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During the COVID-19 crisis, **African veterinary labs offered their expertise, personnel, equipment and materials** to help Public Health institutions. **Intersectoral collaboration was low** in most of the countries **except for Niger**, where a **beneficial One Health experience** was established.

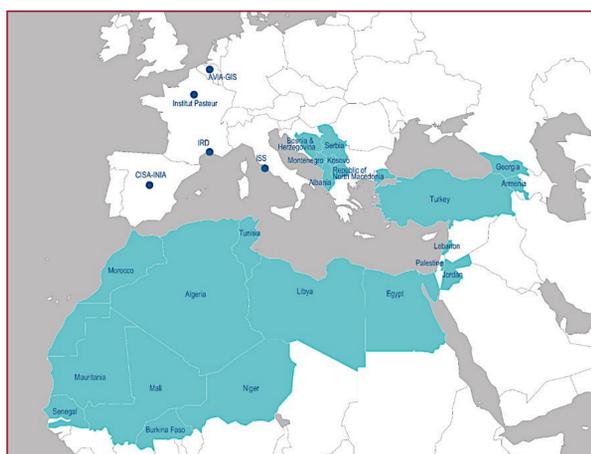
Abstract Reference

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BACKGROUND

MediLabSecure is an EU-funded project whose main objective is to create a framework for collaboration to **promote surveillance of viral zoonoses under a One Health approach in 22 countries of the Mediterranean, Black Sea and Sahel regions.**

During the COVID-19 crisis the project rapidly adapted to the emergency and provided **technical assistance** to the beneficiary countries in terms of **diagnosis and surveillance in humans and animals.**



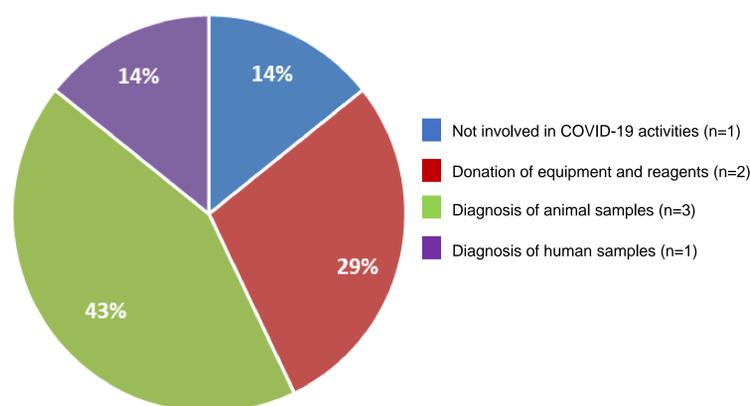
METHODS

To evaluate the involvement of the veterinary laboratories of our network in the sanitary crisis and estimate the degree of intersectoral collaborations, an **online survey** was launched in April 2021. We received **responses from 19 labs, 7 of them from African countries:**

- **NIGER:** Laboratoire Central d'Élevage (**LABOCEL**)
- **EGYPT:** Animal Health Research Institute (**AHRI**)
- **TUNISIA:** Institute of Veterinary Research of Tunisia (**IVRT**)
- **SENEGAL:** Laboratoire National de l'Élevage et de Recherches Vétérinaires (**LNERV**)
- **ALGERIA:** Laboratoire Central Vétérinaire d'Alger - Institut National de la Médecine Vétérinaire (**INMV**)
- **MOROCCO:** Casablanca Regional Research and Analysis Laboratory (**ONSSA**).
- **MAURITANIA:** Office National de Recherches et de Développement de l'Élevage (**ONARDEL**)

RESULTS

Involvement of African vet labs in COVID-19 activities



Vet labs in **Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania** were **not involved** in SARS-CoV-2 diagnosis. Cooperation was not requested by the Ministry of Health despite they had trained staff and all the protocols implemented.



Two of these labs donated equipment and reagents to their Public Health institutions to help with the overwhelming demand of PPE and diagnostic materials.

Vet labs in **Egypt, Senegal and Tunisia** were involved in SARS-CoV-2 **diagnosis only in animal samples** (pets and animal food products).



Only the vet lab in **Niger** established **full collaboration with the Ministry of Health** and was intensively involved in the molecular diagnosis of **human samples** from May to September 2020 (2324 samples were tested by PCR). Vet specialists from this lab were also involved in the disinfection of contaminated premises.



Main difficulties faced by vet labs:

- **Lack of previous experience in One Health collaborations** during sanitary emergencies.
- Difficulties to obtain **official authorization to handle and test human samples.**
- **Lack of funds, personnel and diagnostic reagents.**
- **Difficult coordination** with the reference human virology lab.



In the case of LABOCEL (**Niger**), these **problems were overcome** despite this was their first experience testing human samples.

A **fruitful One Health collaboration was established** that was highly beneficial for the country during the worst months of the pandemic.

CONCLUSIONS

Veterinary labs in North Africa and Sahel regions were **willing to collaborate** in the fight against the pandemic.

Although the **degree of intersectoral collaboration was low** in most of the countries, the **successful One Health experience of Niger** could be a good example for future sanitary emergencies.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the vet labs that responded to the survey. We are grateful to all the MediLabSecure partners and beneficiary institutions for their commitment and collaboration.

MORE INFORMATION

If you want to know more about our One Health project:

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