

Preliminary Summary

High Level Technical Meeting to Address Health Risks at the Human-Animal-Ecosystems Interfaces

November 15-17, Mexico City, Mexico

Main outcomes:

- Political will, trust and financial support are crucial to establishing intersectoral approaches in local, national, regional and international institutions and infrastructure to address health risks at the human-animal-ecosystems interfaces.
- Engaging in a constructive dialogue with relevant political bodies at all levels to explain the benefits of intersectoral collaboration is critical to ensuring high-level political commitment.
- Effectively engaging public and private sectors, academia, NGOs and other relevant partners is vital to promoting cultural and behavioural change among all stakeholders.
- Strong governance structures and aligned legal frameworks, building on existing mechanisms, are essential to achieving effective disease surveillance and response.
- Using intersectoral approaches to risk assessment and risk mitigation for health issues at the human-animal-ecosystems interfaces can add value by improving efficiency and can result in more successful outcomes.
- Sharing information and strengthening collaboration among different sectors, including their public and private components, in disease surveillance and reporting is crucial to ensuring early detection and rapid response to health threats.
- Communication (among different administrative levels and sectors, and including outreach, advocacy, and risk communication) is crucial to ensuring intersectoral coordination.
- Joint training and simulation exercises, and coordinated evaluation and gap analysis of national human and animal health systems are key for intersectoral collaboration.
- Rabies, zoonotic influenza and antimicrobial resistance are models where the benefits of intersectoral approaches are evident.

Background, program, and methods of working

The Government of Mexico, together with the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and the World Health Organization (WHO) convened a High Level Technical Meeting (HLTM) in Mexico City from 15-17 November 2011. This meeting reflects an important step in putting into action the principles presented in the Tripartite Concept Note (April 2010) in which FAO, OIE and WHO indicated their intention to work more closely together and with their respective sectors to address health risks at the human-animal-ecosystems interfaces. This meeting also built on the International Ministerial Conference on Animal and Pandemic Influenza (IMCAPI) process and a variety of other recent meetings related to "One Health". One goal of the HLTM was to expand the technical aspects of the ongoing discussions to build upon the political discussions of the IMCAPI process. During the HLTM approximately 100 key stakeholders including representatives from the human and animal health, agriculture and environmental sectors, international technical experts, and regional and donor organisations, representing over 30 countries, identified key elements, high priority technical actions, and related practical next steps for moving forward on intersectoral collaboration, coordination and communication.

In plenary sessions, keynote speakers presented information on current intersectoral work being undertaken in different parts of the world including ongoing political, technical, and awareness-building processes as well as technical activities and projects, and which provided a context for the work of the participants. In small working groups, participants used three health issues at the human-animal-ecosystems interfaces - zoonotic influenza, antimicrobial resistance, and rabies - as examples to discuss their experiences and identify overarching components of intersectoral

approaches and best practices, constraints to implementation, and potential next steps that can be applied by countries, and requirements for further tripartite and other partners' actions.

The participants then focused on similar issues regarding intersectoral collaboration, but this time, rather than through considering specific health issues, through the perspective of risk assessment and risk mitigation that could be used when considering a broader spectrum of health risks at the human-animal-ecosystems interfaces. Results from both sets of work group discussions were presented and discussed in plenary sessions. A panel made up of tripartite representatives and representatives of Mexico, the World Bank, and the European Commission provided statements and facilitated final discussions of the outcomes.

Results and outcomes

There was general consensus that health risks at the human-animal-ecosystems interfaces should optimally be addressed at source. Many threats are so complex that no one sector or discipline can effectively address them alone. Intersectoral approaches – including social and economic aspects – can add value by improving efficiency and can result in increased effectiveness and achieving more successful outcomes. There was clear expression of tripartite commitment and recognition of the need to cooperate and move forward in a coordinated manner with intersectoral collaboration within the One Health concept, as well as commitment to providing technical support in this area to member countries and regional organizations.

Key elements common across health risks were identified by participants as necessary for effective intersectoral collaboration. Of particular note, the list of key elements was virtually identical whether the groups were discussing the selected health issues (zoonotic influenza, antimicrobial resistance, and rabies) or risk assessment and mitigation more broadly. This list included:

- political will and high-level commitment;
- trust among partners;
- common objectives and priorities identified across the sectors;
- recognition/consideration of existing international standards for different sectors;
- strong governance structures and aligned legal frameworks, including support to good governance quality standards (IHR, PVS and Codex);
- adequate and equitably distributed resources;
- joint technical or coordination mechanisms to address a variety of intersectoral issues;
- clarification of roles and responsibilities and areas of complementarity;
- joint simulation exercises (e.g. in emergency preparedness, coordination and communication);
- coordinated planning of activities;
- collaboration and cooperation when relevant in surveillance, reporting, event investigation, and diagnostic testing;
- determining data to be shared and appropriate ways to share them, and understanding the benefits of doing so;
- communication (among different administrative levels and sectors, and including outreach, advocacy, and risk communication);
- joint training and capacity building/capacity development;
- identification and involvement of other relevant partners (e.g. NGOs, academia, private sector);
- guidance on implementation of intersectoral collaborations.

Participants also identified many high priority actions and possible next steps to achieve them, both for intersectoral approaches generally and for the specific examples of zoonotic influenza, rabies, and antimicrobial resistance. As a concrete next step, it was proposed that the tripartite could lead by example and develop a joint communication framework at the international level to promote cultural and behavioural change towards more intersectoral collaboration.

Participants discussed how to best engage ministers and other partners in applying these approaches in their countries; direct advocacy (including at the global level by FAO, OIE, WHO and other international partners) was identified as one potential first step. This could include providing clear messages to political leaders with evidence supporting the benefits of intersectoral collaboration and options that are feasible, add value and are sustainable. Bringing the ministers together to discuss these issues does not happen routinely, but where such opportunities occur (e.g. the 2012 G20 meeting in Mexico, and the Inter-American Meeting, at Ministerial Level, in Health and Agriculture (RIMSAs) meeting planned for 2012 in Chile), potential next steps in the joint

interministerial process could be sought and exploited. It was agreed that first, the technical findings of the HLTM must be translated into ministerial-level actions and incentives for engagement must be identified.

It was suggested that alignment of the technical outcomes with the broader political processes could be forwarded by:

- Bringing outcomes of the HLTM to various existing political processes and broader initiatives, to address global health security and aspects of sustained livelihoods;
- Continue ensuring buy-in of funding partners and encouraging financial support to facilitate intersectoral initiatives at country, regional and global levels;
- Ensuring continued political support through the respective governing bodies of the FAO, OIE and WHO;
- Translation of the Tripartite Concept Note principles into international, regional and national level approaches and focus at country level on strengthening systems;
- Direct use by governments and communities of HLTM technical outcomes, particularly those components of successful national/regional programs identified by HLTM participants.

These outputs are next steps to providing a more systematic technical basis for countries in their development and implementation of intersectoral approaches for health issues of national concern, as well as to encourage understanding and engagement at local, national, regional, and international levels.

For more information:

www.hltm.org

www.FAO.org

www.OIE.int

www.WHO.int

www.un-influenza.org

www.presidencia.gob.mx

www.semarnat.gob.mx

www.sagarpa.gob.mx

www.salud.gob.mx