

COMMUNIQUE

APCOVE WORKSHOP - NETWORKING & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

JW Marriott Hotel, Bangkok, 26 – 28 APRIL 2023

Workshop Communique prepared by Tania Areori, Khridiana Putri, Art Subharat, Hao Tang, Tu Tu Zaw Win, Lisa Adams, Meg Vost, Ronel Abila, Jenny-Ann Toribio

This Communique is a concise record of the workshop's purpose, key discussion themes and recommendations for field epidemiology training (FET) programs in South-East Asia and the Pacific.

It was written during the workshop from the outputs of workshop sessions, with review and advice from workshop participants, and endorsement by all workshop participants prior to workshop close. The workshop involved 72 participants representing government and non-government organisations, universities, and networks involved in FET in the Asia Pacific and Eastern Mediterranean regions.



PREAMBLE

The APCOVE Networking meeting was held to explore the diversity of field epidemiology training (FET) programs in South-East Asia and the Pacific, with a focus on addressing common interests and country-specific needs. The workshop aimed to develop future directions and opportunities, identify challenges and gaps, and suggest recommendations for enhancing and improving the existing training system. It discussed how to develop a sustainable network of empowered veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals (VPPs) in the region.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS

Sustainability in Field Epidemiology Training Programs

The matter of sustainability is critical. Sustainability means to improve the national embedding system rather than continuing to run a program. This requires commitments from local veterinary authorities and relevant organizations. FET for veterinarians and VPPs, along with the funding, should be embedded within the relevant government system and or universities.

The return on investment in FET should be demonstrated. This should articulate the important role of the animal health sector to overall One Health objectives and recognize we need proactive multi-sectoral engagement in communities. Tailor-made impact assessment frameworks should be developed to meet country requirements and built on the available resources. Empowerment of the country staff in planning and management is required. Accreditation of training by country's statutory bodies and recognition of this by employers is necessary, and pathways to achieve accreditation and recognition should be agreed and implemented.

Country Level

The development of a national roadmap for the professional development of veterinarians and veterinary para-professionals should be considered at a country level. The APCOVE eLearning and other resources are already available within many countries to support the development of roadmaps. We also acknowledge similar activities in animal health and public health done by other organizations such as WOA, FAO, WHO, TEPHINET, SAFETYNET, EMPHNET, and SEAHO. Furthermore, the involvement of the private sector in One Health should be addressed.

Joint approaches at a country level to training field epidemiologists, and involving the animal, public health, and environment sectors are required. These joint approaches need to be extended beyond a disease focus, and also consider other sectors (i.e. biodiversity, wildlife health, natural resource management, waste management, food security, poverty reduction).

Regional Level

Further to APCOVE, there is the opportunity to review and standardize content among a range of current training providers. This would require collaboration among groups like WOA, FAO, WHO, UNEP, SAFETYNET, EMPHNET, TEPHINET, AVAC, SPC, and regional and in-country FETPV programs. We need to strengthen the collaboration between international organisations to support field

Communique

APCOVE Workshop – Networking & Future Directions

veterinary epidemiology and veterinary paraprofessional training. We see the potential to develop a roadmap for field epidemiology training in the Asia Pacific region.

Challenges in Delivering eLearning

We recognize common challenges for delivering eLearning (i.e. internet access, language barriers, time availability, and technology access in some countries). The main opportunities we have identified in response to these challenges are to provide access to the resources offline as well as online, to translate the resources into the local languages, to consider assigning in-country project managers, and to promote senior government recognition of the eLearning resources and processes. We need to communicate the importance of FET to senior government officials so that their staff will be allowed to complete training during office hours. Application of learning in the workplace, linked and aligned to other local, regional and global continuing professional development programs, would also be beneficial.

In the planning phase, training program developers should ideally specify their scope and limitations to enable informed country-level decisions on their participation. Country animal health authorities need to understand the opportunities and challenges of APCOVE. The recognised challenges should be discussed and considered in the planning phase. Further, budget flexibility to address emergent needs within diverse country settings is necessary.

We note that the APCOVE project's main target for training has been government officials, because of government responsibilities for field epidemiology, and also university staff for their professional development. The role of non-government veterinarians and VPPs is under-recognised, and broadening the targeted audience for FET should be considered. The APCOVE stakeholder consultation reports (2020-2022) are a valuable resource for this work. Furthermore, we recognize that multiple regional and international organisations within the region lead different training activities. We need to revisit the country-specific training needs and the capacities needed within countries to deliver the training.

We recognise diverse learning cultures, for instance, passive and active learning methods. We suggest that country-based facilitators and mentors can act as a bridge between the eLearning resources and diverse learning styles.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The workshop generated three high-level priorities to drive action among workshop participants, their representatives, and other interested stakeholders. The actions will commence immediately and extend over three years.

1. **Advocate and influence** donors, funders, industry and governments, using evidence of impact, to achieve sustainable, accredited field epidemiology training programs.
2. **Develop and implement a roadmap** to coordinate existing networks and platforms for equitable field epidemiology training programs within countries and across the Asia-Pacific region, noting there is a global roadmap for FETP.
3. **Establish high-quality joint training** that prioritize agreed common areas and areas in which sectors (animal health, public health, environment, wildlife) need to learn from each other, and have clear accreditation pathways and promote lifelong learning.

Further, the workshop participants recommend to:

- a. Embed training programs within relevant in-country organizations.
- b. Broaden training to include non-government veterinarians and VPPs.
- c. Strengthen collaboration and standardizing of content among training providers.
- d. Address the identified challenges in delivering training.
- e. Develop accreditation pathways for training programs.
- f. Ensure training programs address country needs and limitations for participation.
- g. Resource country-based facilitators and mentors.
- h. Harmonise recommendations with the global and regional quadripartite One Health Joint Plan of Action, and noting these additional recommendations, consistent with this plan.
 - Formalize a regional dialogue between sectors to operationalise the One Health agenda and to institutionalise One Health training.
 - Recognise accessibility, equity and inclusivity as organising principles.
 - Recognise the traditional knowledge and interests of Indigenous communities, and centre their interests in prioritising decisions and actions for One Health.