

Workshop on the Interlinkages between Human Health and Biodiversity

Jointly Convened by the World Health Organization and the Secretariat of the
Convention on Biological Diversity

Geneva, 2 April 2012

WORKSHOP SUMMARY NOTE

I. Potential themes and mechanisms for collaboration between the World Health Organization, the Convention on Biological Diversity and key international partners

Introduction

1. To further strengthen collaboration between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), a jointly organized workshop on the interlinkages between human health and biodiversity was held on 2 April 2012 in Geneva, Switzerland, at the World Health Organization headquarters, with financial support from the Government of Japan.

2. The objectives of the workshop were to:

- (a) Share biodiversity and health knowledge;
- (b) Collaboratively examine common areas of work and potential joint work activities in light of the respective mandates of the World Health Organization and the Convention on Biological Diversity; and
- (c) Discuss challenges and ways to overcome barriers and establish future collaborative steps.

3. Two staff of the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity attended the workshop. More than twenty WHO staff attended, representing the following departments: Protection of the Human Environment; Interventions for Healthy Environments; Evidence and Policy on Emerging Environment and Health Issues; Water, Sanitation and Hygiene; Pandemic and Epidemic Diseases; Nutrition for Health and Development; Standing Committee on Nutrition; Research for Neglected Priorities; Vector Control Interventions. Apologies were received from the WHO departments of Traditional Medicine, Chronic Diseases and Health Promotion, and Mental Health, and from the WHO Regional Focal Points for Public Health and Environment. In addition, a number of partners were in attendance, including from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), Swiss Tropical Institute, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and World Wildlife Fund (WWF). Apologies were received from representatives of DIVERSITAS, the EcoHealth Alliance and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

/...

Potential themes for collaboration on human health and biodiversity interlinkages

4. The following interlinkages on human health and biodiversity were presented and discussed by participants:

(a) Disease regulation, surveillance and integrated vector management in an environment/ecosystem framework; e.g., could collectively undertake a broad approach to gap analysis, for example on dengue fever in urban situations, and seek to establish site-specific/ecosystem-specific solutions;

(b) Food security, nutrition, sustainable agriculture and relationships to biodiversity and health outcomes, including the United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition;

(c) Water, ecosystem management and water quality programmes could address not only sanitation and water supply, but also climate change, loss of species, etc.;

(d) Climate change impacts on health and on ecosystems;

(e) Expansion and promotion of relevant models that encourage and enable work on the interlinkages between environment and health for co-benefits, such as the Libreville Declaration;

(f) Health impact assessments (HIAs) and environmental impact assessments (EIAs) provide opportunities to jointly examine interlinkages between biodiversity and health issues and impacts; e.g., mining, oil and gas sectors; and

(g) Global knowledge management and terminology for shared discussions is required; e.g., United Nations-based glossary to assist discussions between United Nations agencies and partners, as well as in the discussions to establish research priorities.

5. Potential themes for collaboration that were not discussed in detail due to unavailability of expert leads on the workshop date included, *inter alia*, traditional medicine and biodiversity; mental health and biodiversity; and non-communicable disease, preventative lifestyle approaches and biodiversity. These themes will be further considered in future discussions between WHO, the Convention on Biological Diversity and others.

II. Possible approaches to health and biodiversity collaboration

6. A discussion at the workshop on modalities for cooperation and potential activities included the options summarized below:

(a) Capacity-building workshops:

(i) Capacity-building workshops on biodiversity and health interlinkages are being planned by the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity for 2012 with funding support from the Government of Japan. One workshop will potentially be co-hosted with the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and WHO. Other workshops are yet to be confirmed;

(b) Technical and outreach publications:

(i) WHO is leading finalization of the “Review of Health in the Rio Conventions” discussion paper, with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity as co-author, as well as collaboration from the Secretariats of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The discussion paper is to be jointly launched at Rio+20;

(ii) The Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity is leading the development of Good Practice Guides on 1) Health and 2) Food Security for intended launch at the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the

Convention on Biological Diversity. The availability of WHO to provide technical advice and other support will be explored further;

- (iii) Future CBD Technical Series documents could potentially be jointly produced on a range of themes, including 1) a situation analysis on key global health and environment interlinkages, examining research/knowledge gaps and providing examples of “good practices” that demonstrate health and biodiversity integration and 2) a review of the threats to biodiversity and health, then collaborative approaches mapped to the Aichi Biodiversity Targets;
- (iv) WHO Operational Guidelines and internal Environmental Safeguard Procedures could be jointly prepared or the inputs of CBD and partners sought in the future. Potential topics would require further discussions but might include linkages between Health Impact Assessment and Environmental Impact Assessment processes;
- (v) Outreach and communication products (e.g., brochures, fact sheets, website content and links between websites); opportunities need to be discussed further.

(c) Meetings of the WHO World Health Assembly and of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity:

- (i) Report or statement from the Executive Secretary of the Convention on Biological Diversity on the occasion of the World Health Assembly (May 2012);
- (ii) Report and side-events on health with WHO delegates, and partners, at the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (October 2012) and at future meetings of the Conference of the Parties, as appropriate.

(d) Inter-secretariat and other collaborative mechanisms:

- (i) An ongoing collaborative platform could be considered (for example an expert group, liaison group, community of practice, initiative platform, collaborating centre) to continue dialogue and explore synergies in the future;
- (ii) A joint work plan might also be an appropriate way to support implementation of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and respond to various organizational contexts and mandates. The work plan could identify the range of organizations that work on different aspects of health and biodiversity, map interlinkages in their mandates with the Aichi Biodiversity Targets and identify where they agree to strengthen cooperation.

III. Workshop outcomes

7. The following three outcomes have been summarized from the overall workshop discussions:

(a) WHO and the Convention on Biological Diversity will jointly implement select activities. Initially, these include writing and launching the discussion paper “Review of Health in the Rio Conventions” and the regional capacity-building workshops on biodiversity and health interlinkages;

(b) Workshop participants would welcome efforts to continue collaboration and dialogue in the future; and

(c) Workshop participants would generally support the establishment and/or strengthening of collaborative mechanisms on human health and biodiversity interlinkages, subject to the needs of partners, for example through virtual/online platforms, liaison groups, partnership agreements, etc., as appropriate.