

# Second Global Conference of OIE Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres Paris (France), 21-23 June 2010

## OIE LABORATORY TWINNING PROGRAMME

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The OIE network of expertise includes OIE Reference Laboratories, which provide expertise for a named OIE listed disease, and OIE Collaborating Centres which provide expertise for a designated sphere of competence. The network provides global support for surveillance, diagnostic testing and control of important animal diseases, including zoonoses.

Today, the distribution of this network tends to favour developed countries and the northern hemisphere. Through the OIE Laboratory Twinning programme, OIE aims to extend the network to provide a more even geographical distribution, so that more countries will have access to high quality diagnostic testing and expertise essential for early disease detection and rapid control. Expertise is essential to ensure proper application of OIE standards and equal representation of developing countries in international scientific debate.

Each twinning project links an existing OIE Reference Laboratory or Collaborating Centre with a candidate Laboratory. Through this link, knowledge and skills are exchanged allowing the candidate laboratory to develop capacity and expertise for a disease or topic that is a priority in its region, and to better comply with OIE International Standards. Integral to all twinning projects are essential generic areas of expertise such as quality assurance, and laboratory biosafety and biosecurity. Eventually the candidate laboratory will be able to provide support to other countries and may eventually apply to become an OIE Reference Laboratory or Collaborating Centre in its own right; this is the ultimate goal of twinning.

The OIE World Animal health and Welfare Fund provides financial support to the link between the two institutes for the duration of the project; however funds are not available for purchase of laboratory equipment or for upgrading of laboratory infrastructure. There is scope within a twinning project to support surveys, conducted by experts, that can then be used to attract further support from other donors for infrastructure or equipment.

OIE Laboratory Twinning is therefore a tool to both strengthen sustainable links within the animal health laboratory network and to extend the network to provide better global coverage, particularly in developing and transition countries. The eventual aim is to create a network of diagnostic capacity and expertise that is well distributed globally and that provides support in areas where it is needed. This will have long term benefits for animal and human health, and for poverty alleviation.



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