



Entering its 8th year OIE Laboratory Twinning is demonstrating its importance as a robust and effective platform for sustainable capacity building and networking.

With at least 60 projects – addressing more than 30 topics and diseases – on all continents (apart from Antarctica) OIE Twinning is the most popular and comprehensive laboratory capacity building programme of its kind.

Twinning continues to bear fruit – so far, 50% of Candidate Laboratories that have completed a Twinning project have applied to become an OIE Reference Centre, resulting in four new OIE Reference Laboratories and one new OIE Collaborating Centre.

The nature of Twinning means that it is a vehicle for delivering a whole range of

integrated skills. In addition to technical expertise in the disease or topic itself, each twinning project addresses quality assurance, biosafety and biosecurity, animal welfare, responsible science and ethics.

OIE Twinning is sustainable because it acts as a catalyst to improve expertise; it does not build a dependency on aid. Twinning is proving to be a low cost, high impact programme; this means that donor funds can go further and have a longer term impact.

Thanks to OIE Twinning, more veterinary experts around the world are talking to one another, more countries are engaged with the international scientific community, and the OIE is filling gaps in its global network of Reference Centres.

CONNECTING SCIENTISTS

The Twinning programme was established because OIE Reference Centres were found mainly in Europe and North America, yet the diseases that they addressed were found in other parts of the world. In the past, there was a tendency for specialist disease networks to be rather exclusive with a 'Western' focus. Today, things are changing and Twinning is taking disease networks to countries and regions never represented before.

Twining has allowed the OIE-FAO avian influenza network (OFFLU) to reach out to

an additional ten countries in five regions; the rabies network, previously focused in Europe and North America, is now engaging countries with a significant rabies burden (China, India and Turkey); the France–Thailand project for brucellosis has led to the first ever regional inter-laboratory proficiency test in Asia Pacific; and thanks to partnerships in India and China, the equine influenza network has better surveillance data to make an annual vaccine recommendation.



France–Thailand; the first ring trial for brucellosis in Asia Pacific

FIXING HOLES IN THE NET

There are still some important gaps in the geographical distribution and some diseases and topics remain under represented in the global network of OIE Reference Centres. Twinning is working to actively fill these gaps.

Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR)

Following the successful eradication of rinderpest, attention has now turned to the possibility of eradicating peste des petits ruminants (PPR). Such an initiative will need the support of established technical expertise in affected areas. Although there are currently no OIE Reference Laboratories for PPR in Africa, it is hoped that this situation will change, and that centres of expertise will be established to support the continent's control efforts. Twinning has started the process with two projects active between France and Morocco and the UK and Tanzania.

Rift Valley fever

Rift Valley fever gains attention every few years when there is an outbreak of disease. Severe human cases often act as sentinels and represent the tip of the iceberg when there is widespread infection in animal populations. It is widely accepted that the most effective and efficient way to tackle Rift Valley fever is to take action during the inter-epidemic period; unfortunately this often coincides with the time that there is least interest in the disease. The OIE is in the process of activating a Twinning project between one of its two Rift Valley fever Reference Laboratories (in South Africa) and a partner institute in Yemen. The Twinning project, which is due to start in January 2015, complements an OIE initiative to develop practical solutions for safe trade of animals between the horn of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula. Thanks to new vaccine technologies –

and updated OIE Standards to account for these vaccines – safer and cost-effective strategies are becoming available for safe trade between the two regions. Established expertise in the region will support and sustain a longer term regional strategy.

Bees

Concern over bee colony collapses has highlighted the importance of these pollinators for food and life across the whole planet. There are currently only three OIE Reference Centres for bee diseases; one in Germany, one in France, and one in Argentina. Under the leadership of Marie-Pierre Chauzat, the French institute is soon to start a Twinning project with Yemen. Yemeni honey, often referred to as ‘liquid gold’, is regarded as one of the finest honeys in the world for its taste and legendary

health benefits. Honey production is also considered to be one of the fastest ways to make money and to relieve unemployment in Yemen. The Twinning project should help to provide long-term protection to this valuable commodity and should also bring unique expertise from Yemen to the international bee disease world.

Aquatic animals

The aquatic animal disease community is starting to catch on to the idea of Twinning. The first Twinning project for an aquatic animal disease was completed in 2012 with the successful outcome that the Candidate Laboratory in Valparaiso (Chile) has been adopted as an OIE Reference Laboratory for infection with infectious salmon anaemia virus. An additional two aquatic animal disease Twinning projects have just started and a further two are in the pipeline.

THE BURDEN OF ACCREDITATION

Over the past decade it has become increasingly important for laboratories to demonstrate that they have an effective quality management system in place. Accreditation to ISO 17025 or an equivalent standard has become an expectation, particularly for applicant OIE Reference Laboratories. It also helps to reassure laboratory’s customers that they can rely on the results of laboratory tests.

Accreditation also brings a financial and administrative burden. The cost of accreditation and of maintaining that status can put a strain on laboratories already struggling with tight or declining budgets. This means that Candidate Laboratories need to consider the financial and administrative costs of accreditation before embarking on a Twinning project, particularly if the ultimate objective is to become a Reference Centre.

EDUCATION, EDUCATION, EDUCATION

It all starts with education, and to support the quality of Veterinary Services worldwide, the OIE is striving to help its Member Countries to improve the quality of Veterinary Education. The OIE’s vision is for all veterinary students around the world to be equipped with a minimum set of core competencies on the day that they graduate from veterinary school. To

contribute to this long-term objective, the OIE is using the model of partnership tried and tested by the Laboratory Twinning programme. So far four Veterinary Education Twinning projects are underway between Veterinary Schools in eight countries. The model is also being rolled out to Veterinary Statutory Bodies.

TWINNING CERTIFICATES

To acknowledge the successful completion of an OIE Twinning project, the OIE is now issuing a certificate. The certificates have been retroactively issued to those projects completed before the idea was conceived.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the European Union, and the Governments of Canada, France, Italy, United Kingdom, United States of America and New Zealand

CURRENT STATUS

Projects completed	21
Projects underway	33
Projects ready to start	14
TOTAL	68

http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Support_to_OIE_Members/docs/pdf/projects_completed_underway.pdf

UPCOMING EVENTS

20–22 January 2015
Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam



Third OIE Global Conference on Aquatic Animal Health 'Riding the wave to the future'
http://oie.int/eng/A_AAHRWF2015/introduction.htm

15 April 2015
Athens, USA



OFFLU network meeting;

30 June–2 July 2015
Paris, France



OIE Global Conference on Biological Threat Reduction
http://www.oie.int/fileadmin/Home/eng/Conferences_Events/docs/pdf/201014/Concept_note-programmeWeb.pdf



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