

Assessing the implementation of Circular 16 in Viet Nam

One Health guidelines for coordinated prevention and control of zoonotic disease

What is Circular 16

It is an inter-ministerial circular, which was signed by both ministers from Ministry of Health (MOH) and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) in 2013. It provides the legal basis for coordination, information sharing and collaboration between the human and animal health sectors in surveillance and response activities.

What are the gaps to address in implementing Circular 16?

Even though the circular exists, how it is being carried out in the field is not obvious. Therefore, FAO Viet Nam's Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (ECTAD), in collaboration with Department of Animal Health (DAH), Regional Animal Health Office 2 (RAHO2), General Department of Preventive Medicine (GDPM), National Institute of Hygiene and Epidemiology (NIHE) and WHO, conducted an in-depth assessment in Quang Nam and Ha Giang Provinces on the implementation of circular 16 by government agencies, from commune to provincial level.

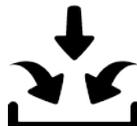
Assessment method



Interview through structured questionnaire



Direct discussions on difficulties, advantages and recommendations of circular 16 implementation



Collecting related evidence such as reports & implementation plans

Assessment result

Awareness of Circular 16

- Both public and animal health professionals at the provincial level are aware of the circular, but not at the district and commune level
- The circular has not been disseminated widely to the district and commune level
- In the grassroots level, most of them are not fully aware of specific details

Surveillance

- All levels have focal points for information sharing
- Surveillance information about a suspected case/outbreak is shared only in an ad-hoc manner and not routinely between sectors
- Ad-hoc information is mostly shared through telephone
- Official Circular 16 forms are not routinely used
- Stakeholders at all levels wanted a timely sharing of test results to facilitate better coordination and collaboration

Disease investigation and response

- Steering Committees for Disease Prevention and Control at provincial, district and commune levels are in charge of directing the implementation of inter-sectoral activities
- Inter-sectoral investigation teams have never been established when the suspected case/outbreak was detected
- Outbreak investigation and response is conducted separately by the two sectors following their own protocols

Communication activities

- The two sectors have never consulted nor agreed upon communication contents and methods
- Coordinated risk communication remains limited, except for the 2015 World Rabies Day

Training & Scientific research

- The two sectors have not built a joint framework for training on zoonotic diseases prevention and control
- Inter-sectoral research has not been conducted

What is One Health?

One Health is an integrated approach that calls for increased multidisciplinary and inter-sectoral cooperation and communication to



address diseases that emerge at the human-animal-ecosystem interface and that pose a threat to human and animal health.

Why is One Health approach important?

Zoonoses (diseases shared between human and animals) can result in significant health impacts to humans, animals and in wildlife, serving as a source of conservation concern. Therefore, One Health approach, which encourages information sharing and coordinated response between sectors, can help improve prevention, early detection and rapid response to emerging and endemic zoonotic diseases.

Recommendations

- More engagement of local authority at provincial, district and commune level is needed to support the Circular 16 implementation plan.
- Better understanding and proper application of the Circular 16 is critical for One Health implementation at the field.
- Budget allocation by local government for capacity and infrastructure development at commune level will be crucial.
- Capacity development on outbreak response and investigation for the public and animal health professionals at all levels is needed.