife species.



Demonstration of PPE wearing by a trainee during a training session
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SUPPORT FOR PRACTICES ADOPTION

Biosafety material and equipment distribution

As part of the training, participants were provided with equipment to encourage their adoption of new safety practices:

- PPE
- Hygiene and disinfection consumables

Champions' program

Among the trainees, "Champions" were identified to monitor and support the adoption of STOP Spillover biosafety interventions among their peers and consumers.

Nijou chatbot

Nijou, a WhatsApp-based chatbot, connects trainees and their peers to information from the training content, and provides a platform to ask questions and receive advice to support their adoption of biosafety practices.



Labeling program of wild meat restaurants

- A label of quality posed on restaurants which adhere to biosafety and hygiene protocols.
- Co-developed with national restaurant association (RUPACI) to incentivize wild meat restaurants.
- To foster local ownership of biosafety practices beyond the life of the project.

Results

A preliminary data from monitoring visits of the trainees showed that many of the PPE and equipment introduced were well adopted (Table 1).

Table 1. Proportion of participants using the various biosafety intervention

Material and equipment	Everyday/ Regularly n (%)	Sometimes/ Often n (%)	Rarely/ Only once/Never n (%)
Hair covering	13 (100)	0	0
Apron	13 (100)	0	0
Bleach	12 (92.3)	1 (7.7)	0
Nitrile Gloves	11 (84.6)	2 (15.4)	0
Hydroalcoholic gel	11 (84.6)	1 (7.7)	1 (7.7)
Washable shoes	8 (61.5)	1 (7.7)	4 (30.8)
Mask	8 (61.5)	0	5 (38.5)
Cutting board	7 (53.8)	15.4%	3 (30.8)
Household Gloves	7 (53.8)	2 (15.4)	4 (30.8)
Face shield	6 (46.2)	1 (7.7)	6 (46.2)
UV sanitizer	1 (7.7)	0	12 (92.3)

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Conclusions

- The innovative approach of STOP Spillover to enhance biosafety among wild meat handlers and processors has demonstrated encouraging outcomes, ensuring safer environments for both workers and consumers in the wild meat sector.
- Preliminary monitoring data indicate promising uptake of the introduced equipment and practices. These efforts which contribute to the broader goal of significantly reducing spillover risks and safeguarding public health, have the potential for lasting impact as local stakeholders are empowered to sustain these critical practices beyond the project's duration.

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