

CAPACITY BUILDING: ISSUES AND OPPORTUNITIES

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The objective of building national capacity in any domain is to empower countries to meet their own needs autonomously. Management of wildlife health requires adequate capacity to prevent, detect, and respond to a wide range of wildlife health and disease issues. This requires international disease intelligence, wildlife disease surveillance, realizable response plans, supportive scientific research, personnel training, and operational communication networks. National capacity in wildlife health is far more than just technical ability. It also requires enabling and supportive legislation and policies, functional organization and appropriate governance, and must be affordable and sustained by the country in the long term. Wildlife health is important to wildlife conservation, veterinary services, public health and national economies. Thus, it seldom is the responsibility of a single government ministry and its management requires inter-ministerial collaboration and stable partnerships with non-government groups.

Low and middle income countries (LMIC) face many challenges when building capacity in wildlife health. Capacity development most often requires external financial support; such support often is contingent upon a country accepting agendas and priorities that may conflict with established national priorities, sovereignty, and security and control of information. Advanced training of individuals to achieve national capacity often is followed by emigration of those trained people. Success in developing national capacity to manage wildlife health issues most often requires parallel and simultaneous success in achieving all of the key objectives of the Millennium Development Goals of the United Nations.

In recent years, opportunities to build capacity in wildlife health have improved. Countries have strong social, economic and ecological reasons to manage wildlife health. National and international concern about emerging infectious diseases has made more internal and external resources available for building enduring capacity in LMIC. Studies of program successes and failures have begun to identify practices and approaches with higher and lower probabilities of success. Collective global experience in wildlife health management has matured sufficiently to provide some reasonable general guidance.

