

RESPOND

SUCCESS STORY

Catalyzing Collaboration in Vietnam's Wildlife Health Management



Participants in a working group at the workshop.

RESPOND is one of four partner projects of USAID's Emerging Pandemic Threats Program. RESPOND seeks to build local capacity of state and non-state actors to manage outbreaks of animal-borne diseases such as H1N1 flu and Ebola virus in hot-spot regions around the world.

Vietnam's impressive biodiversity and rich array of wildlife species is accompanied by a diverse set of institutions and actors that regularly interact with its wildlife populations but rarely communicate with each other. The communication gap has become a concern for the Vietnamese Government, which recognizes that poor coordination could permit the development of disease outbreaks in wildlife that could cross over to threaten humans. In October 2010 the government requested assistance to improve coordination in the wild animal sector from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

To address this gap, two USAID Emerging Pandemic Threats Program (EPT) partner projects – RESPOND and PREDICT – combined resources to organize a workshop that established a baseline of information on wildlife health and disease in Vietnam. The two-day workshop in Hanoi began March 15, 2011, and 101 staff from 47 government agencies and other local and international organizations in Vietnam participated.

At the meeting, groups as diverse as government ministries, circuses and wildlife rescue centers collaborated to identify gaps in Vietnam's ability to identify, investigate, diagnose and respond to wildlife disease outbreaks and define obstacles to improved communication between actors. Participants also formulated positive steps that government and non-government institutions can take to resolve existing gaps in wildlife health management. Recommendations included curricular changes for veterinary training, clear and consistent regulations, and the translation of critical reference materials. The analysis will help to inform Vietnam's National One Health Policy, as well as future assistance by RESPOND, PREDICT and other EPT partner projects.

The impact of the workshop was immediate: attendees agreed to form a new network of animal health and wildlife professionals as a platform to communicate on wildlife health and to facilitate dialogue between participants in the sector. The Vietnamese government has requested a second workshop, and the new network will help to ensure that Vietnam's preparedness for zoonotic diseases continues to grow stronger in the long term.