

LEADERS IN PEDIATRIC ONCOLOGY IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA: A TRAINING PROGRAMME BY GFAOP

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Background:

Most childhood cancers occur in LMICs, where survival rates remain low, particularly in Francophone Africa. Beyond medical challenges, health professionals face many obstacles, including geopolitical tensions, climate-related disasters, resource shortages, and cultural barriers. In response, GFAOP has organized leadership training to support local teams in overcoming these difficulties.

Methods:

Assess Needs through surveys and interviews:

- 1.Design Program: targeted modules on strategy, communication, change management.
- 2.Select Candidates: clear criteria, prioritizing motivation, potential and regional diversity.
- 3.Deliver Training (60 hours): workshops, coaching, team projects.
- 4.Apply Skills with mentorship.
- 5.Evaluate: Measure impact; refine based on feedback.

Results/Graphs/Data:

Sixteen health care professionals (13 pediatricians, 1 surgeon, 2 nurses) from 10 Francophone African countries (Burkina Faso, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gabon, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Morocco, Niger, Senegal, and Tunisia) were selected from among 23 applicants. Following the training, participants applied their newly acquired skills by developing and presenting project proposals, such as working in hostile environments, building new units, convincing influencers, and addressing obstacles to early diagnosis.



Two years later, they reported two main areas of impact:

- 1.Enhanced Leadership & Advocacy** – Improved organizational management, stronger advocacy efforts, better collaboration with decision-makers and donors, increased confidence in strategic planning and team mobilization.
- 2.Concrete Achievements** – Several improvements, including the creation of a new oncology unit, a day hospital, expansion of bed capacity, recruitment of physicians and nurses, access to free medications, and tools for early diagnosis.

Conclusions

Providing health professionals with medical expertise to combat childhood cancer is essential but not sufficient. By strengthening strategic vision, advocacy, and project implementation capacities, this GFAOP initiative empowers professionals to drive sustainable improvements in pediatric oncology care and to contribute to the goals of the Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer.

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