



Contribution to the

ESCAP Seventh Committee on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific

29 November to 1 December 2022

India Water Foundation

Date submitted: 18/11/2022

Submitted by: Ms. Shweta Tyagi/Chief Functionary/ Project monitoring and Appraisals

Agenda item(s): **Agenda Item-3- Operationalizing the environment-health nexus in Asia and the Pacific**

Organization profile

India Water Foundation, established in 2008 as a non-profit civil society & think tank, is engaged in enhancing public awareness about Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and major components of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, in Asia-Pacific region in general and India in particular. It also emphasizes on familiarizing the people regarding the vital role water, energy and environment play in human lives, their impact on health, economic growth, livelihoods of the people and calamities that wreak havoc due to non-judicious harnessing of these natural resources. IWF works towards localizing and implementing SDG's, affirms towards environment conservation and fosters enhancing community resilience through 'Putting People First' approach so they lead a more secure, prosperous, and dignified life. We work collectively to provide vital support to communities through network of organizations, by sharing knowledge, expertise, best practices and fostering local, national, regional and international partnerships for development.

Website: <https://www.indiawaterfoundation.org/>

Main messages, recommendations or points for consideration

- Learn about existing One Health framework, and establish a formal cross sector and cross-thematic working groups and then provide resources to develop actions and work plans to share knowledge and ideas.
- It is also important to engage with existing communities of practice (e.g., health, regional cooperation and integration, trade facilitation working groups) to leverage existing arrangements and promote transformational investments.
- It is necessary to identify financing for One Health project technical assistance, and seek out opportunities for cross-cutting loans and projects with a One Health orientation.

- Continuously engage with country counterparts to mainstream One Health considerations into the planning and design of projects. For example, ensure that infrastructure projects avoid encroachment on natural ecosystems; rethink tourism focusing on environmental sustainability and local communities' needs; and put biodiversity and ecosystem health, human health, and animal health at the forefront of development agendas
- Develop a common SWOT analysis for countries to develop their own mechanisms that are based on their experiences, monitoring and evaluation of one health approaches;
- Identify appropriate mechanisms for engaging the experience of multiple stakeholders, including the creation of appropriate regional platforms for grass root analysis.

Background

The corona virus pandemic has dramatically illustrated the interconnection of humans, animals, and the ecosystem we share. Scientists have long warned that the extent of human pressure on ecosystems is unsustainable and is unlocking serious risks to the environment, human and animal health. It is also creating a triple planetary emergency- climate, biodiversity, and pollution. Although a novel disease, COVID-19 is just the latest in a long line of human diseases that have made the leap from an animal source: two thirds of all communicable diseases are zoonoses. The accelerating encroachment of human habitation not only increases the risk of diseases spreading from animal hosts to humans. It also puts an ever-greater strain on the natural environment through reduction of biodiversity, pollution, and habitat degradation on land, in freshwater systems, and at sea.

Development challenges of this magnitude that cut across human, animal, and ecological health can only be solved with a concerted effort that transcends sectoral and jurisdictional boundaries, and embodies regional cooperation and integration. This need for cross-sectoral cooperation has been widely recognized worldwide. Therefore, the One Health approach allows for a better understanding of the links between biodiversity, health and disease. It is an approach to human, animal, plant, and ecological health challenges that starts from a simple premise: these are all interconnected, and their solution demands communication, coordination, and collaboration across multiple sectors, disciplines, and levels of government.

Asia and the Pacific has evolved and changed, along with development issues it seeks to address. Guided by Strategy 2030, Governments are committed to working towards a prosperous, inclusive, resilient, and sustainable Asia and the Pacific. To make it operational we need to abide by three principles: a country focused approach, promotion of innovative technology, and delivering integrated solutions. The One Health is supportive of all three principles. For the green and sustainable recovery, One Health can provide the basis for integrating protection and restoration of ecosystems, preservation of human and animal health, and provision of long term economic health.

The big picture issues that One Health is particularly aligned with are highly relevant to Asia and the Pacific, including zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance, food security, ecology and environmental degradation, and climate change. Tackling these issues is also an important part of improving the air quality of development.

Many of the issues that One Health seeks to address are unpredictable and as such it is not possible to generate a simple business case for such investment. Moreover, in the face of the threats to sustainability and prosperity that the region faces, the question is not whether we can, but rather the question is: What is the best way to mitigate the risk of another pandemic?

Four areas where One Health can be transformational:

➤ ***Sustainable land and water use for food security***

Topical issue to address is how to work on the relationship between agriculture and conservation when there is such high population density, particularly in rural areas, and high demand for food and livelihoods. Water pollution, clean water, and overuse of antibiotics and other chemicals are all important considerations. In accordance with Strategy 2030's operational priorities One Health helps to explain the crucial role of investment in sustainable agriculture practices to long-term prosperity and security. This in turn also increases scope for engagement with the private sector, in areas such as livestock rearing and aquaculture bio-security, or rational use of animal medicinal products such as vaccines to reduce reliance on antibiotics

➤ ***Biodiversity conservation for Climate Change resilience and human health***

The World Economic Forum now ranks biodiversity loss as a top-five risk to the global economy and the 2021 Global Biodiversity Framework proposes an expansion of conservation areas to 30% of the earth's surface by 2030. One Health helps make the case for environmental protection as a longer-term investment. It provides a framework to understand the economic cost of ecosystem degradation, including the health costs to people affected.

➤ ***Health***

Pandemic prevention and preparedness and antimicrobial resistance are two obvious areas where a One Health approach can be deployed, but these are not the only areas where it matters. Both food security and food quality have a direct burden on health, and on world's efforts to combat both under nutrition and obesity.

➤ ***Inclusion of Ecosystem-based solutions and Green financing***

Ecosystem-based solutions—better managing ecosystems to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere by, for example, restoring and maintaining carbon-rich forests—are getting increasing attention throughout the development community. One way to promote Ecosystem-based solutions is to help create the conditions for the private sector and for agriculture producers to be involved. For this to change, the regulatory framework needs to be changed to move away from such subsidies, to paying people to look after nature and to make these investments more bankable and attractive.