Theory and practise of communications in O.I.E. laboratory twinning projects

Reference laboratories for avian influenza, NLQP (Egypt) and FLI (Germany), and rabies virus, Konya (Turkey) and FLI

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Steps of a Twinning project

• Finding a twin partner

• Writing a proposal

• Working

• Finalizing
All you need is...
talk!
Finding a lab twinning partner

• A twinning project must be based on specific mutual interest of the two partners

• The project should not be felt as an additional burden but as an opportunity

• Strictly define, clearly structure and mutually agree on what you want to do

• Expect deviations from the original planning

• Moderate your expectations!
Writing the project

• Finding common baselines of interest for the laboratories and the O.I.E.

• Do these baselines fit the present capacities and capabilities of the to-be-twinned institutions?

• Defining putative goals of the twinning

• Convincing O.I.E.

Winning the grant – and then…
Overcoming prejudices and clichés
„Promising“ fog in the northern forests...
Overcoming prejudices and clichés
Relax, if you have a „professional“ mediator!

Prof. Hafez,
Director, Poultry Clinics
Free University, Berlin
The mediator

- Is at home in both cultures
- Speaks the language of both partners + english
- Has at least peripheral knowledge of your field of interest/expertise
- Is trusted by the partners
- Should be present during all physical meetings of partners but at least during the kick-off meeting
Misunderstandings may lead to disaster

Cartoon education series from NLQP public awareness campaign on H5N1
Physical meetings

- Have the kick-off meeting at the non-reflab partner’s institute
- Arrange at least 1-2 meetings/year, include, if possible, other regional or satellite laboratories
- At least one meeting during the project should take place at the parent lab
- Meetings might also be organized as a satellite of larger international congresses
Kick-off meeting: Will this really work?

Prof. M.M. Aly,
Director, AHRI,
Giza, Egypt
Kick-off meeting: Eye opening talks and presentations...
Kick-off meeting: An official tour through the lab

Dr. M.K. Hassan,
AHRI, NLQP,
Giza, Egypt
Physical meetings

- Visits of Drs Aylan & Ün from Konya in Germany
- Initiation of bat rabies surveillance in Turkey 2010
Physical meetings

- Annual meeting with provincial veterinary laboratories, Ankara; March 2010
Barriers and obstacles

• Personal background
  Ethnic, social, religious, gender, education

• Language

• Specific local situations (lab security measures; isolated lab location, …)

• Politics
A warm welcome from our lab security guards:

Enjoy your training visit!
If training plays an important role

- Discuss possibilities to have a PhD student from the partner lab working in your lab for a prolonged time.

- The PhD student can serve as an „anchor“ for new trainees from the partner institute.
Beyond the project’s subjects
Plan your communication

• Agree on regular contacts (e.g., monthly), e-mail seems most suitable
• Identify „contact keepers“ (and their deputies) on both sides
• Always cc all contact keepers and the mediator
• Send out the right signals (counter check your mail with your colleagues)
• Sensitive issues, especially financial ones, should be discussed between project leaders of the partners only.
Pre-final assessment

• Kick-off meeting is of utmost importance to
  - establish personal contacts
  - become familiar with the local situations
  - jointly convert ideas into a clearly defined agenda

• Mediator/facilitator bridging cultural and linguistic gaps

• Mutual visits of staff
  - to be used as a central tool in realizing agenda

• Twinning as an offer to exchange ideas and experiences
  between two «siblings of one family» with mutual interests in
  improving quality and building capacity in animal disease diagnostics
  and management
A relaxed atmosphere
(and a „historic“ picture... !)