

# NEWSLETTER



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SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE

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## WHO REPRESENTATIVE DR. ABDOULAYE DIARRA MET NEW MINISTER OF HEALTH, DR. CELSO MATOS

On January 30, the Minister of Health, Dr. Celso Matos, received in audience the Representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) in São Tomé and Príncipe, Dr. Abdoulaye Diarra. This was the first meeting after the appointment of the new Government. The parties discussed various aspects of the existing partnership. Support to the health partners coordination platform, resource mobilization, strengthening primary health care, and health promotion to fight the growing burden of non-communicable diseases were some of the identified key areas where our cooperation will continue to strengthen.





# The World Health Organization's priorities for São Tomé and Príncipe in 2025



In 2024, with WHO's support, São Tomé and Príncipe made significant strides toward Universal Health Coverage, within the implementation of primary health care, strategic planning, and strengthening disease control. These efforts have established a foundation for a more equitable and resilient health system.

The evolving global landscape, particularly the U.S. withdrawal of financial support to WHO, presents serious challenges. For São Tomé and Príncipe, international cooperation is crucial. This situation underscores the urgent need for increased efforts for resource mobilization to safeguard and strengthen recent gains within the health sector. Therefore, collaborating with national authorities, development partners, and regional networks to diversify funding sources, enhance South-South collaboration, and promote greater domestic investment in health become the only way forward. To that end, a new national health financing strategy has been developed with the support of WHO and adopted.

Resource mobilization goes beyond financial support, it involves building strategic, long-term partnerships to sustain progress and uphold the right to health for all. Looking ahead to 2025, we aim to consolidate reforms, advance the implementation of district health system approach, reinforce disease control, and develop the national Health Workforce Strategy. Strengthening the country's capacity to implement the International Health Regulations is essential for better preparation in preventing, detecting, and responding to public health emergencies. Sustained technical, financial and political investment is crucial to ensure that no one is left behind.

**Dr. Abdoulaye Diarra - WHO Representative in Sao Tome and Principe**

# Advancing the surgical capacity at the Hospital of the Autonomous Region of Príncipe

From March 24 to 28, 2025, a joint technical mission was carried out by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organization (WHO) at Dr. Manuel Quaresma Dias da Graça Hospital in the Autonomous Region of Príncipe. The mission involved teams from the Ministry of Health accompanied by colleagues of the Health System Strengthening (HSS) cluster of the WCO.

The mission followed up on priorities identified during a 2023 WHO assessment of the hospital's functional capacity and built on actions initiated during a 2024 mission to enhance the hospital's emergency care response.

The primary objective was to strengthen the technical foundation for establishing a surgical unit on the island. This unit is seen as a strategic measure to ensure access to both emergency and elective surgical care within Príncipe. WHO emphasizes the importance of having functional surgical services accessible within two hours as a key component of achieving Universal Health Coverage.

The new surgical facility will be a major step forward for the region's healthcare system. It will enable local treatment of critical conditions—such as emergency caesarean sections, appendectomies, and hernia repairs—reducing dependence on medical evacuations and enhancing the resilience and autonomy of the local health network.

Beyond its clinical impact, the facility will offer ongoing training opportunities for health professionals, promoting talent retention and supporting the long-term development of human resources in the region. ■







## São Tomé and Príncipe focused on improving surveillance of vaccine-preventable diseases

São Tomé and Príncipe have a new action plan to enhance the surveillance system for vaccine-preventable diseases. The document is one of the main outcomes of the surveillance system review workshop, conducted with technical support of World Health Organization (WHO) through its regional office for Africa. The overall objective of the workshop was to contribute to the early detection and rapid response to outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases in Sao Tome and Principe. A total of 34 participants attended the workshop, composed of professionals from all districts health centres, and the national hospital.

Although the country has not recorded suspected cases of measles, polio, or yellow fever for the last four years, this absence may not be a real absence of these diseases, rather a weaknesses in the early detection and reporting system. After analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of the existing disease surveillance system as well as the links between passive surveillance of diseases with epidemic potential, the new developed 2025-2026 action plan aims to address this challenge by improving the detection and reporting of suspected cases, by mobilizing resources to strengthen the epidemiological surveillance and the response of the health system in place to collect, compile and analyze data and respond to outbreaks especially of vaccine-preventable diseases (VPD).

During the closing of the event, the Minister of Health, Dr. Celso Matos, highlighted the good results achieved by the country in terms of vaccination but warned of the need to maintain progress. "Maintaining gains is often the most difficult, especially when a high level is reached," he stated, emphasizing the importance of active surveillance and early detection. ■

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# Health Minister endorses new **District Health Plan Model** to advance Universal Health Coverage

São Tomé and Príncipe's Health Minister has approved a new district-level action plan model aimed at accelerating Universal Health Coverage through stronger primary health care. This model brings the 2023–2032 National Health Policy and the National Health Development Plan down to the district level, ensuring responses reflect real community needs.

Developed by local health management teams with support from the WHO and the Ministry of Health, the model promotes decentralized planning, efficient resource use, and stronger local leadership. It also emphasizes intersectoral collaboration across education, sanitation, nutrition, mental health, maternal care, vaccination, and emergency response.

Each district now has a clear roadmap to deliver essential health services equitably and sustainably – ensuring better health outcomes without pushing families into financial hardship. ■

## PLANO DE AÇÃO PARA A SAÚDE

REGIÃO AUTÓNOMA DO PRÍNCIPE







## WHO supports Ministry of Health in strengthening its response to incidents with multiple victims

Mass casualty incidents are often unpredictable and take multiple forms. When hospital emergency services are overwhelmed, both direct mortality from the acute event and preventable mortality from everyday conditions ("secondary mortality") increase dramatically.

Mass Casualty Incidents are often unpredictable and take many forms. When hospital emergency services are overwhelmed, both the direct mortality from the acute event and the preventable mortality from everyday conditions ("secondary mortality") increase dramatically.

With the aim of improving the response capabilities of Emergency Units and emergency medical teams, the Ministry of Health, in partnership with the World Health Organization, conducted a training workshop on the coordinated management of multiple casualty incidents. The three-day event aimed to train teams to better handle, in a coordinated manner, an event with multiple casualties in a mass incident and to review institutional protocols and procedures for this purpose. This workshop organized from 31 of march to 5 of april included a total participants of 33 from the Emergency Units and emergency medical teams. ■







## WHO Representative visits Cantagalo District Health Center

The representative of the World Health Organization in São Tomé and Príncipe, Dr. Abdoulaye Diarra, visited the Cantagalo District Health Center on 17 of march 2025. The Cantagalo District, located southwest of the island of São Tomé, is the fourth most populous district in the country. With approximately 17,000 inhabitants, the main Health Center is located in Água Izé, but in order to facilitate the access to health services to the populations, there are seven health posts in the district.

The visit by the WHO Representative was an opportunity to visit the health facilities and to meet and discuss with the Health Delegate (District Health Manager) and the District Administrator about the key challenges, including infrastructure, organization of service delivery and health workforce. He also visited different services and spoke with the health professionals working at the center.

During his visit, Dr. Diarra took the opportunity to deliver a batch of Infection Prevention and Control kits and equipment to the health center and to visit the new incinerator built with the WHO support. Dr Diarra visited also the laboratory of the health centre which received new lab equipment donated by WHO. ■

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## Training to strengthen the contact tracing team linked to Public Health Emergencies

With technical assistance from WHO, the Ministry of Health trained 25 professionals involved in the contact tracing process across all districts of the country. The training aim was to equip these professionals with new tools to improve contact tracing, thereby blocking the chain of transmission and preventing the spread of diseases during an outbreak or epidemic. ■

## Training workshop to strengthen multisectoral coordination and communication mechanisms

With technical assistance from the WHO, the Ministry of Health held a workshop to strengthen communication and multisectoral coordination of the National Focal Points for the implementation of International Health Regulation (IHR), and to improve the tools and protocols for information on Public Health Emergencies. The 2-days activity was attended by 18 IHR National Focal Point professionals responsible for the sectors involved in the detection and notification of Public Health Emergencies, in the multisectoral approach of interconnection and “one health”. ■



## Simulation exercise to test the emergency plan of São Tomé International Airport



The Ministry of Health, with support from WHO, conducted a tabletop simulation exercise (TTX) to test the adequacy and effectiveness of the Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan at São Tomé International Airport. The objective was to identify strengths to be consolidated and areas to be reinforced, considering the gaps identified and the suggestions made by participants for improving the implementation of the plan in the event of a public health emergency. The training was attended by 35 professionals from Ministry of Health, Air Transport Authorities, CONPREC, São Tomé International Airport, Civil Protection and media. ■





## WHO supports Ministry of Health to strengthen preventive maintenance of biomedical equipment

The capacity building training was organized by the Ministry of Health through the National Reference Laboratory, with technical assistance from the World Health Organization and funded by the Global Fund.

The training aimed not only to enhance the knowledge of 20 maintenance and laboratory technicians in preventive maintenance of biomedical equipment, but also to do the inventory of existing equipment, their type and state of functioning, and finally to elaborate a regular preventive maintenance plan of the equipment. World Health Organization provided crucial support to the Ministry of Health in carrying out this training.

By conducting this training in “Preventive and Corrective Maintenance of Biomedical Equipment,” the Ministry of Health hopes to guarantee greater durability of the equipment and ensure better quality of the diagnoses performed. ■

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## WHO supports the Prevention and control of infections within hospitals and district health structures

The hospital environment is highly susceptible to the spread of diseases, which can worsen patients' clinical conditions and affect healthcare professionals, their families, and their communities. Therefore, cleaning and disinfection in hospitals and other healthcare facilities play a crucial role in safeguarding the health of patients, healthcare professionals, and visitors. These hygiene measures are essential to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone in the facility. It is imperative that these practices are implemented consistently and rigorously to create an environment of comfort and protection.

In this context, the Ministry of Health, with technical assistance from the WHO, organized training on "hospital cleaning and disinfection" for 180 cleaning assistants across all health units in the country. The training aimed to update and enhance the knowledge of these professionals regarding hygiene processes in hospitals.

The training is part of the implementation of the WASH component of the joint United Nations project intitled "Green Infrastructure" aiming to improve water, sanitation, and hygiene conditions within hospitals and district health centres. It also benefited of the financial support of a World Bank funded project implemented within the framework of a MOU (memorandum of understanding) between WHO and Project Management Agency of the Government of São Tomé and Príncipe – AFAP. ■





## São Tomé and Príncipe advances towards the **Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV**



São Tomé and Príncipe is on the right track to achieve certification for the Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV (EMTCT), a significant milestone in public health. The National Committee, which includes representatives from the Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, and the “Apoio à Vhida” Association, recently met with the Regional Validation Secretariat, which praised the progress made by the country.

The meeting, held on February 25, aimed to evaluate the documents submitted by São Tomé and Príncipe as part of the certification process. The Secretariat recognized the quality of the national report and provided technical

recommendations for improving the document.

The next step will be the review and resubmission of the report by the National Committee, incorporating the received comments. Following this phase, a verification mission will be scheduled in the country, a crucial step for submitting the certification process at the global level.

The elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV represents a commitment to maternal and child health and the strengthening of prevention and treatment services. ■



**Thank you for your collaboration  
with WHO in supporting the  
strengthening of the National Health  
System in São Tomé and Príncipe.**







**Organização  
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