The current issue of the SEACFMD Newsletter (July-Dec 2011) covers a wide range of issues and reflects the wide scope of the OIE Sub-Regional Representation for South-East Asia’s (SRR-SEA) activities. It also demonstrates that the OIE Bangkok Office is now operating in an integrated way given the range and scope of its activities using a range of planning and monitoring and evaluation tools to progress its work. Future editions of the Newsletter will expand on these matters.

It is important to remind ourselves that the OIE SRR-SEA primarily coordinates and gives guidance on a range of project activities. The key roles of policy direction, leadership, programme delivery and ultimate success reside with countries.

The SEACFMD Sub-Commission meets in Lijiang, Yunnan from 5-9 March, 2012, the first time the meeting has been hosted by China. Key issues that will be discussed include China’s future strategies and how it can support SEACFMD in border areas; what processes need to be developed so that countries can move one stage further on the global FMD Progressive Control Pathway; vaccination approaches in identified ‘hot-spots’; use of a sub-regional vaccine bank for FMD and rabies; and lessons that have been learned.

Importantly, we will be testing progress against the 2nd Edition of the SEACFMD 2020 Roadmap which has now been published. A full report on the Sub-Commission meeting will form part of the next Newsletter.

The SEACFMD Campaign is on its Phase 4 (2011-2015) and received additional funding from AusAID. The OIE SRR-SEA wishes to thank AusAID for its continued support to the programme under a new regional initiative called Stop Transboundary Animal Diseases and Zoonoses (STANDZ) in South East Asia.
The OIE Sub-Regional Representation Office in South-East Asia (SRR-SEA) and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) launched the regional Stop Trans-boundary Animal Diseases and Zoonoses (STANDZ) Initiative in Hanoi, Vietnam on 12 September 2011. The Initiative, with A$12.7 million funding from AusAID, aims to reduce the impact of emerging infectious diseases (EIDs), Transboundary Animal Diseases (TADs) and Zoonoses on food security, human health, and livelihoods in South East Asia over the next five years.

Dr. Ronel Abila, OIE SRR-SEA Representative, said STANDZ brings together under one umbrella programme all AusAID-funded OIE projects namely the South-East Asia and China FMD (SEACFMD) Programme, the Strengthening Initiative for Veterinary Services (STRIVES), formerly known as the Project on Strengthening Veterinary Services (PSVS), and One Health Project on Zoonoses. Under its three components, STANDZ will support priority countries to improve FMD and Rabies control, assist national veterinary services systems strengthening in line with the OIE Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Pathway, and stimulate stronger national commitment and support to veterinary services.

STANDZ represents the peak of AusAID support to OIE doubling previous support for the regional eradication of FMD in the past 15 years. Under STANDZ, OIE will work with Member Countries to develop evidence-based regional policy in order to stimulate regional and national level commitment to and alignment with OIE policies, standards and guidelines; strengthen general veterinary services systems; and improve FMD and Rabies disease management performance. A small grants facility has been established to help select Member Countries implement priority actions identified in their National FMD, Rabies, and broader Veterinary Services Plans. STANDZ will also focus on programme monitoring and evaluation, communications, policy engagement, partnerships, and gender mainstreaming.

The launch was attended by 36 participants from 11 countries and representatives from Australia’s Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and the ASEAN.

OIE SRR-SEA organised a workshop on programme M&E in Hanoi in September 2011 in order to promote better understanding of the M&E concepts and practices in the context of improving the implementation of Member Countries’ animal health programmes. Facilitated by M&E Expert Susan Dawson, the 2.5 day workshop with National Coordinators and other regional stakeholders stressed the need to improve the quality of M&E systems both in STANDZ and in their own Veterinary Services. The training sessions introduced participants to key concepts behind M&E and to some of the basic requirements for selecting appropriate indicators to measure programme performance. A half-day session on Organisational Evaluation Capacity Building introduced participants to the wider organisational requirements to enable credible information to be generated to meet decision-maker needs and to be used. The session deals with organisational leadership, culture and incentives for M&E.

At the end of the workshop, participants agreed that they would, to the extent possible, progress M&E approaches in their respective countries/areas of work taking into account the six lessons to be learned, one of which is to attract leadership support and resources in order to build M&E capacity in their department. The workshop also emphasised the need for managers to know the basic principles of M&E so they can plan more effectively, demonstrate their programme’s effectiveness, identify and correct problems quickly and learn and share learning with others in their field.

Quality M&E for better animal health programme delivery
The Vice-Minister expressed his appreciation of the assistance his government received through OIE and noted the importance of disease prevention in the context of ASEAN+3 and World Trade Organisation (WTO) accession. The Ministry, he said, is fully aware of the opportunity and potential for increasing income for the poor through the production of large animals for export. While different initiatives support animal disease control in Lao PDR, the Vice-Minister agreed that more assistance is needed to establish an FMD-free zone recognised by OIE. The Ministry also recognises the need for engaging the private sector in disease control programmes.

OIE Special Adviser Dr. Gardner Murray and SRR SEA Programme Coordinator Dr Dirk Van Aken met Dr Phouang Parisak Pravongvienkham, Vice-Minister for Livestock of Lao PDR Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, to discuss policy support for the SEACFMD campaign and FMD control programme in the country.

The SEACFMD National Coordinators met in Hanoi, Vietnam from September 12 to 16 in order to discuss progress towards the SEACFMD 2020 Roadmap. They also reaffirmed their support of the FMD vaccination strategy, discussed the mechanics of the vaccine bank with funding from the European Union and the setting up of animal movement protocol in line with the OIE Code. The meeting noted the importance of timely submission of FMD samples for diagnosis and FMD status through the ASEAN Regional Animal Health Information System (ARAHIS). OIE will work with Member countries to prepare a costed national plans for FMD control and eradication which will be presented at the Global FMD Conference in Bangkok in June 2012. The National Coordinators presented the current national FMD status and their countries’ respective achievements in the prevention and control of the disease. Partner organisations namely Australia’s Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Association of South East Asian Nations, Food & Agriculture Organisation, and the FMD Reference Laboratory in Pakchong, Thailand updated participants on activities related to FMD control and prevention. The participants recognised and thanked Dr Wilai Linchongsabongkoch for her invaluable contributions over the years as head of the FMD Reference laboratory in Pakchong, Thailand and in coordinating the SEACFMD Lab Network. Dr Wilai retired last September.

The OIE SRR-SEA has developed a programme of work from June 2011 to December 2012 in order to enhance transparency and ensure that national governments, funding agencies, sub-regional and international organisations, and other stakeholders are aware of how the Office functions and is structured. The SRR–SEA programme of work will help identify areas where there is a potential duplication and areas where synergies are possible by building on each project’s outcomes and training and to encourage further integration of implementation efforts.

With STANDZ, OIE SRR-SEA will link different project components into one initiative to provide financial flexibility and to reduce reporting; provide a framework for activities and the development of model approaches; and strengthen the OIE SRR including in communications, gender and social inclusion, and governance structures. Following the formal establishment of its Office in Bangkok in 2010, the OIE SRR-SEA has broadened its mandate to coordinate not only an expanded FMD Campaign, but also contribute to prevention and control of highly pathogenic emerging and re-emerging diseases and zoonoses including rabies, drive programmes to strengthen veterinary services, and importantly to deliver improvements to OIE representation in the Region.

A strong and functional OIE SRR-SEA will lead to improved outcomes in promoting animal health, coordinating animal disease control programmes particularly FMD and rabies, and strengthening capacity of Veterinary Services in South-East Asia.
A three-day Meeting on Laboratory Strengthening for Emerging Infectious Disease Diagnosis in the Asia Pacific Region, organised by the tripartite FAO/OIE/WHO group, was held in Kuala Lumpur on 19-21 November. The meeting marked the first time that such a large, cross-sectoral group has met to discuss laboratory issues in the region.

Following the recommendation from the 2010 meeting of FAO/OIE Sub-Regional Laboratory Network for HPAI Diagnosis in South East Asia, last year’s meeting expanded the content and scope to include the promotion of harmonisation and enhancement of laboratory capacity and international standards more generally to Transboundary Animal Diseases (TADs) and Emerging and Re-emerging Infectious Diseases (EIDs).

Dr. Ronello Abila, OIE Sub-Regional Representative for South East Asia, said the meeting is part of the global efforts to strengthen collaboration of the human, animal and environmental health sectors in implementing the One Health approach. At the global level, however, collaborations among the three organizations started long before the official recognition of One Health as a concept, with the signing of an MOU in May 2004, between the OIE and FAO, and in December 2004, between OIE and WHO.

This cooperation has been strengthened with the April 2010 Tripartite Concept Note of the FAO/OIE/WHO collaboration in sharing responsibilities and coordinating global activities to address health risks at the animal-human-ecosystems interfaces.

On laboratory in particular, the Concept Note recommended the development of a joint framework to address gaps and strengthen collaboration in human animal health laboratory activities. It also recommended that the framework should cover the upgrading of facilities, training and collaboration between regional and international reference laboratories for diagnosis and quality assurance. The framework should also promote cooperation between human and animal surveillance systems in analysing available evidence and evaluating responses and the timely sharing of comparable epidemiological and pathogen data across the relevant sectors.

The meeting recognised that many countries within the region do not have a strategic plan specific for the national animal health laboratory or the national system of laboratories, nor do they have any official strategic planning initiative or currently have a plan to develop one. Barriers to the development of strategic plans for animal health laboratories include limited capacity/lack of experience and knowledge about strategic planning and the process of strategic plan development. Approximately 50 participants attended the Animal Health component of the meeting including laboratory directors and technical representatives from national animal health and leading laboratories from ASEAN countries and China; Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL), Japan National Institute of Animal Health (NIAH), FAO, OIE and USAID; a similar contingent from the Public Health sector attended the Public Health and joint components of the meeting.
GF-TADs meeting in Tokyo calls for stronger veterinary services

The 5th regional steering committee meeting of the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) was held in Tokyo in July 2011. Participants called for increased funding from donors to strengthen Veterinary Services in developing countries. “The Veterinary Services must be supported by effective and advanced legislation to address increasing incidence of high impact transboundary emerging and re-emerging diseases while meeting OIE criteria for quality and performance of their essential functions,” the meeting recommended.

Indonesia raises preparedness to keep FMD freedom

Indonesia’s Department of Animal Health conducted FMD outbreak simulation exercise in Medan from September 29 to October 1. The annual exercise marked the fourth time Indonesia tested its preparedness for possible incursion of FMD in order to sustain awareness and maintain the country’s FMD-free status.

OIE SRR-SEA Representative Dr. Ronello Abila and Project Officer Dr. Mary Joy Gordoncillo observed the exercise. Dr. Abila praised Indonesia’s efforts and noted the importance of being vigilant given the fact that even developed countries such as Japan and Korea that used to be free from FMD experienced incursions in 2010 and 2011, respectively.

Dr. Abila presented the status of FMD in South-East Asia and other parts of Asia that recently had outbreaks of FMD. Participants simulated possible outbreak scenarios and courses of actions and responses at the national, provincial and district levels in the event of an FMD incursion. A participant noted the difficulty of keeping the government interested in and support FMD prevention and control given the absence of the disease.

The OIE SRR-SEA congratulates the Philippines for receiving FMD-free status without vaccination from OIE for the country’s remaining regions and provinces designated as Zone 2, making the whole country FMD-free without vaccination. Mindanao and Visayas, along with the island provinces of Palawan and Masbate were declared by the OIE as FMD-free without vaccination in 2001 and 2002 while Luzon’s zones 1 and 3 were declared free in 2010. The OIE certification enables the Philippines to export livestock meat products, particularly to nearby ASEAN and Asia-Pacific regions.

Rapid intensification of livestock production and new farming systems in response to rising demand for meat, milk and eggs, requires improved capacity of the Veterinary Services to prevent, diagnose and control outbreaks. The current incursions of TADs in South-East Asia continue to have high social and economic impacts in member countries, analysis of which should be made and used as justification for significant additional investment.

For instance, the Global Conference on FMD, which will be held in Bangkok in June 2012 in collaboration with the Government of Thailand, provides an opportunity to mobilise additional resources to enhance global and regional control of FMD. Participants at the GF-TAD meeting also requested information on Influenza A viruses to better understand the interaction and transmission dynamic between wild bird species and domestic poultry, as well as the diversity of the viruses and their potential risks to animals and humans.

Countries, international organisations and donors/partners were requested to make strong political commitment to combat rabies at national, regional and global levels. Rabies remains a major public health and animal health issue in many countries in the region.

The meeting recognised the active participation of WHO which shows increasing adoption of the One Health approach in addressing zoonotic diseases and other high-impact EIDs and in promoting animal and human health partnership.

A regional initiative between OIE and FAO, GF-TADs is a coordinating mechanism for the control and prevention of TADs and EIDs as well as zoonotic diseases in Asia-Pacific.

The OIE certification enables the Philippines to export livestock meat products, particularly to nearby ASEAN and Asia-Pacific regions.
The OIE has recruited four new staff for its Sub-Regional Representation for South-East Asia (SRR-SEA) to support the implementation of the USAID-funded IDENTIFY Project and the AusAID-funded Stop Transboundary Animal Diseases and Zoonoses (STANDZ) initiative, an umbrella programme comprising the SEACFMD Campaign, STRIVES and the ‘One Health’ project focusing on rabies. Their arrival has bolstered the capacity of the OIE Office in Bangkok to deliver core OIE programmes in line with the OIE 5th Strategic Plan for 2011 to 2015.

Dirk Van Aken, SRR-SEA Programme Coordinator

As the SRR-SEA Programme Coordinator, Dr. Dirk Van Aken is in charge of the overall programming, planning, implementation and monitoring of the STANDZ Initiative. As well as managing the Small Grants Facility, Dirk also provides technical assistance to member countries in the management of control programme for TADs.

Dirk is a graduate of the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Ghent (1981). He holds a Diploma in Tropical Veterinary Medicine (1982) and a Master of Science degree (1992) of the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp. In 2004, Dirk was accepted as Diplomate of the European Veterinary Parasitology College. Dirk has been working in Asia since 1982, on long term assignments in India, Sri Lanka, the Philippines, Lao PDR and Cambodia. His experience includes the training of veterinary students, research in epidemiology of diseases in cattle, small ruminants and pigs, as well as the management of major donor funded projects. His most recent work from 2005 to 2010 was as Team Leader and Senior Livestock Adviser of the European Union Livestock Programme in Cambodia on Smallholder Livestock Production. Since 1998, while working in the European Union-funded livestock projects in Lao PDR and Cambodia, Dirk has been cooperating with the SEACFMD programme.

Andrew Davis, IDENTIFY Programme Coordinator

Dr. Andrew Davis is the OIE Programme Coordinator for the IDENTIFY project within the USAID-funded Emerging Pandemic Threat programme. This project focuses on developing the capacity of laboratories and their networks in the human-health and animal-health sectors to contribute to the management of emerging infectious diseases.

Prior to joining the OIE, Andrew worked at CSIRO - Australian Animal Health Laboratory (AAHL) and was coordinator for the Australian laboratory network on Emergency Animal Diseases. Andrew has worked as a Veterinary Pathologist in National, Sub-national, University and Commercial diagnostic veterinary pathology laboratories within Australia and also internationally. Andrew graduated from the University of Queensland, Australia in 2002, and has post-graduate qualifications in diagnostic veterinary pathology.

Maria Cecilia Dy, SRR-SEA M&E Coordinator/Communications Officer

Maria Cecilia Dy is the SRR SEA Monitoring & Evaluation Coordinator and Communications Officer. Cecilia is responsible for managing the implementation of M&E Framework of the various projects under the STANDZ initiative.

Cecilia also oversees the implementation of the SRR communication plan and coordinates the development and implementation of Member Countries’ communication strategies for animal health in South-East Asia.

Cecilia brings to OIE her expertise in both animal and human health communication, project coordination, evaluation and journalism. During the last five years, Cecilia has been involved in the development and implementation of communications and advocacy strategies on avian influenza for CARE International, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations and UNICEF in Cambodia. She also supervised external evaluations of different activities and programmes on community-based avian influenza risk reduction programme of CARE in Cambodia. Cecilia received her Master’s degree in Mass Communications from the University of Leicester, United Kingdom.

Mary Joy Gordoncillo, STANDZ Project Officer

As Project Officer for the STANDZ initiative, Dr. Mary Joy N. Gordoncillo is providing project management and communication support to various projects in member countries in the region.

Joy is also supporting the various operations of the SRR-SEA, and is promoting the visibility of the OIE as an independent, scientific and highly professional centre of excellence throughout South-East Asia. Joy has a DVM degree from the University of the Philippines, a Masters in Tropical Veterinary Science from James Cook University in Australia, and just recently completed her PhD from Michigan State University in USA. Other than her advanced skills in veterinary microbiology and molecular biology, she is also particularly skilled and has deep interest in digital media arts, illustration and design, as well as health communication.

Word of thanks to outgoing staff

OIE SRR-SEA wishes to thank Dr John Stratton, former PSVS Programme Coordinator, Dr. Sharie Michelle Aviso, former SEACFMD Project Officer, and Dr. Janunee Siengsanan-Lamont, former PSVS Technical Officer, for their valuable contributions to the work of the Office. OIE SRR-SEA wishes well them in their future endeavours.
**FAO, OIE, WHO strengthen their collaboration on HPED**

The 2nd Steering Committee Meeting of the European Union (EU) - funded Programme on Highly Pathogenic Emerging and Re-emerging Diseases (HPED) took place on 20 July 2011 in Tokyo.

**SRR-SEA supports RP’s consultative workshop on zoonoses**

OIE SRR SEA, together with FAO and WHO, supported the Philippine Inter-Agency Committee on Zoonoses (PhilCZ) in the organisation of its National Zoonoses Consultative Workshop in Manila last November. The workshop was designed to develop a coordinating mechanism among the Department of Health, Department of Agriculture and Department of Environment and Natural Resources to operationalise PhilCZ.

**Reference centres hold reg’l forum on EIDs, zoonoses**

OIE, jointly with FAO and WHO, organised the Regional Forum of Collaborating/Reference Centres on Emerging Infectious Diseases (EIDs) and Zoonoses from 5 to 6 December in Hokkaido University, Research Centre for Zoonosis Control, Sapporo, Japan. The aim was to share their work, explore collaboration and discuss a potential joint research agenda for zoonotic diseases and EIDs.

The Forum served as a showcase for fostering cross-sectoral collaboration between animal and public health and provided useful lessons for scaling up the initiative to the global level. It also provided the first unique opportunity to bring together FAO RC, OIE RC and WHO Collaborating Centres and created a platform to share ideas and aspirations.

Dr. Andrew Davis, SRR SEA Programme Coordinator, attended the forum together with more than 50 other participants from 18 FAO/OIE/WHO CC/RCs, observers from Hokkaido University and the Secretariat. Representatives from four OIE RCs in Japan and two candidate laboratories under the OIE Laboratory Twinning (namely National Institute for Animal Health: Thailand Brucellosis and Veterinary Research Institute: Malaysia – HPAI) also participated.

Given the importance of collaboration between the human health and animal health sectors, zoonoses prevention and control have been identified as key focus areas for capacity-building under the Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases.
Farmers, traders need more info about FMD

The OIE SRR-SEA fielded missions to Lao PDR and Cambodia in December to assist both countries’ animal health departments with their public awareness activities on FMD. Maria Cecilia Dy, Communications Officer, and Dr Mary Joy Gordoncillo, Project Officer, met with animal health officials at the national, provincial and district levels, as well as farmers and traders in two districts of Lao’s Xieng Khouang province and four districts of Cambodia’s Takeo and Kampong Cham provinces. Focus group discussions (FGDs) were conducted with 15 farmers in Lao PDR owning between four to 30 heads of cattle and buffaloes and 30 farmers in Cambodia owning between three to 15 heads of cattle. FGDs were also held with nine Cambodian male traders and two Laotian female traders. Women represented 73 per cent of farmer respondents in Lao PDR and 20 per cent in Cambodia. Results indicate that both farmers and traders need more information on FMD prevention and control. Most farmers did not know about FMD vaccination until the recent FAO-supported free vaccination campaign. Laotian women have more responsibilities in raising cattle and buffaloes than their husbands but had not received the information they needed to prevent their animals from getting FMD. In Cambodia, women shared equal responsibilities with their husbands but were also not reached by the same information. Farmers in both countries use traditional medicine to treat lesions caused by FMD. In Cambodia, for example, farmers boil bark of a tree and use it to clean wounds. In both countries, women rely on their husbands to treat their sick animals. On the other hand, traders seem to be more knowledgeable about FMD than farmers but they too have no way of telling if the animals they buy are free of FMD as “symptoms show up days later”. What is certain, however, is that FMD has caused big losses to farmers and traders alike. Traders suffered reduced profit from weight loss in their animals and cost of treatment while farmers spent more time and money for treatment and feed, lost draught and hauling power in the farm and lost opportunities to earn rental fees from other farmers. Those with young cattle usually suffered losses through deaths while those with pregnant cows, abortion was common.

Upcoming Events

- 11th Meeting of the Tri-state Commission of the Myanmar Thailand-Malaysia Peninsular for FMD Freedom
  30 January—1 February 2012 (Penang, Malaysia)
- 10th Meeting of the Upper Mekong Working Group on FMD Zoning and Animal Movement Management
  7-9 February 2012 (Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar)
- 18th Meeting of the OIE Sub-Commission for SEACFMD
  5-9 March 2012 (Yunnan, China)
- 2nd FAO/OIE Global Conference on FMD
  27-29 June 2012 (Bangkok, Thailand)

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