

The International Alliance against Health Risks in Wildlife Trade

Background

Wildlife is an important and integral part of biodiversity, which in turn underpins the health of human civilization. It is also a source of known and currently unknown pathogens, some of which have the potential to become pandemic in humans. It is not wildlife itself that poses a risk, but the interface between wildlife and people. Indeed, human behavior offers many critical control points at which we can both help deter pathogen spillover from wildlife and protect it for future generations.

Most human infectious diseases have a demonstrated origin in non-human animals; of these the majority originate in wildlife. Ecological disruption, including shifts in land use, and unsustainable consumption enable pathogens to spill over. High population densities and high mobility facilitate spread, which can lead to pandemics.

Scientists estimate that a relatively small but focused investment into pandemic prevention *at the source* would reduce the risk of disease emergence with pandemic potential significantly. In addition, the ancillary benefits to climate change mitigation and biodiversity conservation would considerably contribute to planetary health. Thus, pandemic prevention at the source, with a specific focus on wildlife, serves as a cross-cutting and multi-solving approach to multiple intertwined global crises.

The Global Project

To foster collaboration towards reducing and preventing health risks from wildlife trade, the idea was born to launch an *International Alliance against Health Risks in Wildlife Trade*. To realise this, the GIZ Global Project works in three parallel work streams:

- 1. The Alliance** set-up as international multistakeholder platform.
- 2. Country Packages** realized in coordination with partner countries' structures.
- 3. Individual Projects** implemented by member organizations.

1. The Alliance

The *International Alliance against Health Risks in Wildlife Trade* was launched in 2021 as an interdisciplinary and inclusive multi-stakeholder platform. It receives core funding by the German Government and is being set up and implemented by GIZ. It provides a platform for pooling knowledge and evidence, communication and matchmaking among its members to enable new insights, collaboration, and policy recommendations. Outputs are made publicly available via open access expert talks, events and publications.

Members of the *Alliance* may engage in a range of activities in support of the above-mentioned goals e.g.:

- **offer knowledge** of where contact between wildlife and people have proven or potential health risks, in nature, captivity, use or trade and fill knowledge gaps on **suspected and/or understudied risk factors**
- minimize wildlife contact with health risks to humans, e.g., by **supporting communities at risk**
- support **emerging techniques** including traceability and pathogen surveillance along wildlife trade chains
- support **veterinary and public health facilities** and capacities to be able to detect known and unknown pathogens in wildlife, and assess impact and associated risks, and the integration of wildlife into veterinary systems
- analyze **capacity needs to develop policies** and interventions at the national and intergovernmental levels
- improve the **regulatory frameworks** and capacities of key stakeholders along wildlife trade chains (e.g. health authorities, law enforcement authorities and agencies)
- contribute to design and the implementation of **social and behavior change initiatives** with regard to the consumption of and contact with wildlife species with proven or potential human health risks



Wild pangolin in South Africa



Sale of exotic animals in Jakarta

Our Approach

Identifying and reducing human and animal health risks from wildlife trade needs an internationally coordinated and cooperative approach. The Alliance aims to foster knowledge exchange, serve as an incubator for innovation and co-creation, joining disciplines across the One Health-spectrum, and provide a safe space to explore solutions. With its multi-solving approach, the Alliance supports translating science and knowledge into recommendations for improved regulation, while pointing out knowledge gaps. It facilitates dialogue and raises awareness, transfers, and integrates knowledge, expertise, and evidence, supports pilots and disseminate lessons learned. It will catalyze joint action of stakeholders from various fields including, but not limited to, biological, biomedical and health sciences, ecology, human and veterinary medicine, as well as development cooperation, psychology, and social sciences, in addition to diverse forms of knowledge.

Mission & Goals

Mission

The International Alliance against Health Risks in Wildlife Trade is an open, inclusive and collaborative space where stakeholders join forces to better understand and reduce the threat of pathogen spillover from wildlife trade and markets, providing and communicating evidence, supporting interventions, thereby, reducing the risk of future outbreaks, epidemics and pandemics, while concurrently improving health, equity, and well-being for all species – through a One Health approach.

“One Health is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to achieve optimal and sustainable health outcomes for people, animals, and ecosystems. It recognizes that the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (our ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent. The approach mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines and communities at all levels of society to work together to tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing our collective needs for healthy food, water, energy and air, taking action on climate change, and promoting sustainable development.”

One Health High-Level Expert Panel

Goals

In the Alliance, national decision makers, international political and civil society organizations, including Indigenous Peoples’ organizations and networks, research institutions and university networks work on contemporary risks of zoonotic spillover, novel pathogen emergence, zoonosis and emerging infectious diseases from wildlife, in use or trade, as well as the interface with livestock to identify and support adequate action and policies to mitigate risks to human and animal health from this source.

Co-creating and infusing this combined knowledge to narrow the gap between science and implementation, global awareness, policies and practice will be improved. Through joint action unnecessary human health risks caused by contact across the wildlife trade will be substantially reduced.

2. Country Packages

Additionally, the GIZ Global Project implements three country packages: Together with national and international partner institutions and local GIZ structures in Vietnam, Cameroon and Guatemala, selected activities-related to various aspects of wildlife contact along the trade chain are being implemented. They will feed into context-specific policy recommendations.

3. Individual Member Projects

The GIZ Global Project’s third work stream funds individual projects proposed and implemented by *Alliance* members. As of April 2022, nine projects had started in a wide range of topics: Activities include pathogen discovery and community work on the African continent, demand reduction work with Buddhist communities and building capacity for interdisciplinary, translational research and advocacy in Asia, and improving knowledge, attitude and practice in Latin America. A second round of projects will start implementation in late 2022. Results will be made available to all *Alliance* members and translated into recommendations, where possible.



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Picture 1: Wild pangolin in South Africa/Shutterstock page 1
Picture 2: Sale of exotic animals in Jakarta/Shutterstock page 1

Text

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