Initial assessment of strategic plans for improving the performance of Veterinary Services in developing countries: a review of OIE PVS Gap Analysis reports

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Summary

The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) carries out Gap Analysis missions (if a country so wishes) as part of its programme to assess and improve the Performance of Veterinary Services (the ‘PVS Pathway’) in Member Countries. These Gap Analysis missions have found that many national Veterinary Services comply to only a limited extent with the international standards established by the OIE and that their competence is compromised by poor governance. This failure threatens animal and public health not only nationally but also internationally.

The OIE PVS Gap Analysis reports reviewed found that all the Veterinary Services have a strong vision and commitment to improvement but are held back by a weak chain of command, inadequate and outdated legislation, insufficient funding, weak technical competencies, compromised technical independence, poor communications and limited joint programmes. There are weaknesses across all the core technical areas of trade, animal health, veterinary public health and veterinary laboratories and also in the overall management of the Veterinary Services. The OIE PVS Gap Analysis missions recommend significant increases in budget in all countries.

Keywords


Introduction

Since 2009, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) has carried out more than 40 ‘Gap Analysis’ missions as part of its programme to assess and improve the Performance of Veterinary Services (the ‘PVS Pathway’). The first assessment in the pathway – the PVS Evaluation – identifies weaknesses in performance and the PVS Gap Analysis then examines how these weaknesses can be addressed. This article reviews the findings of initial PVS Gap Analysis missions in developing countries, focusing particularly on issues of good governance of Veterinary Services.

Fourteen PVS Gap Analysis country reports have now been authorised for distribution to donors and partners and three have been released into the public domain. This review considers the findings of the reports on Barbados, Bhutan, Bolivia, Cameroon, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Egypt,
The PVS Gap Analysis missions determine five-year objectives for the Veterinary Services that are appropriate to the national priorities and constraints and take into consideration compliance with OIE standards (2). In this process PVS missions identify critical weaknesses in the provision and good governance of Veterinary Services and make recommendations as to how these should be addressed. The country PVS Gap Analysis report includes an indicative annual budget and an exceptional budget, consolidated over five years. The PVS Gap Analysis report is reviewed by the country authority and may then be released into the public domain or to donors only, according to the level of confidentiality required by the country.

**Good governance**

The activities of Veterinary Services are recognised as an ‘international public good’. There is therefore a requirement for countries to provide competent and transparent services that protect animal health and public health both within the country and internationally.

To provide appropriate Veterinary Services it is vital that the principles of ‘good governance’ are met. Any analysis of the current state of governance in national Veterinary Services should include an assessment of the extent to which they are:

- enhancing political accountability: legislation and institutions
- improving capacity: personnel skills, processes, systems, and resources (including both capital and financial resources)
- strengthening the demand for better governance: measures to enhance stakeholder participation.

Good governance of Veterinary Services results in services that are sustainably financed, universally available and provided efficiently without waste or duplication, all in a manner that is transparent and free of fraud or corruption. For Veterinary Services to support the development of the livestock sector, protect public health and be sustainable, strong collaboration with the private sector must be developed; such consultations should seek synergies to remove restrictions to livestock development and promote improved productivity through better husbandry and animal health whilst maintaining good governance.

Good governance of Veterinary Services should be further strengthened by seeking the support of citizens and direct users to improve the quality and quantity of services and access to them. Public support for good governance is critical to the long-term sustainability of the improvements.
and should be addressed in any strategic plan. Ultimately, Veterinary Services must be accountable and there must be a public process of audit and review.

The PVS Gap Analysis missions have identified a number of key structural, organisational and resourcing weaknesses that limit the ability of Veterinary Services to comply with recognised international standards as defined by the OIE (1, 3). In addition, operational weaknesses, such as weak management and limited staff, vehicles, equipment and funding, restrict the capacity of Veterinary Services to deliver technically effective programmes that enable them to fulfil their core functions of improving animal and human health.

Figure 1 indicates the current ‘Levels of Advancement’ for key good governance critical competencies. For the purposes of this article, the five levels of advancement used in the PVS Tool have been condensed into three for easier assessment: Level 1 – no significant activity; Level 1/3 – initial developments undertaken; Level 4/5 – good progress towards international ‘best practice’. To improve their standards of good governance, all countries face major challenges in terms of achieving technical independence, ensuring transparency, gaining accreditation and delegation, securing emergency funding and setting up joint programmes; most countries also need to develop better management systems, seek better funding models, strengthen legislation and improve communications and consultations.

Further analysis by region of the levels of advancement of key good governance critical competencies indicates that ‘American’ countries are generally the most advanced. In African countries performance varies widely, with some strengths but considerable weaknesses. Asian countries face major problems, with poor technical competencies, weak legislation, insufficient communication and a lack of joint programmes. Funding is a major challenge in every region.

Discussion

National priorities

Under the PVS Gap Analysis approach national priorities are determined in consultation with the Veterinary Services and other government and industry stakeholders. The national priorities are defined under four categories – livestock development, animal health, veterinary public health and the organisation and management of the Veterinary Services.

A review of the national priorities indicates that all countries aim to develop livestock production. All countries are seeking to develop their production of livestock in order to promote food security and economic development by increasing export opportunities and decreasing imports. In some countries, this development is to be enhanced further by increasingly adding value to primary production and increasing access to higher-value markets through improved production and processing and better quality control. Another priority for several countries is to increase productivity by improving husbandry and reducing the impact of endemic diseases. In a number of countries this improvement is to be focused on developing smallholder production, whereas others have said that they intend to intensify and industrialise production.

Fig. 1

Current country ‘Levels of Advancement’ for key good governance critical competencies
The national animal health priority that is common to all countries is to target major epidemic and transboundary animal diseases, particularly foot and mouth disease, peste des petits ruminants, highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), porcine reproductive and respiratory syndrome, classical swine fever and African swine fever. Some countries also plan to target endemic diseases, focusing variously on parasitic diseases, clostridial diseases and anthrax in ruminants, leptospirosis and other pig diseases and various poultry diseases. In part, this improved disease control is expected to come from strengthened quarantine and border controls. The role of wildlife in animal health is also identified in some mission reports. A number of countries are already free from some of these diseases, but this has not always been acknowledged internationally and so there is the need for a formal programme and an official report to demonstrate freedom from the disease.

Veterinary public health is widely recognised as a national priority in most strategic plans. Most jurisdictions have identified a need to improve their programmes to control foodborne diseases and other zoonoses. Rabies is commonly cited as a key disease that is not being well managed. Several of the reports reviewed indicated that food safety is to be addressed with strengthened ante- and post-mortem inspection programmes. Veterinary medicines and biologicals are generally poorly managed, and there is an identified need for improved regulation of their use and the monitoring of residues in livestock products.

The organisation and management of Veterinary Services is recognised as a critical requirement and a national priority by all countries; however, the types of activities to be prioritised vary considerably. All countries identified weaknesses in the chain of command and in information flows/pathways. Other priority areas requiring attention included the accessibility of the Veterinary Services, the need for greater public–private partnership, staff recruitment and succession planning, professional integrity and technical qualifications, and the need for better legislation.

### Chain of command

A problem identified by most PVS Gap Analysis missions is the weakness of the chain of command; that is, the line of authority from the central level through the regional and/or provincial departments and down to the district and local field veterinary network. This problem includes the lack of direct vertical management from the central agency to local levels to set policy, provide technical leadership, implement effective programmes, and receive timely and reliable reports of the progress of such activities and of local changes in animal health status.

Veterinary Services in many jurisdictions face additional chain-of-command problems because they sometimes have limited or no authority over cross-cutting activities, which are often handled by other departments or agencies. Examples include customs/border control, food safety post slaughter, zoonoses and general enforcement activities.

Many countries are federations or have decentralised systems of authority, with increased provincial or even district autonomy in policy-making, budgeting and implementation. Under this administrative structure there is no direct line management or funding of local agencies, including local Veterinary Services.

Figure 2 compares the ideal direct line of authority with a decentralised system. The administratively simple system, with a single line of authority, provides direct control over
funding and resources, personnel, the setting of policy and the provision of technical leadership; this also facilitates the flow of information from the field to the regional or central authorities. The more complex decentralised systems, operating in many countries, result in a break in the chain of command between the central agency and the sub-national authorities; in these systems funding and personnel management is provided by the sub-national authority while policy-making and technical guidance are provided centrally.

The immediate priority for many Veterinary Services is how to strengthen this chain of command between the central authority and the decentralised agencies. The indirect line management of Veterinary Services is unlikely to be addressed through changes in the national governance systems and so improvements must focus on a ‘consensus’ approach under which the policies and technical leadership of the competent authority are recognised by the sub-national agencies, and the local agencies provide timely, useful reports to the national authority on their activities and the changing animal health situation.

There is no single method by which Veterinary Services must carry out their mandate, but it should be clear how they will comply with international standards as defined by the OIE (1). Although from a governance perspective the ideal for Veterinary Services would be independence with complete autonomy from external influences and adequate funding, this is unlikely in the majority of national contexts, in which the sub-sector may not be considered a national priority and practical budget limitations exist.

The complex further issue of the cross-cutting authority of Veterinary Services is illustrated in Figure 3. It is not obligatory for Veterinary Services to have absolute authority over the full remit of animal and veterinary public health activities in a broad government system. For example, in many countries the Ministry of Environment monitors and manages wildlife health, and the Ministry of Commerce manages commercial marketing and processing facilities. The Ministry of Health is tasked with promoting human health but, when health is compromised by a zoonotic disease, control must be sought through reducing exposure at source, that is, in animals.

To achieve good governance of the critical Veterinary Service activities it is necessary to ensure a clear definition of the roles of the different agencies and to ensure transparency through the sharing of high-quality and timely information. The PVS Gap Analysis missions identified problems in developing a coherent whole-government approach and recommendations were made either to implement structural change or to improve coordination to address these weaknesses.

**Legislation**

Legislation forms the cornerstone of Veterinary Service activities, specifying the organisational structure, the budget support and financial management, the technical authority and independence, the reporting obligations, and the ability of Veterinary Services to investigate and control disease. As such, appropriate legislation is fundamental to the good governance of Veterinary Services.

The PVS Gap Analysis missions found that, in all the jurisdictions reviewed, Veterinary Services have problems with inadequate and outdated legislation. Commonly, animal health legislation fails to recognise the changing international environment and the obligations of the Veterinary Services. Many countries have new legislation in various stages of preparation but progress in finalising the new laws is slow. Veterinary Services have limited ability to promote the required legislative changes, as they are often not seen as a priority, and have limited lobbying power both within their line ministry and across central government.

The legislative power of Veterinary Services is often further limited by the lack of a clear mandate over activities that are critical, but that are on the periphery of the Veterinary Services remit, e.g. food safety post slaughter, customs, inspection and enforcement (as indicated under ‘Chain of command’ above). Understandably, governments have different approaches to protecting human health from foodborne and other zoonoses — some choose to give the mandate to their Veterinary Services, others may use the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Commerce or the Ministry of the Environment, whilst others provide no specific mandate to any agency.
Areas of critical weakness in veterinary and animal health legislation vary but commonly include:
- ineffective lines of reporting/organisational structure
- no registration of veterinarians/absence of a Veterinary Statutory Body
- no facility to register veterinary para-professionals
- no defined veterinary public health mandate
- weak management of veterinary medicines and biologicals.

The problems of the lack of effective legislation in these areas are discussed further under the relevant sections of this article.

All PVS Gap Analysis missions have advocated the updating and/or passing of new veterinary legislation and the need for ongoing review, with new regulations and further revisions to be undertaken as necessary. To accomplish the necessary revision of legislation Veterinary Services must work closely with their ministries to gain their support and commitment to push the new laws through the legislative process.

In all of the reports reviewed by the authors, countries recognised the active support from the OIE – within its Veterinary Legislation Support Programme (2) – in strengthening their legislation to achieve good governance of Veterinary Services and compliance with international standards. Other international agencies, such as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the European Commission, are also actively working in this area, and there is a need for the different agencies to work together to avoid confusion and duplication of effort.

**Technical competence**

**Veterinarians**

A major weakness identified by many PVS Gap Analysis missions is the lack of a definition of a ‘veterinarian’. In many countries the requirements for being recognised as a veterinarian are minimal or non-existent and there is no established Veterinary Statutory Body to manage professional standards regarding registration, professional integrity and ethics, and disciplinary measures.

To establish and maintain veterinary professional standards all countries should have a Veterinary Statutory Body, which should be independent of government and any political interference (1, 3). Most developing countries currently do not have a Veterinary Statutory Body; some have a government-managed programme of veterinary registration, but few have an independent body.

Veterinary education is of highly variable quality and duration, with many countries making no reference to any recognised curriculum standards. In addition, there is generally no requirement to undertake continuing professional development. Government veterinarians have little opportunity to develop specialist skills unless they participate in internationally sponsored short courses or postgraduate training. The limitations of basic training and limited ongoing development of government and private veterinarians severely restricts their ability to develop national Veterinary Services that meet international standards as set out by the OIE.

In small countries, the cost of establishing a veterinary teaching facility may be considered unwarranted, and alternative options should be considered. It is also difficult to implement a formal process for professional disciplinary measures if the veterinary profession in the country is very small. PVS Gap Analysis missions suggested that in some situations a regional organisation might usefully be established to address such problems.

The absence of veterinary standards presents a serious threat to good governance as it means that technical competence is limited, professional ethics are uncertain and likely to be placed under pressure, and that there is no method of controlling the quality and integrity of the profession. The lack of veterinary standards (i.e. the absence of an appropriate definition of a ‘veterinarian’) allows untrained people to adopt the term without ever having their competency or professional ethics evaluated. Such a situation exists in many developing countries, including those assessed in this article. This weakness presents as a Veterinary Service unable to accurately diagnose disease, with limited ability to take the necessary regulatory actions that may be required to combat disease and with no reliable system for certifying animal health status. Further, this situation can lead to conflicts of interest in the absence of any management of the integrity of the profession.

A number of country reports strongly advocate the benefits and sustainability of delegating some activities of the government Veterinary Services to private practitioners. Delegating some activities assists in the development of a private veterinary system and can meet the need for good governance – as long as the chain of command is clear and effective management and quality control are implemented. Using private practitioners reduces the overhead costs of staffing and equipping the government Veterinary Services.

Figure 4 shows the range of budget recommendations, as a percentage of the total Veterinary Services budget, for staffing and delegated activities from a number of PVS Gap Analysis missions. Staff salaries form a major component of all PVS Gap Analysis budgets, and the range allocated varies from over 50% to less than 20% of the total budget. Veterinary staff generally receive the greater percentage of
staff salaries, but some countries have a policy of making greater use of veterinary para-professionals and other technical staff. Countries have a wide range of approaches to the delegation of activities, with some expecting to spend more than 80% of their ‘personnel’ costs on delegation, whilst other countries have no planned budget for delegation. This range of approaches can be explained by the different philosophies of government and stage of development of the country and/or the Veterinary Services. For example, the countries with the higher salary percentages generally have a more developed livestock industry and/or are more strongly focused on increasing livestock production. The countries with lower salary percentages are at an earlier stage in the development of their Veterinary Services and starting from a lower base, with greater initial investment required for facilities, equipment and staff training.

Veterinary para-professionals

In all the reports reviewed in preparation for this article, there was limited or no definition of veterinary para-professionals, with often no clear job descriptions and no qualification or training requirements. Some veterinary para-professionals were given responsibility for specific tasks in some jurisdictions, for example, meat inspection and food safety.

Veterinary para-professionals were recognised by all PVS Gap Analysis missions as a core component in providing a competent national Veterinary Service. However, to make better use of this resource, there is a need to have a rigorous system for defining their roles and activities, their basic qualifications and ongoing training needs, and the effective management and supervision of their activities by designated veterinarians. A common problem is making inefficient use of veterinary para-professionals, with veterinarians being used as technicians in laboratories or other positions when competent para-professionals, under veterinary supervision, would be able to undertake the task competently and well. Failure to implement effective management of this resource weakens the Veterinary Service and also runs the risk of technical weakness or, worse, incompetence. These failures present a significant threat to the good governance of the Veterinary Services as technical independence and authority will be reduced.
It is widely recommended that there be a registration programme for veterinary para-professionals (in addition to the registration process for veterinarians) under the control of the Veterinary Statutory Body that manages veterinary standards.

**Technical independence**

Good governance principles require that decisions be based on technical independence and a sound knowledge and understanding of the situation. In addition, the decision-making process must be transparent and decisions should be made without any bias or self-interest. Technical independence was identified as a significant concern in many countries.

Technical independence is compromised at a number of levels in many countries because there is:

- inadequate information on which to base decisions
- lack of documented processes
- bias, self-interest or political interference by decision-makers
- insufficient remuneration of technical staff

Information on animal health or veterinary public health is often inadequate, with insufficient data on the disease situation and little or no robust surveillance data available. This weakness is exacerbated by problems of poor information management, with little concatenation of data and limited analysis and reporting. The net result is a poor understanding of the disease and its epidemiology and an inability to make appropriate science-based decisions.

In many countries, there is no documented process for decision-making. Decisions are taken by individuals or at meetings, without any record being made of the information provided, the options considered, the deciding arguments and the final conclusions. Policy decisions and their implementation are not routinely monitored or evaluated.

As there is no documentation of the process of decision-making, there are concerns over the integrity of the process. Self-interest, political expediency and personal bias may all interfere with decision-making and technical independence. In many developing countries remuneration of government staff is very poor, insufficient to meet even basic living costs – this means there is a risk that decisions will be made on non-technical grounds or that there will be ‘reward-seeking’ behaviour. This poses a threat to the principles of good governance, with a loss of transparency and objectivity, and may result in corruption or fraud.

As an example, a lack of transparency and reporting of disease outbreaks and unreliable reporting of control activities, such as vaccination, seriously limit the ability of Veterinary Services to assess the disease situation and the progress of control programmes. Such a situation exists in a number of countries and results in poor decisions being made and inappropriate control strategies adopted. This situation also presents the risk of decisions being taken on the basis of short-term expediency, with benefits for specific interest groups, rather than with the aim of achieving sustained improvements with benefits for all.

**Communications**

Government and stakeholder communications help to promote the principles of good governance, as they enable government to work with industry stakeholders and other relevant parties to set objectives and to develop viable and mutually beneficial programmes. Government Veterinary Services demonstrate a variety of approaches to communications and consultation activities: some hold regular formal meetings with industry groups and cross-cutting agencies, others arrange *ad hoc* meetings when problems arise, and some are involved in little activity other than internationally supported campaigns targeting specific issues such as HPAI.

A general recommendation made by PVS Gap Analysis missions was that there should be increased investment in communications, with the development of a core unit within the Veterinary Services with dedicated staff and an increased budget. Such units should work with programme managers to develop a communications plan targeting key stakeholders using the most appropriate means of communication. The impact of communications should be reviewed regularly to ensure that they remain effective – if they are not having a high impact on the target audience, then the programme should be revised.

Consultations with industry and producer groups are often limited, reducing the ability to develop joint programmes with public–private partnerships. In many countries there are no producer groups, either because the level of development is low or because local politics do not endorse such group associations. To develop stronger consultation mechanisms, PVS Gap Analysis missions commonly recommended strengthening producer groups and also considered the possibility of setting up ‘industry funds’ to support industry development and to assist government in providing contingency funding.

To develop the principles of good governance further, a process of public and industry feedback should be established. The commitment and engagement of citizens in the review of Veterinary Service activities will provide direct guidance on priorities and governance concerns.
Joint programmes

All the PVS Gap Analysis reports reviewed recommended the increased use of ‘joint programmes’ to reduce the cost of implementing animal health programmes and veterinary public health initiatives. Such programmes should be jointly developed with the appropriate stakeholders and led by the Veterinary Services using a participatory approach to set realistic goals and milestones with clear lines of project management, responsibility and funding.

In all countries, producers and industry groups have the vision of increasing livestock production and so either reducing the country’s reliance on imports or increasing its exports. National governments are generally not in a position to support all the infrastructure, staffing, traceability, information capture, analysis and reporting required to undertake the necessary programmes of surveillance and disease control. The logical approach therefore is to endorse the philosophy of public–private partnerships under which government services provide leadership, coordination and any necessary legislation and, to a greater or lesser extent, industry develops the field programme of controlling and monitoring the animal health situation (Fig. 5).

All countries have undertaken planning for incursions by one or more of the major transboundary animal diseases, such as foot and mouth disease, HPAI and African swine fever. These preparedness plans are not always well developed and structured, nor have they always been tested through real events or exercises. Critical in developing robust and effective response plans is managing the impact that emergency controls will have on the livestock industry stakeholders. To encourage strong commitment to an emergency response, and to ensure that the necessary trade restrictions are implemented, joint programmes need to be developed and promoted. This process will include identifying factors that may limit industry commitment when problems occur, such as market collapse and the absence of effective, timely and appropriately valued compensation. It is imperative that these obstacles to an effective response then be addressed during the planning phase.

Technical policies and programmes

To achieve national priorities PVS Gap Analysis missions work with the Veterinary Services and other stakeholders to (i) review the core technical programmes for livestock development, animal health and veterinary public health, (ii) support cross-cutting activities such as laboratory services and communications, and (iii) improve staff skills and capacity.

Issues of good governance cut across all these activities, requiring transparency of process and decision-making, sustainability of funding, efficient implementation, universal access, and management in a manner that is free of corruption or self-interest.

All countries identified quarantine and border control as being critical to improving the control of disease incursions. Island countries have natural barriers to the easy movement of livestock and livestock products and typically tend to have a higher animal health status. All island countries assessed already invest heavily in border control, but there remain many systemic weaknesses. Countries with substantial land borders face a considerable challenge in reducing the risk to their animal populations. To address these challenges, PVS Gap Analysis missions recommended that veterinary authorities:

– increase the authority of the Veterinary Services over the border control for livestock and livestock products, as this is often compromised by cross-agency management
– increase investment in staff and staff training, facilities, equipment and materials
– improve data capture, record-keeping, analysis and reporting
– increase the use of risk analysis to identify priorities, including issues of illegal trade
– increase collaboration with neighbouring countries and trading partners.

Animal health remains the core activity of national Veterinary Services, and all PVS Gap Analysis missions have assigned this a high priority. The identified critical activities are reducing the threat of transboundary animal diseases and improving the control of endemic diseases.
Achieving this will involve improving surveillance systems, both active and passive, developing robust control programmes, preferably as ‘joint programmes’ with industry, providing contingency funding for emergency animal health events and increasing capacity to respond to disease incursions. There is also a general acknowledgement among Veterinary Services that livestock identification and traceability are important (Fig. 6), but, given the different national priorities, this activity receives varying commitment and budget. Animal welfare has had little attention in many countries and Gap Analysis missions recommend that Veterinary Services develop the necessary legislation, formulate job descriptions and assign staff to undertake welfare duties.

The PVS Gap Analysis reports reviewed for this article concluded that veterinary public health is being variably addressed but is underdeveloped in all countries. Common issues identified include:

- limited animal inspection at slaughter, both ante and post mortem, with little recording of findings, consolidation of data, analysis or reporting

- no authority over the inspection of post-slaughter market and distribution chains (Fig. 7) or any access to data from post-slaughter monitoring

- weak or absent control of veterinary medicines and biologicals, with often no registration or control of their use or monitoring of imports or sales, and no residue testing programme; this problem is often exacerbated by cross-cutting issues of partial control of veterinary medicines by the health authorities.

In all PVS Gap Analysis reports reviewed, laboratory services were identified as being vital to the development of competent Veterinary Services. Recent disease epidemics and threats have seen many donors offer considerable support to a range of activities but particularly to laboratories. All national veterinary laboratories have been significantly strengthened with increased staff and staff training, improved facilities, equipment and materials. A number of countries have made significant progress in developing laboratory quality assurance by developing standard operating procedures and quality controls. However, although great progress has been made, substantial challenges remain. The greatest challenge facing every Veterinary Service in running a competent laboratory diagnostic system is one of providing an adequate and sustainable budget.

**Insufficient funding**

A core requirement for the good governance of Veterinary Services is their adequate and sustainable funding. Following consideration of the national priorities for livestock, all the PVS Gap Analysis reports reviewed recommended significant increases in funding to achieve the desired level of advancement.

National Veterinary Services are not generally a priority for developing countries with insufficient funding even for baseline activities, let alone improving their capability with further investment in staffing, facilities and operational funding. This weak financial position is further limited by any fees and revenue earned being paid into the central exchequer, providing no direct strengthening of the Veterinary Services from their own enforcement and registration activities.

The Veterinary Services in most developing countries are overly dependent on external aid programmes. Although these programmes strengthen aspects of Veterinary Services activities they result in inevitable problems: domestic priorities are superseded by international objectives and the Veterinary Services are not always able to sustain the provided ‘improvements’. For example, under the HPAI control programmes, donors have provided significant investment in laboratory diagnostic services.
equipment but no budget for ongoing calibration and maintenance, or even for consumables and reagents. The national desire for ‘state-of-the-art’ veterinary diagnostic facilities is tempered by the recognition that the Veterinary Services do not have the ability to operate and sustain such capacity. Logically, greater consideration should be given to developing regional centres to perform the more costly and sophisticated diagnostic tests. Laboratory services will be difficult to sustain if they do not provide a broader benefit to producers and consumers by supporting the control of endemic and zoonotic diseases and reducing the emphasis on major enzootic diseases.

Veterinary staff remuneration packages are often insufficient to provide for even the basic living costs of staff. This problem results in limited staff availability and commitment and is likely to have negative consequences for sub-sector governance. Particular problems identified by PVS GAP Analysis missions have been:
- inability to recruit staff
- loss of experienced/postgraduate trained/technically competent staff
- reward-seeking activities
- absence of staff.

Staff recruitment and retention were both identified as problem areas. Difficulties in finding and holding on to qualified personnel result in there being insufficient staff with the appropriate experience and specialist skills. Many donor programmes have sought to address this skills shortage by sponsoring a range of training initiatives, including overseas postgraduate courses. In many cases, staff who have completed training abroad are not retained to provide the technical leadership and policy-setting required of the Veterinary Services – such staff are often recruited by overseas organisations or international non-governmental organisations, others are promoted into non-technical managerial positions.

Veterinary Services staff in all countries are poorly remunerated when compared with other professions such as doctors, engineers and middle/senior management. The levels of remuneration vary by country, but in the most severe cases staff are paid at such a low level that there is little or no commitment to actually work for the government Veterinary Services; staff are frequently absent or engaged in other income-earning activities. Government Veterinary Services staff based at regional and local offices often provide clinical care for animal owners, reducing their ability to provide independent objective local Veterinary Services.

The lack of available, technically competent and independent staff is a major challenge for the provision of Veterinary Services in all the countries reviewed and requires urgent attention. PVS Gap Analysis missions have identified this weakness and made recommendations for this problem to be addressed, but this will take time and require government commitment and financial support – support which may not be forthcoming given common budgetary and political challenges and competing national priorities.

**Recommended budget**

PVS Gap Analysis missions develop a five-year budget plan covering both annual and exceptional expenditure. The budget is compared with a number of national parameters when these are available – most commonly it is presented as a percentage of the livestock gross domestic product (GDP). The recommended budget is typically between 2% and 3% of livestock GDP, with a range of less than 1% to greater than 10%. This variation can be attributed to different national priorities – with some countries focusing on high animal health status to protect domestic human and animal health or to promote trade by increasing access to higher-value export markets, whilst others are in an earlier stage of development, with competing national priorities and limited opportunity to invest in their Veterinary Services.

The recommended budget can also be reviewed according to the five ‘pillars’ of the OIE PVS Gap Analysis tool; that is, the activity areas of trade, animal health, veterinary public health, laboratory services and management and resources (Fig. 8). In all countries, it is recommended that animal health activities receive the highest proportion of the budget – primarily to support disease surveillance and control activities, both centrally and in the field – and that trade receive a moderate budget, the amount of which varies by country depending on the emphasis on border controls and traceability. Veterinary public health is increasingly recognised as important, and in most countries it is recommended that a significant portion of the budget is assigned to this activity. The need to support Veterinary Services with improved management and resources is recognised in all countries. A significant budget should also be provided for laboratory services. (Note that not all PVS Gap Analysis missions assessed laboratory services.)

Internationally, government budgets have come under increasing pressure because of the global economic uncertainty and the pressure to rein in public sector borrowing. Notwithstanding the pressure on all governments, the PVS Gap Analysis missions have universally recommended increased funding for Veterinary Services. These recommendations are developed recognising the national priorities of the country, its current level of advancement, and the improvements proposed. Veterinary Services have been chronically underfunded, with inadequate funding for baseline
activities, poor staff remuneration and the return of any fees earned to the central exchequer. Veterinary Services face a further funding problem in view of international pressure to address major enzootic diseases, such as foot and mouth disease and HPAI, rather than to improve production by investing in the control of endemic diseases, including parasitic diseases. All PVS Gap Analysis missions recommended that an increased budget be provided to the Veterinary Services, along with increased support from the private sector.

Conclusion

This initial assessment of a number of OIE PVS Gap Analysis reports has demonstrated the wide range of strategic development plans that have been prepared. This finding is not surprising as the countries reviewed are at varying stages of development from ‘developing’ through to ‘middle income’ status. The more developed countries tend to set higher standards of good governance, with better management systems, stronger legislation, higher technical competence, good-quality joint programmes and more transparency and sharing of information.

There is a high level of commitment by all national Veterinary Services to improving the effectiveness and integrity of their systems, with all countries showing considerable vision and clarity in establishing their national priorities. Predictably, it is harder to obtain such a commitment from other central government agencies and sometimes even from senior officials in the agriculture ministry.

Good governance of Veterinary Services is compromised in many countries as services are inadequately financed and ineffectively operated, without good management of information or transparency of decision-making.

Following consideration of the national priorities, all PVS Gap Analysis missions recommended significant budget increases so that the Veterinary Services could achieve the necessary levels of advancement. It is difficult to predict if these recommendations are going to be endorsed, as the OIE PVS Pathway is still in its early stages. It is apparent that all Veterinary Services must become more adept at political lobbying and develop a higher profile within government. Part of this increased advocacy must come from closer liaison with, and support from, the private sector – in many jurisdictions there is
little or no synergy between Veterinary Services and the private sector.

The PVS GAP Analysis missions have identified critical problems facing Veterinary Services and developed robust strategic plans for their improvement. It remains to be seen whether increased and sustainable funding and support will be provided by national governments and/or international agencies and donors. If the suggested budget support is provided, at least in part, then, by following the strategic development plans, national Veterinary Services will be greatly strengthened internationally.

Opportunities to make considerable progress without significant funding should not be overlooked. Following only the more cost-neutral recommendations in the five-year plans, Veterinary Services could still expect to see a general improvement in core good governance activities, including strengthened and updated legislation, improved management and reporting systems, enhanced technical independence, increased use of joint industry programmes and greater transparency and citizens’ demand for high-quality and sustainable Veterinary Services.

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Évaluation initiale des plans stratégiques visant à améliorer les performances des Services vétérinaires dans les pays en développement : examen des rapports d’analyse des écarts PVS de l’OIE

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Résumé

L’Organisation mondiale de la santé animale (OIE) effectue, dans le cadre de son programme d’évaluation des performances des Services vétérinaires de ses Pays Membres, des missions d’analyse des écarts dans les pays qui le demandent. Il ressort de ces missions d’analyse des écarts que dans bien des cas, la conformité des Services vétérinaires nationaux par rapport aux normes internationales élaborées par l’OIE est très relative et que les compétences de ces Services sont mises à mal par une gouvernance médiocre. Cet insuccès menace la santé animale et la santé publique aux niveaux tant national qu’international.

Les rapports des missions d’analyse des écarts PVS de l’OIE constatent que tous les Services vétérinaires sont animés par une vision forte et une réelle volonté d’amélioration, mais qu’ils sont freinés par une chaîne de commandement inefficace, une législation inappropriée et obsolète, des financements insuffisants, des compétences techniques médiocres, une indépendance technique fragile, des systèmes de communication inefficaces et des programmes en partenariat peu ambitieux. Des insuffisances techniques portant
sur des aspects cruciaux ont été identifiées en matière de commerce, de santé animale, de santé publique vétérinaire et dans les laboratoires vétérinaires, ainsi que dans la gestion globale des Services vétérinaires. Les rapports d’analyse des écarts PVS de l’OIE préconisent une augmentation significative des budgets dans tous les pays ayant participé à l’évaluation.

Mots-clés

Evaluación inicial de planes estratégicos para mejorar la eficacia de los Servicios Veterinarios en países en desarrollo: estudio de los informes de análisis de brechas PVS de la OIE

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Resumen
Como parte de su programa de evaluación de la “Eficacia de los Servicios Veterinarios” (PVS), la Organización Mundial de Sanidad Animal (OIE) lleva a cabo misiones de “análisis de brechas” en los Países Miembros que lo solicitan. Esos estudios han puesto de relieve que los Servicios Veterinarios de muchos países solo cumplen parcialmente las normas internacionales fijadas por la OIE, y que sus deficientes procesos de gobierno ponen en entredicho su competencia. Ello supone una amenaza para la salud pública y animal, no solo de cada país, sino también a escala internacional. De las misiones de análisis de brechas PVS de la OIE estudiadas por los autores se desprende que todos los Servicios Veterinarios tienen el claro objetivo y la firme voluntad de mejorar, pero sus esfuerzos se ven lastrados por problemas en la cadena de mando, una legislación inadecuada y obsoleta, falta de fondos, insuficiente competencia técnica, interferencias en la independencia de los técnicos, dificultades de comunicaciones y escasez de programas conjuntos. Se observan deficiencias en todos los ámbitos técnicos fundamentales ligados al comercio, la sanidad animal, la salud pública veterinaria y los laboratorios veterinarios, así como en la gestión global de los Servicios Veterinarios. En todos los países estudiados, las misiones de análisis de brechas PVS de la OIE se saldaron con la recomendación de incrementar sustancialmente la dotación presupuestaria.

Palabras clave
References


