



Organisation  
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SHS/EST/ABC/REP/09/Rev 1

**1<sup>st</sup> Preparatory Meeting on the Establishment of a National Ethics Committee in  
Gabon, 15-16 November 2007**

**Background**

The mission to Gabon was undertaken to realize the objectives of the ABC Project ('Assisting Bioethics Committees'). Gabon is one of the first seven countries having indicated the wish to participate in this project. The objectives of this project are: To create a national bioethics committee in 12 Member States (Objective 1); to enhance the functioning of the committees established (Objective 2); and, to train members of established committees (Objective 3).

**Participants in the meetings on November 15, 16 and 17th:**

Jan Helge Solbakk, Chief of Bioethics Section, EST/SHS, UNESCO. Due to 'unforeseen circumstances', the second member of the UNESCO team, Madame Marie-Helene Mouneyrat, Secretary-General of the National Ethics Advisory Committee, France (*Comité consultatif national d'éthique*) was not able to take part in the mission. Participants in the meetings from Gabon:

*First meeting, 15 November, morning (National Scientific and Technological Research Centre of Gabon) CENAREST):*

- Jacqueline OBONE MBA  
Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Higher Education and Research  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)
- Adèle SAMBO  
Advisor to the Minister  
Ministry of Higher Education and Research  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)
- Louis-Joseph MBOULA  
Scientific coordinator CENAREST
- Bernabé BOUMBA  
CENAREST

- Elisabeth P. FAYETTE  
Deputy Director-General  
Centre hospitalier de Libreville
- Innocent NZEMBA  
Priest, Ethics teacher, Grand séminaire, Église Catholique, Libreville
- Edouard NGOU MILAMA  
Professor, Department of Biochemistry and Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Libreville  
Chairman of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)

After a short self-presentation of each participant an overview of the different ethics programme activities of the Division of Ethics of Science and Technology of UNESCO was given, i.e. the GEObs-databases, the round-table conferences, the regional teaching programme meetings, the teacher training courses in bioethics, the core proposal based on the Universal Declaration of Bioethics and Human Rights and the ABC project. At the request of the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, this presentation was repeated at the third meeting organized in Libreville, with members of the Faculty of Medicine (see below). Furthermore, it was repeated during a meeting which took place on 18 November at the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Lambaréné with members of the Regional Research Ethics Committee of Lambaréné (*Comité d'éthique régionale indépendant de Lambaréné, CERIL*) and representatives from the Medical Research Unit at the Albert Schweitzer Hospital. After the presentation of these programme activities in the three fora mentioned above followed discussions of whether some of these programme activities could be implemented in Gabon, and eventually in what ways:

- There was full agreement about the importance of starting a collaboration with the Division of Ethics of Science and Technology of UNESCO to enter data from Gabon into the GEO-obs databases
- During the first meeting Professor Edouard NGOU MILAMA, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, expressed great interest in the possibility of piloting the core proposal based on the UDBHR at the Faculty of Medicine of Libreville. This interest was reiterated during the meeting with other members of the Faculty of Medicine on 16 November (see below). Also in the meeting with Professor Fidèle NZE NGUEMA, Rector of the Omar Bongo University, Libreville, an interest for piloting this course was expressed.

*Second meeting, November 15, afternoon (Department of Applied Economics):*

- Albert ONDO OSSA  
Minister, Ministry of Higher Education and Research
- Jacqueline OBONE MBA, Advisor to the Minister,  
Ministry of Higher Education and Research  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)
- Adèle SAMBO  
Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Higher Education and Research  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER).

The focus of attention in this meeting was the ABC-project and the conditions a member state has to comply with in order to become partner in the project, i.e. the official inauguration of the committee. The Minister made reference to a working party linked to the project 'Establishment and Support to a National Ethics Committee in Gabon'. This project is a follow-up of a law on research from 2000 (*Law N° 22/2000, determining the*

*fundamental principles of scientific research in the Gabonese Republic*). Chapter III of this law, entitled *About a National Ethics Committee*, reads as follows:

*“Article 10: The National Research Ethics Committee:*

- *ensures respect for human dignity and human rights;*
- *raises awareness of the scientific community on the moral implications of scientific research;*
- *ensures the taking into account of the cultural identity of the nation.*

*Article 11: The composition and function of the National Research Ethics Committee is established by decree by the Council of Ministers for Scientific Research.*

The result of the working party's activities is a draft decree for the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (*Comité national d'éthique de la recherche, CNER*) in Gabon. This draft is at present undergoing legal assessment at the relevant Ministries. According to Article 10 of the draft the following Ministries are envisaged to have one representative each in the committee: the Ministry for Research, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry for Environmental Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Justice. The decree consists of five chapters (Chapter 1: *Missions*; Chapter II: *Composition*; Chapter III: *Operation*; Chapter IV: *Resources* and Chapter V: *Various and final arrangements*). The decree is envisaged to be signed by the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister, the Minister of Higher Education and Research and the Minister of State, Economy, Finance, Budget and Privatisation (for the whole draft, see appendix).

*Third meeting, November 16, morning (Faculty of Medicine, Libreville):*

- Edouard NGOU MILAMA  
Professor, Department of Biochemistry, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Libreville  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)
- Adèle SAMBO  
Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Higher Education and Research  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)
- Maryvonne KOMBILA  
Chief of the Department of Parasitology, Mycology and Tropical Medicine  
Faculty of Medicine, Libreville
- Alphonse RAÏVIRE  
Secretary-General, Faculty of Medicine, Libreville
- Guy Joseph LEMAMY  
Head of studies of the Dean, FMSS, Faculty of Medicine, Libreville
- Blandine AKENDENGUE  
Chief of the Department of Pharmaco-chemistry, Faculty of Medicine, Libreville
- Colette YENOT  
Chief of the Department of Toxicology, Faculty of Medicine, Libreville
- Angélique NDJOYI MBIGUINO  
Chief of Department of Microbiology, Faculty of Medicine, Libreville
- Jean-Claude MOUNDOUNGA-BAKITA  
Assistant, Department of Biochemistry Faculty of Medicine, Libreville

- Elisabeth LENDOYE, Assistant, Department of Biochemistry Faculty of Medicine, Libreville
- Serge BEKALE  
Assistant, Department of Biochemistry Faculty of Medicine, Libreville
- Jean-Baptiste MOUSSAVOU KOMBILA  
Assessor, Department of Gastroenterology, Faculty of Medicine, Libreville
- François ONDO N'DONG  
Chief of the Department of Surgery, Faculty of Medicine, Libreville

*Fourth meeting, 16 November, noon (The Gabonese Centre of Research in Ethics and Health (CEGARES))*

- Simon Pierre MVONE NDONG  
Deputy Director of CEGARES
- Eric Damien BIYOGHE BI ELLA  
Researcher at the Institute of Human Sciences (*Institute of Research in Human Sciences (IRSH)*) associated with CEGARES
- Patience NTONGONE OKE  
Chief of the Unit of Pharmacy  
Melen Hospital, Libreville, associated with CEGARES
- Léandre ASSA MBOULOU  
Researcher at IRSH, Secretary General of CEGARES
- Lucien MANOKOU  
Researcher at IRSH, associated with CEGARES
- Gyno Malik MIKALA  
Researcher at IRSH, associated with CEGARES
- Adèle SAMBO  
Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Higher Education and Research  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)

The participants in this meeting expressed great interest in the teacher training course and the core proposal based on the UDBHR, as CEGARES is actively engaged in developing ethics courses for health care workers. They also expressed their full support to the initiative of setting up a National Ethics Committee in Gabon.

*Fifth meeting, 16 November, early afternoon (Ministry of Health)*

- Secretary General, Ministry of Health  
Adèle SAMBO, Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Higher Education and Research  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)
- Jacqueline OBONE MBA  
Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Higher Education and Research  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)

From the discussions with different stakeholders participating in the meetings, including this separate meeting with the Secretary-General of the Ministry of Health, it became clear that some stakeholders are concerned about the idea of *one* national ethics committee for research and favour the establishment of a second ethics committee dealing with broader health issues.

*Sixth meeting, 16 November, late afternoon (National Scientific and Technological Research Centre of Gabon (CENAREST):*

- Firmin IKABANGA  
Legal advisor  
Ministry of Higher Education and Research, member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)
- Jacqueline OBONE MBA  
Advisor to the Minister  
Ministry of Higher Education and Research  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)
- Adèle SAMBO  
Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Higher Education and Research  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)
- Emmanuel MVE MENO  
Professor of Ophthalmology, Health Advisor, Ministry of Defense  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)
- Paul BEKALE  
Advisor in the Cabinet of the President  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)
- Emma Flore ANGUEZOME, National Commission of UNESCO

This meeting was dedicated to a more detailed presentation and discussion of the ABC project. As became clear from the discussions, in this meeting as well as in the meeting in Lambaréné with members of the Regional Research Ethics Committee of Lambaréné and representatives from the Medical Research Unit of the Albert Schweitzer Hospital, there is a considerable interest for this project from many stakeholders, including the coordinator of the project '*Establishment and assistance of a National Research Ethics Committee in Gabon*', (I assume this is the same as on pages 2 and 6) Dr Pierre-Blaise Matsiegui, researcher at the Medical Research Unit of the Albert Schweitzer Hospital and the provisory bureau of the National Research Ethics Committee which collaborates with the coordinator in preparing the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee.

*Seventh meeting, 16 November, evening (at the Rectorat, Omar Bongo University, Libreville)*

- Fidèle NZE NGUEMA  
Professor of Sociology and Rector, Omar Bongo University, Libreville  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)
- Jacqueline OBONE MBA  
Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Higher Education and Research  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)
- Adèle SAMBO  
Advisor to the Minister, Ministry of Higher Education and Research  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)

*Eighth meeting, 17 November, afternoon (Medical Research Unit of the Albert Schweitzer Hospital)*

- Bintou KOUYATÉ AMARA  
Head of the Department of Pediatrics, District General Hospital, Lambaréné  
Chair of the Regional Research Ethics Committee of Lambaréné.
- Christiane MBILI-NKOGHE, Secondary State School of Lambaréné
- Solévo N. AKAKPO-GUETOU, Secondary School of Adiwa, Lambaréné
- Grégoire ADZODA, Chief physician, Albert Schweitzer Hospital, Lambaréné
- Christian OPALI, Special Advisor, Cabinet of the President  
Member of a working party set up to prepare the establishment of a National Research Ethics Committee (CNER)
- Agnandji SELIDJI MAXIME  
Researcher, Medical Research Unit of the Albert Schweitzer Hospital
- Pierre-Blaise Matsiegui  
Researcher at the Medical Research Unit of the Albert Schweitzer Hospital and  
Coordinator of the project '*Establishment and assistance of a National Research Ethics Committee in Gabon*'.

Evaluation and outcome:

Meetings with different stakeholders in Libreville and Lambaréné made it clear that there is a great interest in several of the ethics program activities of the Division of Ethics of Science and Technology of UNESCO:

- it was agreed to start a collaboration with the Division of Ethics of Science and Technology of UNESCO to enter data from Gabon into the GEO-obs databases,
- furthermore, it was agreed that the possibility of piloting the core course based on the UDBHR at Omar BONGO University, Libreville should be further explored
- third, it was agreed that a teacher training course in bioethics could be organized next year at the Albert Schweitzer Hospital in Lambaréné.
- finally, it was agreed that as soon as the National Ethics Committee has been set up the possibility of signing a 'Memorandum of Understanding' between the CNER and UNESCO should be further explored, taking into account the statutes of the committee (focus on research) and the financial and professional support the project Establishment and Support to a National Research Ethics Committee in Gabon already receives through a grant from EDCTP and collaboration with the Vienna School of Clinical Research and the Institute of Tropical Medicine, University of Tübingen. Other international participants in this project are Dr Marie-Charlotte BOUËSSEAU, Department of Ethics, Trade, Human Rights and Health Law, WHO; Prof. Dominique SPRUMONT, Faculty of Health Law, University of Fribourg and University of Neuchâtel (Switzerland) and Dr Aïssata TOURE, Institut Pasteur, Dakar (Senegal) and member of UNESCO's International Bioethics Committee.