Information Sheet
Virtual Workshop on "Proposed South Asia Rabies Laboratory Network"

Thursday, 14 July 2022, 3 PM Japan time

Background

Barring few countries, rabies is endemic in both humans and animals in most countries in the Asia and the Pacific Region, with dog-mediated rabies being the predominant source of disease. However, it is often under-reported and is therefore considered to be a neglected disease. Over 95% of human rabies cases are associated with dog bites. Except for the Maldives, rabies is endemic in rest of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Member States resulting in about 45% of the global burden of human rabies.

Although rabies poses significant public health concerns in the SAARC region, there is a general lack of ground-level surveillance owing primarily due to the lack or insufficient rabies diagnostic capacity across the region. The World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE) initiated capacity building measures such as regional and country-level trainings on rabies diagnosis in the region since many years. Through its laboratory twinning programs, WOAH supported the laboratory twinning programme between Karnataka Veterinary, Animal and Fisheries Sciences University (KVAFSU) – Commonwealth Veterinary Association (CVA) Rabies Diagnostic Laboratory (RDL), Veterinary College, KVAFSU, Bengaluru, India with the Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), UK and the Centres for Disease Control (CDC), Atlanta, USA during 2016-2020. The outcome of this Twinning programme was the designation of the KVAFSU-CVA RDL as the WOAH Reference Laboratory for Rabies in India in 2020 with Dr Shrikrishna Isloor as the designated expert.

Since 2020, to support building capacity for rabies diagnosis and surveillance in animals in South Asia, the WOAH Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific (RRAP) with the WOAH Reference Laboratory for Rabies in India based in KVAFSU organised virtual trainings on brain sampling and diagnosis of rabies in animals in 2020 and rabies serology in 2021. During these trainings, there were queries and requests from countries for further support for rabies diagnosis – especially in terms of providing rabies laboratory proficiency tests, supply of reagents, harmonisation of tests, and technical backstopping for advanced laboratory tests from the WOAH Reference Laboratory in India and RRAP. It was therefore felt necessary to provide a platform to connect the national laboratories involved in the diagnosis of rabies in animals in the SAARC MSs for harmonization of rabies diagnosis, surveillance, and control. In view of this, a workshop is being proposed to discuss with SAARC MSs the need and modality of establishing a network amongst the national rabies laboratories and the Reference Laboratory for Rabies based in India. At the workshop, the concept of setting up such a network will be explained and feedback/suggestions will be sought from the country representatives on the draft terms of network and the modality of implementation.

Objectives

The workshop is expected to contribute to the following objectives:

- Introduce the draft concept of Rabies Laboratory Networking to the SAARC MSs and seek feedback
- Introduce the draft terms of reference (ToR) of the Network and seek feedback
- Seek feedback on the implementation of the Network and possible support from the Members' in ensuring sustainability of the Network

Expected outputs/outcomes

- Awareness on the concept of Rabies Laboratory Networking for SAARC MSs and its benefits to the countries
- Feasibility of establishing the Rabies Laboratory Network known
- Inputs received from the countries for the terms of reference (ToR) of the Network
- Inputs received from the countries on the way forward for establishing and maintaining the Network

Participants

The Delegates of 8 SAARC Member States will be asked to nominate the Director/Head of the National Veterinary Laboratory, the National Focal point for Veterinary Laboratory and an official/scientist working on rabies diagnosis either at national or sub-national level as **officially nominated participants.** Additionally, Delegates/CVOs can also nominate a maximum 3 participants working on rabies diagnosis from other organisations such as universities, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), private sectors, etc. involved in rabies diagnostic activities as **observers**.

Representatives of the Reference Laboratory in India and staff from RRAP will support the workshop. Observers from the tripartite and other regional bodies working on rabies control may be invited based on the relevance.

Platform

The workshop will be delivered through *Zoom®* using PowerPoint presentations followed by a facilitated Q&A session using *Mentimeter®*. Please ensure to install Zoom® on your computer or smart phone to access the webinar. Please download and create your account at https://zoom.us/download if you do not have a *Zoom®* account.

To use *Mentimeter®*, you do not need to download the software. You will be provided with the link to join the *Mentimeter®* session during the meeting.

Registration and Invitations

All participants will need to pre-register for the workshop by accessing the Zoom registration page (link to be sent separately to each nominated participant/observer). Once you register for the meeting, you will receive an email giving access to join the zoom meeting. Please save the e-mail carefully as you will need to join using the private link provided in the email. You should

<u>click on the link</u> in your registration email to join the meeting on 14 July 2022. Please join at least few minutes before the scheduled starting time.

Document for feedback
A draft copy of the terms of reference (ToR) of the Network will be shared with all registered participants. Participants should read it and provide feedback either through email (before or after the workshop) or during the workshop through Chat or oral intervention.

Post-workshop activities
All presentation materials will be shared online on the WOAH regional website after necessary approval of the presenters.

Following the event, the WOAH and KVAFSU will follow up with the nominated participants for their feedback and inputs for the ToR and their participation in the implementation of the Network.

Language
English

Certificate of attendance
No certificates will be provided as this is a consultation workshop which will be continued periodically in the future.

Follow-ups
After the workshop, KVAFSU and RRAP will follow up with countries for finalisation of the ToR of the Network. Once the ToR of the Network is finalised, RRAP will follow up with Delegates to approve the ToR and officially nominate Members from each country who will be part of the Network and with whom KVAFSU and RRAP can communicate on a regular basis. The KVAFSU in consultation with RRAP and the lead country will organise follow-up workshops every 6-months or as decided with the SAARC MSs to update on the activities of the Network.

Contact points
WOAH RRAP: Kinzang Dukpa (k.dukpa@woah.org) with support of Dr Siddiky, OH consultant and Dr Lesa Thompson
KVAFSU: Dr Shrikrishna Isloor (kisloor@gmail.com), Dr Sharada Ramakrishnaiah

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