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A Decade of ‘onehealth’ and ‘ecohealth’ in South East Asia – An Inventory and Perspectives

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Abstract

South East Asia (SEA) is a hot spot for diseases emergence as demonstrated for HPAI and SARS. To address challenges on disease emergence in livestock and human such as urbanisation, agriculture intensification, land use changes and others new integrated approaches have been increasingly introduced to the region to facilitated collaboration across disciplines, groups and stakeholders. Those approaches include the ‘ecohealth’ (EH) and ‘onehealth’ (OH) concept, both focusing on integrated research but having a different history and characteristics. The EH approach was pioneered over the last decades by the International Development Research Centre, Canada (IDRC). The OH concept builds up on Schwabe’s One Medicine and is currently institutionalised by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and FAO. To promote EH in the region, ILRI implemented an EH capacity building project (EcoZD) funded by IDRC between 2008 and 2013. The project targeted six Southeast Asian countries. In each country an across-disciplines research team was formed and implemented an EH case study aligned with capacity building on transdisciplinary research. In a subsequent step, ‘onehealth-ecohealth’ resource centres were established in three universities/institutions in Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia. For this paper we also screened selected other OH/EH initiatives implemented since 2004 in SEA for their focus and impact. Most initiatives emphasised on capacity building others mainly on research or both. Challenges are various and complex, such as ‘loose’ or overlapping definitions of OH/EH, cultural barriers, silo thinking, lack of qualitative research skills. While the use of integrated research has been successfully demonstrated in case studies (e.g. for Brucellosis in Yunnan) donor dependency, limited impact assessments of the added value of used integrated approaches and coordination gaps among the various initiatives remain a challenges and need more attention in the future.

Keywords: ‘Onehealth’, inventory, perspectives, South East Asia, ‘ecohealth’