American biotech company Ginkgo Bioworks in partnership with Rwanda Biomedical Centre (RBC), have announced a pathogen monitoring program at Kigali International Airport which will act like a public health radar, providing leaders with near-real-time data to inform targeted response strategies.

The one year program was announced on Wednesday February 15, 2023, and will identify new and emerging variants of SARS-CoV-2 , monitor water samples from arriving aircraft and nasal swabs samples, collected on a voluntary, as well as anonymous basis from arriving international travelers.

Matt McKnight, General Manager, Biosecurity at Ginkgo Bioworks said that they are excited to be partnering with the Rwanda Biomedical Centre—to stay ahead of the next variant or pathogen of concern; we must take an international approach to biosecurity.

“Mitigating the risk of biological threats, including emerging viral variants, remains a global imperative that necessitates a robust early warning system,” stated Matt McKnight.

“This pathogen monitoring program at Kigali International Airport will act like public health radar, providing leaders with near-real-time data to inform targeted response strategies. We are excited to be partnering with the Rwanda Biomedical Centre—to stay ahead of the next variant or pathogen of concern, we must take an international approach to biosecurity.” Matt added.

In addition, Ginkgo and RBC will work together to establish KGL as a new node in a global network of pathogen monitoring infrastructure, complementing the insights generated from Concentric’s existing travel biosecurity programs at several major international airports in the U.S. The program builds on Ginkgo’s previously announced MOU to develop and implement biosecurity capabilities in Rwanda.

Prof. Claude Muvunyi, the Director General of the Rwanda Biomedical Centre noted, “As we continue to feel the impacts of emerging variants and pathogens, we recognize the need to create a sustainable public health and biosecurity infrastructure in Rwanda and internationally.””

“We are thrilled to launch this program at Kigali International Airport in partnership with Ginkgo to enhance our biosecurity capabilities.” Muvunyi added.