

Strengthening joint risk assessment using the One Health approach in South-East Asia

25 – 27 July 2023 in Colombo, Sri Lanka

The Regional Meeting was held to introduce and discuss the operationalization of the Joint Risk Assessment (JRA) Operational Tool (OT) in South-East Asia region. Twenty-three participants representing human, animal and wildlife health sectors from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Indonesia, Maldives, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Timor-Leste attended the three day meeting.

Emerging and endemic zoonotic diseases pose a threat not only to the health of animals and humans but also to global health security. An estimated 60% of known infectious diseases and up to 75% of new or emerging infectious diseases have zoonotic origin. Pathogens such as SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) and neglected zoonosis such as rabies demonstrate the need for a deeper intersectoral cooperation using the One Health approach to tackle health risks at the animal-human-environment interface.

Dr Poonam Khetrupal Singh, Regional Director of WHO South-East Asia Region, in a message to the meeting said the *“context and consequences of these threats are increasingly becoming more complex and challenging. A comprehensive understanding and management of risks at the human-animal-environment interface can only be achieved by collectively integrating information and expertise from all relevant sectors.”*

Such challenges have brought the Quadripartite organizations, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) to collectively develop the One Health Joint Plan of Action (2022–2026) which provides a framework for countries to advance and sustainably scale up One Health implementation and to prevent future pandemics.

Dr Chadia Wannous, One Health Global Coordinator at WOAHA emphasised that: *“together we can all contribute to achieve the vision of “A world capable of preventing, detecting, containing, eliminating, and responding to health risks attributable to zoonoses and other health threats at the interface through multi-sectoral cooperation and strong partnership.”*

While countries in the region have made substantial progress to implement the One Health approach, many still face difficulties to jointly assess public health risks at human-animal-environment interface.

To support countries, the tripartite organizations have led the development and roll-out of the JRA OT, a practical instrument under the Tripartite Zoonoses Guide. “We recognize the necessity

of advancing One Health at the national level. The JRA OT is not just a harmonized approach for assessing risk, it can support countries in strengthening One Health collaboration, capacity building and preparedness in management of zoonotic disease hazards. “This regional meeting in Sri Lanka is a platform for countries to share and review successes and challenges towards implementing joint risk assessment using the One Health approach,” stated Dr Yin Myo Aye, FAO Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases Regional One Health Specialist.

The JRA process informs risk communication and management options through a comprehensive 10 step process that are relevant to all sectors. The results obtained from its use can align with new and ongoing efforts across sectors for an effective appropriation of One Health actions to zoonotic diseases in countries. As such, the JRA is an effective tool to promote multisectoral planning and coordination in the implementation of the One Health approach in countries.

In the region, the JRA OT was introduced in Indonesia and Thailand by organizing national training sessions. The review of these activities at the meeting aims to identify good practices, lessons learnt and challenges in conducting JRA at the human-animal-environment interface, drawing on experiences of countries and propose priority actions to further advance JRA.

The enhancement of tools such as JRA is an important step to facilitate the implementation of the One Health approach in the region. It will contribute to successful collective actions to shape a healthier and safer world.

More information:

- [One Health Joint Plan of Action \(2022-2026\)](#)
- [Joint Risk Assessment Operational Tool \(JRA OT\)](#)