Policy Briefing:

Antimicrobial Resistance in Cameroon: When Antibiotics Stop Working

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Overview:

This brief draws on Session 137 of the Cameroon Town Hall for Healthcare Professionals (November 28, 2026), presented by Dr. Bryan Tegomoh (public health) and the Chair, Dr. Munoh Kenne Foma (clinical care), for the Ministry of Public Health (MINSANTE) ahead of the AMR ministerial conference in Abuja on December 6 to 8, 2026.

Context:

One in five laboratory-confirmed infections in the WHO African Region was resistant in 2023 (WHO). Across 14 African countries including Cameroon, only 1.3% of laboratories do bacteriology and 88% of resistance results carry no clinical data (MAAP). At Cameroon's sentinel sites, 89% of bloodstream E. coli resist ceftriaxone, and the costed One Health plan for 2024 to 2028 notes that there is generally no specific budget line for AMR (NAP-AMR 2024-2028).

Key Issues:

1. **A plan without a budget or a coordinator:** No dedicated budget line, and no structure joining human, animal and environmental health to advise prescribers and monitor resistance.
2. **Antibiotics sold without prescription:** Antibiotics, including third-generation cephalosporins, are sold in pharmacies without prescription, in markets and on buses, and products of unknown quality cross porous borders.
3. **Too little culture, and data that do not connect:** Cultures are rare outside referral and regional hospitals and often unaffordable; sentinel sites do not work as a network and results are not linked to patient data.
4. **Habits that select resistance:** Antibiotics after a negative malaria test or a positive Widal test, routine ceftriaxone after clean surgery, few stewardship programmes, and heavy antimicrobial use in poultry.

Discussion Highlights:

- Dr. Tegomoh: we cannot manage what we do not culture.

- Dr. Foma: a negative malaria test is not a reason for an antibiotic; every hospital, down to the district, should run stewardship.
- Dr. Ivo Ditah: without control of pharmacies, borders and the profit motive, stewardship policies will not reach practice.

Recommendations:

- **Fund and coordinate the national action plan:** MINSANTE, with the livestock, environment and finance ministries, should create an AMR budget line for the NAP-AMR 2024-2028 and a standing One Health coordination unit. First step: name the unit and its budget for 2027, and present Cameroon's funding commitment in Abuja on December 6 to 8, 2026.
- **Enforce prescription-only sale of antibiotics:** MINSANTE, the National Order of Pharmacists, customs and regional delegations should enforce prescription-only dispensing, act against market and transport sales, and define who may prescribe Watch and Reserve antibiotics. First step: a joint inspection and quality-testing campaign in Douala and Yaoundé.
- **Culture the sick patient and publish a national antibiogram:** MINSANTE and the National Public Health Laboratory should fund reagents, culture bottles and quality assurance at sentinel sites, extend culture to district hospitals, subsidise cultures in sepsis, link results to clinical data and report to WHO GLASS, and, with Centre Pasteur du Cameroun and hospital laboratories, publish a yearly national antibiogram to update treatment guidelines. First step: a first national antibiogram in 2027.
- **Make stewardship routine in every hospital:** Directors of regional and district hospitals should launch low-cost stewardship: a signed directive, a physician lead with a pharmacist, review of every antibiotic at 48 to 72 hours, no routine prophylaxis after clean surgery beyond guidelines, and a monthly report. First step: pilots in central and regional hospitals, with diaspora specialists mentoring remotely.
- **Limit antimicrobials on farms and educate the public:** The ministry in charge of livestock should monitor veterinary antimicrobial use and promote vaccines and biosecurity over routine antibiotics in feed; MINSANTE and civil society should educate the public on self-medication.

Next Steps: This brief goes to MINSANTE and is published on cameroontownhall.org.

Conclusion: Resistance is high and few laboratories can measure it. These five steps protect antibiotics.

Prepared by the Co-Moderators, Cameroon Townhall for Healthcare Professionals, from the session of November 28, 2026. Recording to follow.