

AMCOA

ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL COUNCILS OF AFRICA



RESPONSIVE REGULATION
FOR SAFER COMMUNITIES
TOWARDS UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE

28TH
ANNUAL
CONFERENCE

ACCRA, GHANA

23 – 27 AUGUST 2026

DEDICATED TO PROTECTING THE PUBLIC AND ADVANCING PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS IN AFRICA

MEDICAL AND DENTAL COUNCIL OF SIERRA LEONE



Crisis-Responsive Regulation in Action

Sierra Leone: Expedited Licensing, Credentialing, and Quality Assurance in Emergency Settings

WHO Case Study Presentation

AMCOA

ASSOCIATION OF MEDICAL COUNCILS OF AFRICA



Executive Summary

- Health emergencies place extraordinary pressure on regulatory systems.
- Sierra Leone can use crisis-responsive regulation to accelerate licensing and credential verification without compromising patient safety.
- Key enablers: risk-based decision-making, continuous oversight, digital transformation, interagency collaboration, and supportive legal frameworks.

Background

- Sierra Leone has experienced public health emergencies that challenged health-system capacity.
- These emergencies exposed shortages of healthcare workers and the need to mobilize qualified professionals rapidly while preserving patient safety.
- **MDCSL's regulatory responsibilities include registration, licensing, accreditation, facility inspection and licensing, professional standards, ethics, and public protection.**

Problem Statement

- In a national emergency, demand for healthcare services can increase sharply.
- Critical shortages of licensed professionals may occur, alongside large numbers of volunteers needing rapid registration.
- Foreign credential verification and emergency-facility inspection can create delays.

Central policy question: How can regulation accelerate access to qualified professionals while maintaining safety, legal compliance, and public confidence?

Objectives

- Rapidly increase the available healthcare workforce.
- Protect patients from unqualified practice.
- Maintain regulatory accountability during emergencies.
- Strengthen quality assurance mechanisms.
- Support continuity of healthcare services nationwide.

Regulatory Response: Emergency Licensing

7

- **MDCSL** established an expedited pathway for eligible practitioners to receive Temporary Emergency Practice Licences.
- Eligibility included verified qualifications, valid identity documentation, evidence of previous registration/licensure, Certificates of Good Standing where available, and agreement to emergency practice conditions.

Regulatory Response: Credential Verification

- An Emergency Credentialing Committee prioritized verification through medical schools, professional councils, international regulatory authorities, professional associations, and digital verification platforms.
- Risk-based documentation review was used.
- Where immediate verification was not feasible, provisional verification could be used while comprehensive checks continued.

Emergency Quality Assurance

- Rapid assessments covered emergency treatment centres and temporary health facilities.
- Key areas: infection prevention and control, clinical governance, equipment availability, staffing adequacy, and patient safety.
- Facilities requiring corrective action received technical guidance and follow-up inspections.

Continuous Regulatory Oversight

- Routine supervision.
- Complaint management systems.
- Clinical audits and incident reporting.
- Performance monitoring.
- Post-emergency licence review.
- Temporary licences remained subject to disciplinary procedures where misconduct occurred.

Case Narrative

- Following a national emergency, facilities experienced unprecedented patient volumes.
- Hospitals urgently requested additional clinicians, including international emergency teams and Sierra Leonean professionals living abroad.
- An Emergency Regulatory Taskforce activated accelerated credential verification and temporary licensing while preserving minimum regulatory standards.
- Qualified practitioners were deployed to designated emergency facilities under defined practice conditions.

Key Findings

- Improved workforce availability — expedited licensing reduced deployment time for qualified professionals.
- Enhanced patient safety — risk-based verification and continuous supervision supported competent practice.
- Regulatory resilience — flexible procedures supported continuity of statutory functions.
- Strong multi-sector collaboration — coordination improved response efficiency.
- Increased public confidence — transparent processes reinforced

trust.



Lessons Learned

- Regulatory preparedness should be integrated into national emergency preparedness plans.
- Digital registration and credential verification reduce administrative delays.
- Emergency licensing frameworks should be legally established before emergencies occur.
- Risk-based regulation can accelerate decisions while protecting patients.
- Continuous quality assurance is essential throughout emergency operations.
- Strong regulator-provider communication improves compliance and accountability.

Policy Recommendations

14

1. Develop a legally recognized national emergency licensing framework.
2. Introduce fully digital registration and credential verification systems.
3. Establish pre-approved emergency credential verification protocols.
4. Create multidisciplinary Emergency Regulatory Response Teams.
5. Strengthen emergency inspection and quality assurance using standardized risk-based tools.
6. Develop real-time regulatory dashboards for emergency licences, workforce deployment, inspections, and compliance.
7. Institutionalize simulation exercises to test preparedness.

Discussion Questions

15

How can regulators maintain public protection while accelerating licensing during emergencies?

What legal reforms are needed for temporary emergency licensure?

Which verification methods are appropriate when international documentation cannot be confirmed immediately?

How can digital technologies improve emergency registration and licensing?

How should temporary emergency licence holders be monitored?

How should regulators coordinate with ministries, hospitals, associations, and international partners?

Which indicators should measure emergency regulatory effectiveness?

Conclusion

- Responsive health-professional regulation can save lives while preserving public confidence.
- Expedited licensing does not require lower professional standards; it requires flexible, transparent, evidence-based, and accountable systems.
- Combining accelerated verification, temporary licensing, continuous quality assurance, and interagency collaboration can strengthen health-system resilience.

Key Messages

- Emergency preparedness should include regulatory preparedness.
- Rapid licensing must always be accompanied by rigorous quality assurance.
- Digital regulation enhances speed, transparency, and accountability.
- Risk-based regulation enables timely decisions while safeguarding patients.
- Collaboration strengthens national emergency response capacity.