

CONCEPT NOTE and PROGRAMME

Advancing Gender Equality, Disability and Social Inclusion (GEDSI) in the Veterinary Sector in Asia and beyond

World Veterinary Association Congress 2026
April 23, 2026 9am-12pm
Hall D1 | Zoom

Background

WOAH has been seeking to strengthen its knowledge and capacity on **gender equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI)** in recognition of its impact on the realisation of human rights, organisational performance and the delivery of activities in the veterinary sector. Thanks to the support of Australia Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), studies were commissioned by WOAH in 2023¹ and 2024² to assess the progress and identify potential gender inequality issues within the workforce in Asia Pacific. Despite this consistent rise in numbers of qualified women professionals, the animal health sector's culture, institutions, and policies are yet to be fully adjusted to this change.

Although research on gender inequalities in the animal health sector is growing, there remains limited evidence on how gender, disability and social inclusion intersect to shape workforce participation and career trajectories. Available studies indicate that institutional practices and professional norms can reinforce unequal opportunities. Gender stereotypes that promote attributes traditionally associated with masculinity (e.g. physical strength, constant availability, etc.) influence perceptions within the veterinary sector. Similarly, the absence of reasonable accommodations (e.g. accessible field equipment, adaptable travel expectations, flexible working modalities) reinforces the exclusion of persons with disabilities, as well as elderly populations. Social inclusion barriers also persist when recruitment or mobility systems favour individuals without caregiving responsibilities, those able to travel frequently, or those with certain ethnic, geographic or socio-economic backgrounds.

Revising policies to address these systemic, but often invisible biases is essential for building a resilient veterinary workforce that is truly inclusive, diverse and reflective of the communities it serves. These normative assumptions frequently result in women, persons with disabilities and socially disadvantaged groups being systematically perceived as less suited for leadership, technically specialised functions or physically demanding roles than their male or socially privileged counterparts, despite same or even higher academic qualifications, skills and levels of expertise. If this is not addressed, the industry may miss a substantial number of capable employees.

To raise attention and awareness on why Veterinary Services should consider gender, disability and social inclusion in their work, WOAH organised an [awareness raising webinar in April 2025](#) and the importance of continuing efforts to engage veterinarians and students on this topic was highlighted. In 2025, WOAH has partnered with the [Federation of Asian Veterinary Associations](#)

¹ <https://rr-asia.woah.org/en/news/gender-assessment-of-veterinary-services-in-south-east-asia/>

² <https://rr-asia.woah.org/en/news/gender-equality-disability-and-social-inclusion-in-veterinary-services/>

(FAVA), the [Asian Association of Veterinary Schools \(AAVS\)](#) and the [International Veterinary Students' Association \(IVSA\)](#) Asia & Pacific to further understand the current GEDSI situation among veterinary professionals, educators, and students in the region, organise capacity building activities, and promote GEDSI in the veterinary sector at conferences and through [a comics competition](#).

The **World Veterinary Association Congress** (WVAC) is held every 1-2 years. In 2026, WVAC was co-hosted by the World Veterinary Association (WVA) and the Japan Veterinary Medical Association (JVMA). WOAHO organised a session dedicated to GEDSI at WVAC in collaboration with JVMA, FAVA, AAVS and IVSA Asia & Pacific. Leading up to the event, a comics competition promoting GEDSI in the veterinary profession was organised for veterinary students and professionals. An award ceremony was held during the session, along with the introduction of the winning submissions.

Objectives

- To promote and provide general knowledge to participants on GEDSI and why it should be important to the Veterinary Sector;
- To exchange experiences and lessons learned from countries/territories and partners on implementation of gender and inclusive policies in the veterinary sector;
- To inspire future veterinarians and other stakeholders to take actions to promote GEDSI.

Format and language

The session was organised in a hybrid format in English without interpretation.

Target Participants

Target Participants were veterinarians and veterinary students – from Japan, Asia and beyond - who are interested in the topic.

Speakers/ Panelists

Speakers included:

- Dr Emmanuelle Soubeyran, Director General, WOAHO
- Dr Konstantinos Eleftheriadis, Gender Technical Adviser, WOAHO
- Dr Masako Kurimoto, Vice President, JVMA
- Dr Achariya Sailasuta, Director, FAVA Bangkok Office
- Dr Bambang Pontjo Priosoeryanto, FAVA Secretary General
- Dr Noraine Medina, Chair, AAVS Veterinary Education Enhancement Working Group
- Dr Peachy Domingo, AAVS GEDSI project consultant
- Ms Bertina Sum, IVSA Asia & Pacific Regional Representative
- Dr Ronello Abila, PVS expert, former WOAHO Sub-Regional Representative
- Dr Shannon Mesenhowski, Gates Foundation & WVA council member

Programme (click on hyperlinks to access presentations):

Time		Moderation: Mr Basilio Valdehuesa, Dr Maho Urabe, Mr Stéphane Renaudin
20 min	Welcome remarks	Dr Emmanuelle Soubeyran, WOA Director General Dr. Ju Hyung Hur, FAVA President Dr Masako Kurimoto, JVMA Vice President
20 min	Introduction on GEDSI and Animal Health Presentation (Video PDF)	Dr Konstantinos Eleftheriadis, WOA Gender Technical Adviser
40 min	GEDSI among veterinarians and veterinary students in Asia – findings from surveys <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentations (PDF) • Discussion and Q&A 	Representatives from FAVA, AAVS, IVSA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - FAVA (Dr Achariya Sailasuta, Director of FAVA Bangkok Office) - AAVS (Dr Noraine Medina, Chair of AAVS VEE Working Group) - IVSA (Ms Bertina Sum, IVSA Asia & Pacific Representative)
10 min	Break	
15 min	Initiatives for Gender Equality in the Veterinary Profession in Japan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation (PDF) • Q&A 	Dr Masako Kurimoto, JVMA
45 min	Panel discussion: GEDSI in veterinary sector	Panelists: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dr Emmanuelle Soubeyran, WOA Director General - Dr Bambang Pontjo Priosoeryanto, FAVA Secretary General - Dr Peachy Domingo, AAVS GEDSI project consultant - Dr Bertina Sum, IVSA Asia & Pacific Regional Representative - Dr Shannon Mesenhowski, Gates Foundation & WVA council member - Dr Ronello Abila, PVS Expert Moderated by WOA

20 min	<p><u>Award ceremony for the Comics competition promoting GEDSI in the Veterinary sector</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Brief background of the competition- Announcement of the winners- Presentation of the comics by the winner- Photos	<p>Mr Stéphane Renaudin, WOAHSRR-SEA</p> <p>Winner of the competition, Dr Alfathitamara Oktalia Sasti, veterinarian, Indonesia</p>
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