POSITION PAPER | February 22

One Health at ADRA

Expertise, activities and resources

Introduction

Nowadays, it is recognized by major donor agencies and governing bodies that the well-being of the planet and all creatures living on it is closely interrelated. Therefore, several new and already existing systemic approaches, such as Planetary Health & EcoHealth or Natural Resource Management and Nature Based Solutions are becoming more and more relevant for the work of humanitarian and development organizations. The One Health approach is holistic in its nature, combining most of these concepts under one umbrella. Even though ADRA Germany does not see itself as a distinct 'One Health Organization', we recognize the importance of the One Health concept and current related discussions.

With this position paper ADRA Germany aims to define what the approach means for the organization, what we can contribute to its realization and to point towards some challenges related to the approach, which are important for future discussions.

Background

The One Health approach was already recognized by the global community in the early years of the 21st century when several new zoonotic viruses emerged[1]. With the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic the approach was brought even more into the spotlight. The essence of One Health is that human health, animal health, and environmental health are interdependent and to achieve well-being for all, it is necessary to take a holistic view on all three equally. Hereby, transdisciplinarity between different sectors and stakeholders is a key element. The One Health Commission defines the approach as follows:

„One Health is a collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach – working at local, regional, national, and global levels – to achieve optimal health (and wellbeing) outcomes recognizing the interconnections between people, animals, plants and their shared environment."[2]

Picture 1: Joint Tripartite (FAO, OIE, WHO) and UNEP (2021). "Tripartite and UNEP support OHHLEP's definition of "One Health"".

[1] Gibbs, P. (2014). "The evolution of One Health: A decade of progress and challenges for the future". *The Veterinary Record*, *174*, 85–91.
[2] https://www.onehealthcommission.org/en/why_one_health/what_is_one_health/

To globally coordinate the expertise related to human, environmental and animal health, the WHO, OIE, and FAO formed the tripartite alliance in 2005. Nowadays the importance of One Health is still growing and the approach was in the spotlight of discussions during the latest World Health Summit 2021[3] and other global conferences, such as the World One Health Congress. One Health is also becoming increasingly important in Germany: The approach was included in the coalition treaty for the new government that just took office in December 2021. The German Ministry for Development (BMZ) developed a One Health strategy[4] in early 2021 and increased its financial contribution to multilateral organizations and projects that support the One Health approach. Many well-known universities around the globe have also begun offering courses and degrees in One Health, including the Hannover Medical School in Germany. Currently, the German Helmholtz-Institute for One Health is in its founding phase.

In summary, it has been recognized by policy makers as well as implementing organizations that many issues cannot be solved by thinking in silos and that holistic, transdisciplinary approaches are needed. The current discussions around One Health help to bring this awareness into action. Furthermore, the approach provides a universal vocabulary to many activities that have already been done but were not recognized as 'One Health' per se. It helps policy makers and the science community to work closer together to create related policy strategies by using common vocabulary.

One Health and ADRA Germany

We recognize the importance of One Health while understanding that we cannot cover all aspects of One Health in our programming independently. Whereas most of ADRA's programs are not typically presented as full One Health interventions, components of One Health are often present throughout. In sectors in which we see our strengths, namely livelihoods and food security (organic agriculture, conservation agriculture, nature-based solutions) as well as nutrition and environmental protection, we will aim at integrating the other sectors, such as human and animal health, through cooperation with relevant partners and projects. Furthermore, we will aim to make sure that we are not causing any harm to one of the sectors while operating in another.

Exemplary ADRA Germany activities related to One Health

- Environmental protection of African coastal regions while promoting the livelihood and well-being of the local population
- Marine Protection, coastal protection and reforestation activities in the pacific region
- Creating Waste Management system and Green Circular Economy in Koro, Fiji
- Support people to gain sustainable food security in African and Asian countries taking climate resilient and protective measures into account
- Using Effective Microorganisms during flood relief projects in Germany

The strength of One health is that it brings together actors from different knowledge areas; it works on transdisciplinary solutions that are inclusive enough to answer to diverse, multi-facetted questions. We see ourselves as one of the actors who can contribute to answers and solutions. Another important and related aspect of our work is to incorporate local indigenous knowledge of the people we work with as much as possible. Looking at human, animal and environmental health holistically is not new to indigenous and rural population and their knowledge is critical to achieve sustainable solutions for themselves.

[3] Joint Tripartite *(FAO, OIE, WHO) and UNEP (2021). "Tripartite and UNEP support OHHLEP´s definition of "One Health"*
[4] BMZ. (2021). "*Initiative area One Health in development cooperation", BMZ Strategie*. BMZ

Our overarching goal regarding One Health is to implement equitable and holistic solutions to achieve sustainable development. This is done in collaboration with all relevant actors in the areas of human and animal health, as well as environment and climate change.

Outlook

COVID-19 might not be the last global pandemic – currently it is estimated that approximately 1,7 million unknown viruses are existing in the wildlife.[5] However, disease outbreaks are only part of the problem. Human well-being is further threatened by air and water pollution, overuse of chemicals in agriculture, lack of food due to decreased soil quality, antimicrobial resistance, natural disasters, and non-communicable diseases. Environmental and animal health are faced with challenges of the same magnitude, such as a rapidly growing human population, growing waste, loss of biodiversity, deforestation, climate change, over-fishing and many more. Systemic and holistic approaches such as One Health are important contributions to sustainable development because they recognize the complexity of socio-ecological systems and seek to transform community resilience through comprehensive and sustainable structural adaptations. However, much needs to be done to effectively start integrating the approach in international development cooperation:

1. The transdisciplinary nature of One Health involves many stakeholders from different backgrounds. Even though this is a much-needed approach it also makes it difficult to agree on one common understanding as well as responsibilities of each stakeholder, resulting in difficulties in collaboration and coordination. Thus, **there is a need to strengthen global, regional, and national coordination mechanisms for One Health.**

2. In Germany, One Health is still mainly discussed by experts and interested parties. Thus, not all stakeholders are aware of the connections and implications related to One Health. Consequently, **there is a need to break down the topic and bring technical discussions to everyone involved.** It is equally important to communicate the learning and successes through advocacy and close-knit networking.

3. German donors have not yet defined how the impact of One Health will be measured. **Generally accepted, standardized approaches and indicators need to be developed**. In general, **more cross-sectional and transdisciplinary research about One Health is needed**.

4. **More financing mechanism for One Health programming need to be developed** that consider the cross-sectorial nature of the approach to make it possible for NGOs and other entities to start integrating One Health into their general programming.

5. One Health needs to go beyond pandemic prevention and human health because if **the approach is implemented holistically and inclusively**, it can make a valuable contribution to all aspects of the life of humans, the environment and animals alike.

[5] IPBES (2019): Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services. E. S. Brondizio, J. Settele, S. Díaz, and H. T. Ngo (editors). IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany. 1148 pages. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3831673

Related ADRA Resources

- ADRA Carbon Reduction Guide
- ADRA Nachhaltigkeitsguide
- ADRA International Webinar: *One Health 101: An Introduction to Global Health at the Human-Animal-Ecosystem Interface*
- ADRA International Webinar: *COVID-19, One Health, and ADRA: Preventing Future Pandemics at the Human-Animal-Environment Interface*
- ADRA International Podcast Episode One Health

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