



Food and Agriculture
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The Southeast Asia Laboratory Directors Forum Workshop and Training (OSRO/RAS/100/AUL) Meeting Report



22 – 23 November 2023 | Yogyakarta, Indonesia

With the financial and technical support of



Report on the Southeast Asia Laboratory Directors Forum Workshop and Training

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Introduction

1. The Southeast Asia Laboratory Directors Forum Workshop and Training was conducted offline in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, on 22 – 23 November 2023.
2. The ASEAN Laboratory Directors Forum Focal Points from Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Viet Nam attended the Workshop. Representatives from the FAO ECTAD Indonesia, the Australian Indonesia Health Security Partnership (AIHSP), the United States Agency for International Development Regional Development Mission for Asia (USAID RDMA), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), The Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) were also in attendance. The representative from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) ECTAD Asia and the Pacific were in attendance to organize and facilitate the workshop.
3. The Southeast Asia Laboratory Directors Forum Workshop and Training is part of the SMART-ASEAN Project implementation funded by the Australian Government through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). The workshop and training are hosted by Indonesia and funded by Thailand through the Letter of Agreement with FAO on the SMART-ASEAN project funded by the Australian Government through the DFAT.
4. The workshop and training are part of the SMART-ASEAN project implementation in response to output 3, which is strengthened ASEAN technical capacity for pandemic preparedness, specifically activity 3.1 'support the implementation of relevant ASEAN frameworks to strengthen regional capacity for EID and TAD prevention and control and also activity' and activity 3.3 'strengthen ASEAN's institutional and multi-disciplinary workforce capacity on laboratory and epidemiology'. The objective is to support Southeast Asian countries in strengthening their regional laboratory capacities.

Introduction

5. Dr Hendra Wibawa, Head of the Disease Investigation Centre of Wates Yogyakarta, Indonesia, represented the Directorate General of Livestock and Animal Health Services Indonesia, who could not attend the workshop due to prior commitments, to provide opening remarks. Dr Hendra expressed his gratitude to all delegates who could attend the workshop. He also appreciated the SMART-ASEAN project of the FAO ECTAD RAP funded by the Government of Australia through the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to help organize the workshop and training. He also thanked the Government of Thailand, which provided the funding through the Letter of Agreement (LOA) with the FAO SMART-ASEAN project. He looked forward to sharing Indonesia's experience in developing its laboratory capacity. He closed his remarks by welcoming everyone to Yogyakarta, Indonesia and wished the workshop success.

AGENDA 1: Introduction to the Laboratory Assessment Workshop

6. Maharti Rihana, FAO - ASEAN RSU Programme Specialist, presented the introduction of the Laboratory Assessment Workshop and its background to the participants.
7. The workshop noted that the SMART-ASEAN team developed the Lab Assessment tool with support from the ASEAN Secretariat. The Lab Assessment tool was developed to support ASEAN in generating a baseline understanding of countries and regional progress on implementing the Regional Strategic Framework for Laboratory Capacity Building and Networking in Southeast Asia (ASEAN Lab Framework). Participants further noted that the assessment tool has been submitted and received endorsement from the ALDF and ASWGL, respectively.
8. Idil Yalman, FAO ECTAD M&E Consultant, presented the background of the development of the ASEAN Lab Framework and the introduction on the use of the Lab Assessment tool.
9. The Lab focal points were trained to fill out the Lab Assessment Tool and given some time to complete it through consultation with the consultant. Noting there was information that required internal country discussion, the participants agreed to

conduct an internal consultation and will submit the fill-out baseline data to the SMART-ASEAN team on **Monday, 4 December 2023**.

Action line: ALDF Focal Points

10. The participants agreed to share the result of the M&E assessment with AMS, current partners and donors, and by request for interested universities, potential donors and partners.
11. The participants agreed that the outcome of the baseline data would be presented at the next ALDF workshop. ALDF shall discuss follow-up action based on the baseline data, including the possibility of revising the framework to ensure the relevance of the current situation.
12. The participants further agreed on the mid-term and end-line assessment timeline, which is every 2-year interval for the regional objectives and a maximum 3-year interval for the national objectives.
13. The participants agreed to share the result of the M&E assessment within AMS, current partners and donors, and by request for interested universities, potential donors and partners.
14. The participants agreed that the outcome of the baseline data will be presented at the next AVEG workshop, and ALDF shall discuss follow-up action based on the baseline data, including revising the framework to ensure the relevance of the current situation.
15. The participants also discussed the regional baseline together during the workshop, and some recommendations that came up from the workshop are as follows:
 - a. Maintain and continue training activities to improve human resource capacity.
 - b. Ensuring standardized approaches, activities, protocols, etc., at the regional level.
 - c. Enhance networking and sharing available information (resources/materials) into one platform.

16. The ALDF focal points further agreed to hold a joint workshop with the AVEG to discuss cross-cutting activities and ensure better coordination and support in implementing the frameworks.

AGENDA 3: Update and Progress of ASEAN Reference Laboratories Application

17. Dr Hendra Wibawa, Head of the Disease Investigation Center (DIC) Wates, presented the update and progress of the DIC Wates as the ASEAN Regional Reference Center (ARRC) for Bioinformatics. The updates included the activities that DIC Wates, as the reference centre in the region, has conducted to support other AMS, including the conduct of the following activities:
 - a. February 2021: ASEAN Bioinformatics Workshops for Animal Health Laboratories in ASEAN Countries. Attended online (during COVID-19) by 28 participants from Vet-Lab AMS and Indonesia.
 - b. August 2022: ASEAN One Health Bioinformatics Workshops. Attended offline by 26 participants from Vet-Lab AMS, three from Public Health Lab and 4 participants from ZDAP countries (online).
 - c. November-2023: ASEAN Bioinformatics Workshops. Attended offline by 26 participants from Influenza Virus Monitoring (IVM) members (DICs, Universities, and Private Sectors) and online from AMS (Malaysia, Brunei, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam, Philippines, Cambodia).
18. Dr Navanithakumar A/L Balakrishnan, Veterinary Officer (GV 48) Disease Investigation Coordinator, Veterinary Research Institute (VRI), Malaysia, presented the progress and update of the Veterinary Research Institute in Malaysia as the ASEAN Reference Laboratory (ARL) for Avian Influenza.
19. Dr Namtaporn Wandee, Veterinarian, Senior Professional Level, Thailand, presented the progress and update of the Regional Reference Laboratory (RRL) on FMD (RRL-FMD, Pakchong) and the ASEAN Reference Laboratory of Brucellosis.
20. Dr Nguyen Thi Kim Oanh, Vice Director of the National Centre for Veterinary Diagnosis (NCVD), Department of Animal Health, Viet Nam, presented the progress and update of the National Centre for Veterinary Diagnosis as the ASEAN Reference Laboratory for Rabies.

21. Dr Tran Minh Tan, Regional Animal Health Office 6 (RAH06), Department of Animal Health, Viet Nam, presented the progress and update from RAH06 as the ASEAN Reference Laboratory for Swine Disease.

AGENDA 4: Draft roadmap for ARC Bioinformatics (DIC Wates)

22. Dr Hendra Wibawa, informed the workshop that the DIC Wates is currently developing the Strategic Roadmap for the Advancement of the ASEAN Regional Reference Centre for Bioinformatics. ACDP and FAO support the roadmap development.
23. Based on the presentation, the participants agreed to develop a strategic roadmap for each of the ASEAN reference laboratories and requested FAO and other development partners to support its development.

Action Line: FAO, development partners and ASEAN Reference Laboratories

AGENDA 5: Other Matters

24. Dr Brian Zi Yan Tan, Deputy Director of the National Parks Board, Singapore, as the lead country for the Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) activities in the region, presented to the workshop the progress of AMR activities that have been conducted in the region, including the support provided by FAO.
25. Dr Chantanee Buranathai, One Health Coordinator, WOH, presented the overview of WOH support to the region on laboratory activities, including the WOH reference laboratories in Southeast Asia.
26. Dr Gemma Clark, Project Manager BICOLLAB of the ACDP, presented the overview of ACDP support to the region.
27. The ALDF focal points agreed to develop the requirement to become an ASEAN reference laboratory and will develop the draft requirement for being the ASEAN laboratory reference based on the guidelines published by WOH and FAO. The ALDF focal points further appointed Indonesia and Malaysia to be the lead countries and to discuss the topic at the next ALDF workshop.

Action line: Indonesia and Malaysia

28. The partners and donors who were in attendance (WOAH, ACDP, FAO), based on the request of ALDF focal points, agreed to provide necessary support in the development of the requirement to become an ASEAN reference laboratory.
29. Viet Nam also requested assistance and support from partners to maintain the ASEAN reference laboratory.
30. FAO informed participants on the development of a scientific publication using the result of the FAO Lab Mapping Tool (LMT) from 2012 to 2020 in all 10 AMS countries. The workshop further agreed for FAO to publish the scientific paper with considerations as follows:
 - a. To publish the data in generic analysis, where the LMT score will be translated into stages.
 - b. FAO to develop two drafts, with one version that showcases all the laboratory names and the other version that is anonymous.
 - c. The drafts shall be submitted to where ALDF will decide which version is the most suitable to be published, based on AMS's internal consultation with all national laboratories that were involved in the LMT assessment.
 - d. ALDF focal points will inform this activity during the next ALDF workshop.

Action line: FAO

31. FAO further informed that the latest LMT conducted was in 2020. FAO suggested that countries conduct another round of LMT. The assessment could also show the difference in the laboratory capacities pre- and post-COVID. ALDF focal points further agreed to conduct another LMT assessment, with a combined approach, where experts will come to support the assessment, and countries can also conduct self-assessment. In this regard, the participants agreed on the following:
 - a. Brunei Darussalam: Experts will conduct the LMT Assessment.
 - b. Cambodia: Experts will conduct the LMT Assessment.
 - c. Indonesia: Self-assessment with expert support.
 - d. Lao People's Democratic Republic: Experts will conduct the LMT Assessment
 - e. Malaysia: Self-assessment with expert support.
 - f. The Philippines: Self-assessment with expert support.
 - g. Singapore: Self-assessment with expert support.
 - h. Thailand: Self-assessment with expert support.
 - i. Viet Nam: Self-assessment with expert support.

32. The workshop ended with a field visit to the DIC Wates, Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The workshop participants thanked the Government of Indonesia for the warm hospitality.
33. The workshop agreed to submit the result of the Southeast Asia Laboratory Directors Forum to the ALDF workshop and ASWGL for consideration and adoption.
34. The participants appreciated the support provided by FAO, Indonesia and Thailand for the successful event.