

Fieldwork in Central African Republic and cattle.  
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## Project pioneers brucellosis work in post-conflict Central African Republic



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Brucellosis is a disease of cattle and other ruminants with severe livelihood impacts for people in West Africa. It causes loss of productivity in herds, and for people who contract the disease it can cause chronic disability. Measuring the extent of brucellosis in communities and identifying routes of infection is an important first step towards tackling the disease.

For the people of Central African Republic, though, that has been particularly hard to achieve. In 2014, the country collapsed into a civil war. Much of its infrastructure was destroyed, including its central veterinary laboratory in the capital, Bangui, which was looted during the crisis.

Despite challenges presented by this, as well as security issues and poor road and communications infrastructure, researchers for the ZELS **Brucellosis in West and Central Africa** project ensured the Central African Republic was fully included in their work generating much-needed information about brucellosis on dairy farms. Researchers, for example, ensured that they recorded data in the field using pen and paper as livestock-keepers were reluctant to answer questions on the tablets used elsewhere in the project. These devices had also made the team vulnerable to attack by armed militia.

“Active engagement of researchers and professionals in countries undergoing conflict is often not feasible, but when it is, research can have impact that goes further than its original scope.”

*Dr Marie Noël Mbaïkoua Ouâïmon, Director of Veterinary Public Health, Ministry of Livestock and Animal Health, Central African Republic*

As a result of such small adaptations to research protocols, cross-sectional surveys to assess the presence of brucellosis around Bangui and in the town of Bouar, near the border with Cameroon, were successfully completed. Sampling also took place and the first serological testing for brucellosis in the last 15 years in the country was carried out in a newly restored veterinary lab in Bangui.

The project built upon a partnership between UK institutions and the Ecole Inter-Etats des Sciences et Médecine Vétérinaires de Dakar (EISMV), an interstate veterinary school. It generated much-needed information, and was also a source of motivation for the field and laboratory teams. It strengthened their collaboration with livestock-keepers and their laboratory skills, and linked them with partners in other countries.

## Brucellosis in West and Central Africa

Principal Investigator: Javier Guitian, Royal Veterinary College, UK

Partners:

- Royal Veterinary College, UK (lead)
- London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, UK
- Animal and Plant Health Agency, UK
- Global Alliance for Livestock Veterinary Medicines (GALVmed), UK
- Interstate School of Veterinary Science and Medicine – Dakar, Senegal