

A one health approach to preventing future pandemics: joining forces to reduce the health risks in wildlife trade

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Introduction

- Consensus exists that the COVID-19 pandemic is of zoonotic origin.³
- Most human infectious diseases have a demonstrated origin in non-human animals and of all emerging human infectious diseases it is some 75%, the majority of which originated in wildlife.⁴
- While ecological disruption and unsustainable consumption are the main drivers of pandemic risk, an estimated investment of less than 2% over ten years of the current economic losses due to the pandemic would have not only reduced the risk of disease emergence with pandemic potential, but the ancillary benefits to climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation would have also contributed to planetary health.⁵

Methodology

- To address one of the major drivers of disease emergence the German Government launched the International Alliance against Health Risks in Wildlife Trade as an international, interdisciplinary and inclusive multi-stakeholder platform for knowledge exchange uniting various disciplines along the One Health spectrum.
- With participation of national, international political and civil society organizations, incl. indigenous communities, and research institutions, the Alliance pools and utilizes interdisciplinary information and know-how to work on the Alliance goals: Risk reduction by translating science into policy and contributing to effective interventions, specifically in areas of high biodiversity and stress on land use.
- It catalyzes **joint action** of stakeholders from various fields including, but not limited to **biological, biomedical and health sciences, ecology, human and veterinary medicine**, as well as development cooperation, psychology, and social sciences, in addition to diverse forms of knowledge.

Mission

- The International Alliance against Health Risks in Wildlife Trade is an open, inclusive and collaborative space where stakeholders join forces to better understand and reduce the threat of pathogen spillover from wildlife trade and markets, providing and communicating evidence, supporting interventions, thereby, reducing the risk of future outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics, while concurrently improving health, equity, and well-being for all species – through a One Health approach.

Activities

Members of the International Alliance against Health Risks in Wildlife Trade may - in accordance with organizational mandates and supported by the knowledge and networks gained through the Alliance - do a range of things in support of the above-mentioned goals, e.g.:

- **offer evidence and knowledge** of where contact between wildlife and people have proven or potential health risks whether in nature or in captivity, use or trade
- **minimize that wildlife contact which has proven or potential health risks to humans**, e.g. by supporting communities at risk, and fill in knowledge gaps on suspected and/or understudied risk factors;
- **support** approaches and techniques including **traceability and pathogen surveillance** and related emerging technologies along wildlife trade chains;
- **support** veterinary and public health facilities and capacities to be able to detect known and unknown pathogens in wildlife, and assess impact and associated risks, and the **integration of wildlife into veterinary systems**;
- **analyze capacity needs to develop policies and interventions** at the national and intergovernmental levels;
- **improve the regulatory frameworks** and capacities of key stakeholders along wildlife trade chains (e.g. health authorities, law enforcement authorities and agencies), including the integration of biodiversity and health considerations;
- **contribute to the design and the implementation of social and behavior change** initiatives with regard to the consumption of and contact with wildlife species with proven or potential human health risks;
- **promote a positive image** of wildlife and do not communicate health risks in a way which could harm the human-wildlife relationship

Projects

- As of April 2022, nine projects had started in a wide and transdisciplinary range of topics and regional outreach.
- The fields of activity include pathogen discovery projects on the African continent, behavioral work with Buddhist communities in Asia, and work on knowledge, attitude and practice in four Latin American countries.
- A second call for proposals is currently open to proposals and expected to start implementation in late 2022.
- The results will be made available to all Alliance members and translated into policy recommendations, where possible.



Some of our members as of March 2022

Results & Discussion

- The Alliance aims to reduce the risks of zoonotic spillovers, by enhancing international and national awareness, policies and action by narrowing the gap between science and implementation, while respecting cultural identity, Indigenous rights, traditional knowledge and practices, and contributing to the conservation of biological diversity.
- Excerpts of the exchange among the Alliance's membership (currently ~90 member organizations, from small NGOs to intergovernmental organizations and governments) are made publicly available via open access expert talks, events and publications.

Conclusion

- With its multi-solving approach, the Alliance offers a communication venue and matchmaking to integrate expertise and evidence to improve awareness and regulation, supporting pilots and disseminating lessons learned among the community and with policy makers.
- It will catalyze joint action of stakeholders from the fields of biological sciences, ecology, biomedicine, human and animal health as well as development cooperation and social sciences.

Acknowledgements

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References

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Interested in becoming a member?

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