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ENHANCING THE CAPACITIES OF NATIONAL VETERINARY SERVICES THROUGH THE FAO SURVEILLANCE EVALUATION TOOL

In recent years, outbreaks of animal diseases such as Foot-and-mouth disease (FMD), African swine fever (ASF) and *Peste des petits ruminants* (PPR) have had a devastating impact on communities' livelihoods and food security. In addition, many animal diseases can spread to humans (known as zoonoses), sometimes with lethal outcomes, as seen with rabies, Avian influenza and Rift Valley fever.

To reduce the risk posed by these pathogens, it is necessary to establish a strong animal disease surveillance system that is capable of timely exchange of information with other sectors, such as public health and the environment. However, in many countries, the animal health systems are underdeveloped and underfunded, a factor that places these nations at a disadvantage when they are required to prepare for animal diseases, including zoonoses.

Strengthening the capacities of national veterinary services is therefore crucial to fill this gap and ensure that:

1. The impact of economically important livestock diseases such as FMD, ASF, PPR and Avian influenza is reduced;
2. Countries are able to maintain disease-free status through efficient surveillance activities;
3. Zoonoses are detected in animals prior to their spillover to humans.

FAO'S ROLE IN MEETING THE CHALLENGE

A methodology to assess the quality of national disease surveillance systems and to determine critical gaps was identified. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), under a project agreement, has been a key partner in developing SET, based on the Surveillance System Analysis Tool (OASIS) of the French National Agency for Food Safety, Environment and Labour (ANSES).

The goals of SET are twofold:

- Provide countries with a comprehensive and reproducible evaluation methodology to assess national animal disease surveillance systems;
 - Produce a locally relevant action plan for improvement using specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound (SMART) recommendations.
- SET is currently used by countries for the targeted planning of activities to enhance the capacity of national veterinary

KEY FACTS

FAO SURVEILLANCE EVALUATION TOOL

RECENT OUTBREAKS OF ANIMAL DISEASES HAVE HAD A DEVASTATING IMPACT ON LIVELIHOODS

THE FAO SURVEILLANCE EVALUATION TOOL (SET) PROVIDES SUPPORT FOR PLANNING AND MONITORING THE PROGRESS OF ANIMAL DISEASE SURVEILLANCE CAPACITY IN COUNTRIES

SURVEILLANCE OF ANIMAL DISEASES PROTECTS COMMUNITIES FROM ZONOTIC DISEASES, WHICH CAN SPREAD TO HUMANS

SET WAS IMPLEMENTED IN 13 COUNTRIES IN AFRICA, RESULTING IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF LOCALLY RELEVANT ACTION PLANS FOR THE TARGETED IMPROVEMENT OF ANIMAL DISEASE SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS

REGULAR FOLLOW-UP WITH COUNTRIES' FINANCIAL AND TECHNICAL PARTNERS ENSURES THAT SET RECOMMENDATIONS ARE IMPLEMENTED

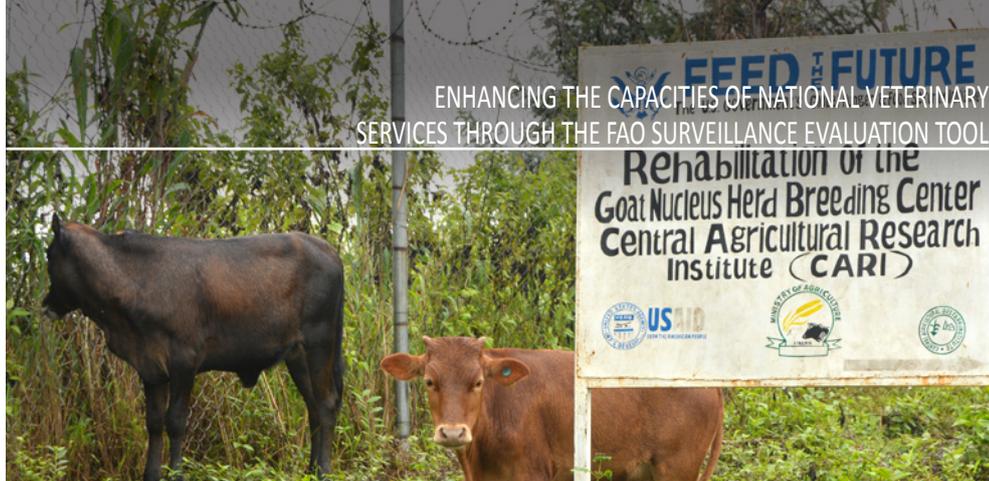
FAO Surveillance Evaluation Tool

E-MAIL

Sophie.VonDobschuetz@fao.org
Gael.Lamielle@fao.org

WEBSITES

<http://www.fao.org/food-chain-crisis/home/en/>
http://www.fao.org/ag/againfo/programmes/en/empres/tools_SET.html



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surveillance systems. In addition, follow-up assessments measure the progress and impact of the interventions implemented.

THE SET TOOLKIT AND METHODOLOGY

SET consists of a scoring grid that assesses surveillance systems against 90 indicators, which are grouped into 19 categories and seven major areas. For each indicator, the evaluation team enters a score ranging from 1 to 4 along with a justification qualifying the score. Once all indicators have been scored, the toolkit automatically provides visual outputs depicting the strengths and weaknesses of the surveillance system.

In-country missions last 10–12 days, when the team interviews various actors and stakeholders of the surveillance system to gather the information required to complete the toolkit. Care is taken to conduct interviews at all levels of the surveillance system (central, intermediate and field). In addition, the SET methodology includes a strong One Health component, and representatives of ministries of health and the environment provide information on inter-sectoral collaboration.

Using the information collected during interviews, each indicator is scored. Once the visual outputs have been generated, a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis is conducted and SMART recommendations are developed. The results of the evaluation and a preliminary action plan are presented to the key decision-makers, who provide their initial feedback and agreement.

Finally, a comprehensive report describing the mission, its findings and the finalized action plan is drafted and posted online.

PARTNERS INVOLVED

SET evaluation missions are held in close collaboration with in-country FAO teams, which are instrumental in coordinating mission logistics, organizing interviews and acting as intermediaries with the central government. In addition, national focal points from the country's veterinary services or laboratory network are key members of the evaluation team throughout the duration of the mission. These actors provide invaluable background information on the surveillance system and coordinate meetings with stakeholders at the intermediary and field level.

RESULTS ACHIEVED AND NEXT STEPS

During 2017–2018, a total of 13 missions were conducted in selected African countries and the mission evaluation reports are being posted online.

Action plans developed by SET teams have been implemented in several countries. For example, Liberia created an epidemiology unit within their directory of veterinary services that will lead the development of standardized disease reporting tools – as highlighted in the SET recommendations. The United Republic of Tanzania is implementing a technical-scientific committee for surveillance activities, a gap identified during the evaluation in the country.

SET is much more than an evaluation, as a major part of its activities involves measuring the impact of recommendations implemented. In the future, regular meetings with technical and financial partners will ensure that recommendations are implemented, while follow-up evaluation will track countries' progress towards an efficient and sustainable animal disease surveillance system.



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