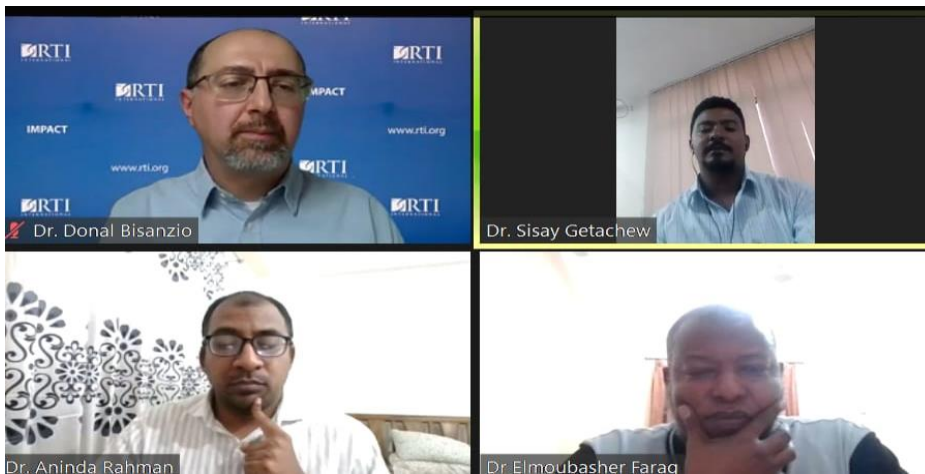




Policy Brief

July 2023

SUSTAINING MEANINGFUL MULTISECTORAL COLLABORATION FOR ONE HEALTH: CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The One Health approach recognizes the interconnectivity of human, animal, and environmental health and emphasizes the importance of a collaborative and multisectoral response. This paper examines the pressing need and potential benefits of implementing this approach in the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR), a region uniquely challenged by urbanization, political instability, environmental disruptions, and zoonotic diseases.

The EMR's specific challenges and complexities necessitate the One Health approach. However, the lack of political will, multisectoral collaboration, communication barriers, legal complexities, and institutional silos hinders its implementation.

The paper outlines a roadmap for successful multi-sectoral collaboration, including fostering political commitment, policy formulation, sustainable financing, coordinated program

Approach

This policy brief originates from EMPHNET's 32nd webinar in the WEBi Series, which was on July 25, 2023, and moderated by Senior Epidemiologist for Global Health Security, Dr. Donal Bisanzio. The session featured insights from Dr. Aninda Rahman, Deputy Program Manager of Antimicrobial Resistance, Viral hepatitis, Diarrheal Diseases Control for the Government of Bangladesh; Dr. Elmoubasher Farag, Head of Communicable Diseases Control Programs in Qatar; and Dr. Sisay Getachew, One Health Steering Committee Chairperson from Ethiopia. Together, they shed light on the multifaceted challenges and opportunities of implementing the One Health approach in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, insights that shape the recommendations outlined in this brief.

development, institutional collaboration, community engagement, and alignment with global challenges and long-term goals.

Key recommendations include fostering interdisciplinary collaboration, strengthening the political and policy framework, enhancing financing mechanisms, building capacity and education, improving data sharing and technology utilization, promoting research and development, encouraging community engagement, and aligning with global collaboration and standards.

In conclusion, this paper serves as both an analysis and guide for nations striving to implement the One Health approach in the EMR effectively. By recognizing the interconnections between

different facets of health and providing concrete recommendations, the document offers a multifaceted path towards achieving a more resilient and effective health infrastructure in the region. The executive summary encapsulates the urgency, complexity, and potential strategies for this endeavor, emphasizing the importance of integrated efforts across disciplines.

INTRODUCTION

The essence of the One Health approach lies in its inherent recognition of the interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health. It underscores the need for collaborative, multisectoral efforts, which are integral in addressing the complexities of today's global health threats. This paper seeks to delve into the critical necessity and the potential benefits of such multisectoral collaborations, particularly within the context of the Eastern Mediterranean Region (EMR).

This region's unique amalgamation of challenges – rapid urbanization, political instability, environmental disruptions, and a heavy burden of zoonotic diseases – underscores the pressing need for a comprehensive and effective One Health strategy. However, its implementation is hampered by the lack of resources, inadequate health systems, and complex political factors that mark the region. The emerging understanding is that isolated efforts, confined to single sectors, fall short in preventing or effectively addressing the multi-dimensional health threats at the human-animal-environment interface.

The central theme of this brief revolves around the operationalization of multisectoral collaboration, as encapsulated in the One Health approach. Moving forward, the brief will underscore the importance of a coordinated, multisectoral approach to one health. Its ultimate aim is not merely to advocate for the One Health approach, but to drive its practical implementation in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, thereby creating a more resilient health infrastructure that can effectively combat the unique health challenges of the region.

THE PROBLEM

The effective operationalization of the One Health approach in the Eastern Mediterranean region encounters various significant challenges.

At the governance and management level, a considerable challenge lies in the lack of political goodwill. While the importance of One Health is widely acknowledged, the political commitment needed for its successful implementation is often insufficient. And the absence of specific government policies tailored towards promoting One Health and the lack of adequate funding to support the

application of these policies further worsen the situation.

In terms of networks and partnerships, effective multi-sectoral collaboration, a cornerstone of One Health, is lacking. There are deficiencies in robust multi-sectoral working mechanisms, which results in disconnected efforts that do not holistically address the issues at hand. Power imbalances among sectors, leading to unequal decision-making and cooperation, further compound these difficulties.

Communication barriers pose another obstacle, as the unique terminologies, languages, and communication styles within each sector can inhibit mutual understanding and collaborative synergy. Coupled with the competition for limited resources and funding, these barriers can suppress the pooling of resources for shared projects, which is a critical element of One Health initiatives.

Legal and regulatory challenges, varying between sectors and jurisdictions, add complexity to these collaborations, making it difficult to navigate joint efforts that cross boundaries. Institutional silos, with organizations often working in isolation and having established procedures that may not facilitate cross-sectoral collaboration, further hinder cooperative efforts.

Finally, the substantial time and effort required from all stakeholders to build and maintain collaborations pose a significant challenge. The cumulative impact of these challenges underscores the pressing need to develop thoughtful, comprehensive, and adaptable strategies to navigate these obstacles and ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of One Health initiatives.

CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION

I. Framework and Implementation

Political Commitment: National leadership must catalyze a change in the narrative for an integrated approach, with continuous advocacy by international organizations like WHO, OIE/WOAH, FAO, and UNEP.

Policy Formulation: A paradigm shift in national policy to desectoralize human, animal, plant, and ecosystem health, advocating a more interconnected programmatic approach.

Sustainable Financing: Pooled national financial resources can accelerate the implementation of the One Health approach for better public health outcomes.

Program Development and Coordination: Joint planning, coordinated surveillance, and knowledge integration at every stage of policy development to strengthen governance.

Institutional Collaboration: Success depends on attaining collaboration, comprehensive surveillance, and fast-tracking multisectoral capacity building.

Community engagement: Awareness and active participation of individuals, civil society, and communities are crucial for success.

II. Long-term Goals and Advocacy

Global Challenges: Addressing emerging infectious diseases, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), food security, and environmental degradation.

Long-term Implementation: Promotion of research for risk management, intersectoral coordination, policy inputs, and development of cost-effective interventions.

Celebration and Awareness: Emphasizing 3rd November as One Health Day for community engagement and advocacy with decision-makers.

These conditions together create the essential elements required for successful multi-sectoral

collaboration, taking into account the real-world complexities of the One Health approach. By outlining the interconnections between different facets of health and providing a framework for action, this section serves as a comprehensive guide for nations striving to implement the One Health approach effectively.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- I. **Foster Interdisciplinary Collaboration:** Develop Intersectoral Committees by including health, veterinary, environmental professionals, and other stakeholders to oversee and coordinate efforts. Incentivize collaboration through financial and institutional support to encourage various sectors to work together.
- II. **Strengthen Political and Policy Framework:** Encourage governments to create a formal One Health policy, complete with guidelines, responsibilities, and timelines. Leverage international organizations like the WHO, OIE/WOAH, FAO, and UNEP to provide expertise, funding, and support.
- III. **Enhance Financing Mechanisms:** Secure budget allocations specifically for One Health initiatives and explore Public-Private Partnerships to pool resources and expertise. Both strategies will ensure sustained and diversified funding.
- IV. **Build Capacity and Education:** Comprehensive training, from academic curricula to continuous professional development, should be developed. Alongside, widespread public awareness campaigns can educate about the importance and benefits of the One Health approach.
- V. **Improve Data Sharing and Technology Utilization:** Implement systems for seamless data sharing across sectors and

explore the use of emerging technologies like artificial intelligence and big data to enhance monitoring and response capabilities.

- VI. **Promote Research and Development:** Encourage interdisciplinary research efforts and invest in creating practical and affordable solutions tailored to local needs. This research focus will lead to more effective interventions and policies.
- VII. **Encourage Community Engagement:** Initiate community-based programs that actively involve citizens in disease prevention and empower local leaders with the tools and training needed to champion the One Health approach within their areas.
- VIII. **Global Collaboration and Standards:** Align the One Health approach with broader global goals, such as the Sustainable Development Goals, and develop and adopt international standards and best practices to ensure consistency and quality across regions.

COUNTERFACTUAL ANALYSIS

If interdisciplinary collaboration fails to be fostered within the One Health approach, the consequences could be significant. Fragmentation across sectors may lead to disjointed and duplicated efforts, resulting in inefficiencies, miscommunication, and delayed responses to outbreaks. Inconsistent policies might further undermine these efforts.

The absence of political backing and clear policies could result in a lack of focus, priority, and sustainable funding. Without dedicated financing and public-private partnerships, the One Health initiatives may remain sporadically implemented and chronically underfunded. This could limit innovation, reach, and impact, stifling the overall effectiveness of the program.

Insufficient capacity building and education could leave professionals unprepared and allow misinformation to persist among the general population. This lack of skilled professionals and informed citizens may severely hinder both prevention and response to complex health challenges.

If interdisciplinary research is not promoted, there may be persistent knowledge gaps and a lack of context-specific interventions. This could stifle the development of innovative and effective solutions tailored to specific regional needs.

Without encouraging community engagement, there might be a significant disconnect between policy and practice. This gap could reduce the effectiveness of interventions and limit the adaptability to local needs and cultural contexts.

Lastly, if the One Health approach does not align with global goals and standards, it may become fragmented across regions. This lack of cohesion could lead to inconsistencies, inefficiencies, and challenges in cross-border cooperation.

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