

A Collaborative Approach to Strengthen Research Capacity Across West Africa

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The Advancing Research Capacity in West Africa (ARC-WA) project is a collaborative effort to establish a network of Good Clinical Practice (GCP)- compliant clinical trial sites across West Africa. Designed to accelerate responses to future health emergencies, the initiative is driven by the Technical Coordinating Partner (TCP) - formed by the International Vaccine Institute (IVI) and the Medical Research Council, Gambia (MRCG) - in collaboration with three operational partners. These partners bring deep expertise and logistical support, enable site-led progress throughout the project.

The Margan Clinical Research Organization (MMARCRO) has been instrumental in providing operational and logistical support throughout the ARC-WA project. The team has coordinated site assessments, facilitated training, and supported site readiness for clinical trial implementation across West Africa sites including those in Irrua, Abakaliki and Kenema. Crucially, MMARCRO has worked side-by-side with local investigators to refine and harmonize SOPs tailored to the needs of each site. Their practical, on-the-ground support has ensured that infrastructure and logistics are aligned with trial readiness goals-enabling sites to manage their own development paths efficiently and confidently.

The Research Centre for Global Health (RCGH) at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (KNUST) in Kumasi, Ghana has played a key role in evaluating targeted site readiness and fostering community engagement across Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Benin. RCGH has worked hand-in-hand with local teams to assess infrastructure, staffing, and training needs, while identifying critical gaps such as equipment maintenance and isolation capacity. RCGH also led the

delivery of Good Participatory Practice (GPP) training in Nigeria, reinforcing ethical research standards and ensuring meaningful community involvement. These efforts have laid an essential foundation for GCP-compliant clinical trial conduct.

The Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine (BNITM) in Hamburg, Germany has served as a technical support partner under ARC-WA, offering expertise in laboratory systems, regulatory processes, and clinical operations. Working alongside local site teams - especially at the Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital (ISTH) - BNITM has contributed to the review and improvement of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), the development of equipment maintenance plans, the training in Good Clinical Laboratory Practice (GCLP), and the integration of laboratory information systems. BNITM's contributions has enabled site personnel to build the robust quality systems and regulatory documentation practices, and the preparation of declaration templates and workload forms needed for sustainable clinical research infrastructure.

Together, the collaboration among the TCP, RCGH, BNITM, and MMARCRO have played a pivotal role in enhancing research readiness across ARC-WA sites. By focusing on systems, skills, and infrastructure, they are enabling ARC-WA sites to respond more quickly to health emergencies and to play a leading role in future outbreaks.

As ARC-WA project continues to evolve, this collaborative approach builds the foundation for long-term resilience, regional leadership, and alignment with global goals like CEPI's 100 Day Mission. West African research institutions are preparing to respond. They are preparing to lead the global outbreak response.