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## TECHNICAL BRIEF

# The One Health approach and Key Recommendations of the Quadripartite

June 2023

The Quadripartite (FAO, UNEP, WHO and WOAH) with the secretariat chaired by WHO this year, has developed and launched a Joint Plan of Action and convened a Group of Friends<sup>1</sup> for One Health as part of its efforts to more effectively safeguard the health of humans, animals, plants, and the environment, addressing the full spectrum of risk mitigation and management – from prevention to detection, preparedness and response – and improving human, animal and ecosystem health while contributing to sustainable development.

## Key messages

- The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the need for a unified approach to address health threats arising from the imbalance between human activities and increased stress on our ecosystems. The One Health approach can help to sustainably balance and optimize the health of humans, animals, plants, and the environment.
- Despite the experience of multiple health challenges, disease outbreaks and epidemics, investment in the One Health approach is limited, fragmented and unsustainable.
- To prevent, prepare for and respond to emerging health challenges, all relevant sectors must collaborate in an integrated manner that breaks down the silos between sectors and disciplines. Greater collaborative dialogue and joint actions are required between human, animal, plant and environment health organisations, as well as the financial sector, in order to secure the long-term investment needed.
- Strong political commitment is critical to enable awareness raising and advocacy for One Health, and to develop mechanisms to support a One Health governance and coordination framework. A whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach is essential to achieve this.
- Comprehensive and regular assessment, monitoring and evaluation help to identify gaps and opportunities for progress. Collaborative learning and integration of data and knowledge systems from relevant sectors and disciplines should underpin One Health action.
- The Quadripartite One Health Joint Plan of Action can be used as a blueprint for action, adapted to national contexts and plans, and applied to all relevant sectors and levels.

1. The group of friends is an informal group composed by permanent missions in Geneva in which countries have keen interests in advancing and scaling up the One Health (OH) approach to reduce and prevent the risk of pandemics at the animal-human-environment interfaces and to contribute to sustainable development.

## Background and challenges

The health of humans, animals and ecosystems are closely interlinked. Human activities and stressed ecosystems have created new conditions for diseases to emerge and spread: over 30 new human pathogens have been detected in the last three decades, 75% of which have originated in animals. These stressors include animal trade, agriculture, livestock farming, urbanization, extractive industries, climate change, habitat fragmentation, and encroachment into wild areas.

The COVID-19 pandemic has clearly demonstrated the importance of a unified approach to address health threats. It underscored the importance of resilient and sustainable health systems and the need to implement systems and structures that are capable of preventing and mitigating threats in relation to the human–animal–plant–environment interface and support sustainable development.

One Health is a powerful integrative approach that aims to balance and optimize the health of people, animals, and ecosystems. It emphasizes the need for effective collaboration across sectors and disciplines, along with the importance of communication, coordination, and capacity building. This holistic approach helps to address the underlying drivers of zoonotic disease emergence and other related health threats, thereby improving disease prevention and preparedness, mitigating the impacts of health risks and threats, and implementing science-based and sustainable solutions to promote long-term health for all.

Despite lessons learned from health challenges, disease outbreaks, and epidemics, investment in the One Health approach for prevention systems, effective surveillance and response systems remains fragmented and unsustainable. The traditional separation of sectors and disciplines poses a significant challenge to the development and implementation of an integrated approach.

The Quadripartite (2023) estimates that a five-year investment of 3.7 billion US dollars is required to build and operate systems for effective disease prevention and control in low- and middle-income countries. However, insufficient attention has been paid to financing preventative measures and the reduction of risks. Crucially, One Health provides the mechanism by which funding mechanisms can be explored and established.

In the future, we will be confronted with zoonotic infections that may develop into epidemics, pandemics, and new strains of antimicrobial resistant pathogens, as well as other health threats that we face from pollution, loss of biodiversity, and climate change.

These will put human lives at risk and endanger animal health, threaten ecosystems and food security and damage the global economy. A transformative approach is required in relationships with the environment and how the emergence, re-emergence, spill-over and spread of disease are addressed.

## Key actions and policy recommendations

The One Health approach needs to be applied at all levels, involving all relevant sectors and actors. This includes fostering a common understanding of the One Health approach and promoting One Health governance, enabling countries to operationalise the approach at scale. The Quadripartite has developed a One Health Joint Plan of Action (2022-2026) (OH JPA), on which the following recommendations are based:

### 1. Raise awareness and advocacy for One Health

with key stakeholders, who should be mapped for each One Health priority since focal points are not the same in most countries. The success of One Health depends on strong political commitment, including to break existing silos between sectors and disciplines. A common understanding of the One Health approach should be based on the definition published by the One Health High-Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) and endorsed by the Quadripartite.<sup>2</sup> Policy makers and decision makers should engage with communities to raise awareness of the benefits of the approach, which involves greater emphasis on prevention and preparedness, without neglecting response. The One Health approach should also be integrated into the new pandemic agreement being discussed by member states under the WHO consultation.

**2. Identify gaps and opportunities** by engaging in comprehensive and regular assessment, monitoring and evaluation. At all levels, governments should support the development and implementation of One Health action plans, using existing tools, surveillance mechanisms and instruments for this purpose. Sectors should work together, backed by regulatory frameworks, to make collective decisions on acting on the assessment findings.

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2. <https://www.who.int/groups/one-health-high-level-expert-panel>



- 3. Develop mechanisms to support an overarching One Health governance and coordination framework.** The approach should leverage existing solutions and develop mechanisms to support an overarching One Health governance structure. Quadripartite structures and coordination frameworks should be integrated with a whole-of-society and whole-of-government approach – including all levels of government, the private sector, civil society, academia and the media. This will help to ensure that decision-makers and practitioners across health and related sectors can share information effectively and work together to prevent, detect and respond to health threats.
- 4. Develop evidence-based business cases for funding or investment in One Health,** building on initiatives from community to global levels. This needs to be practical and based on country priorities or needs, and should aim to support national and sub-national authorities and relevant agencies for investment packages that integrate One Health. Goals should move beyond economic gain to focus on human health and development, animal health and wellbeing, and ecosystem health. Cost–benefit analyses can provide insights into the benefits of such action, which are necessary and fiscally prudent given that the cost of inaction is far greater than the price of inaction.
- 5. Utilize the Quadripartite One Health Joint Plan of Action as a blueprint for action** for countries and stakeholders as appropriate, allowing them to strengthen collaboration and mainstream the One Health approach at global, regional, national and sub-national levels. This includes developing national One Health plans and/or integrating One Health into relevant plans, considering the principles prioritized by the OH JPA and its implementation plan. Adapted to national contexts, these plans should include appropriate, actionable and measurable targets; reduce the risks from emerging and re-emerging zoonotic epidemics and pandemics; control and eliminate endemic zoonotic, neglected tropical and vector-borne diseases; strengthen assessment, management and communication of food safety risks; curb the silent pandemic of antimicrobial resistance; and integrate environmental concerns into all One Health priorities.
- 6. Implement the One Health approach in all relevant policies to better prevent, detect and respond to health threats** arising from the linkages between humans, animals, plants and ecosystems. Responses to health threats should be evidence-based and sustainable, taking the wider implications for ecosystems into consideration.

Sustainable and effective communication, coordination and collaboration between those sectors is therefore a critical aspect of all efforts geared towards disease prevention, preparedness and response.

- 7. Facilitate One Health research, knowledge sharing, capacity building and voluntary knowledge transfers** by creating an enabling environment in which learning can thrive. This involves creating synergies and promoting frameworks and processes including collaborative learning that facilitates and promotes One Health action; integrating data and knowledge systems; investing in research and expert researchers to increase our collective understanding and knowledge around One Health; and building on the expertise of relevant organisations, communities, and R&D partnerships. Moving forward, this international network of One Health experts can then be mobilized and deployed to enable capacity building at all levels. Opportunities that emerge from these interactions can be leveraged for individual, community and institutional learning and exchange at national and international level.

## References and resources

World Bank (2021), *Safeguarding Animal, Human and Ecosystem Health: One Health at the World Bank*, Brief, June 3, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/agriculture/brief/safeguarding-animal-human-and-ecosystem-health-one-health-at-the-world-bank>

FAO/UNEP/WHO/WOAH (2022), “One Health Joint Plan of Action (2022–2026): Working together for the health of humans, animals, plants and the environment”, <https://www.who.int/publications/item/9789240059139>

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