

Pandemic Lessons: Four years on from the pandemic, International Animal Rescue's 'One Health' Programme Makes Significant Steps in Preventing Animal-to-Human Disease Transfer

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This week in 2020, The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic. Navigating the intricate web of challenges posed by poaching, wildlife trade, and zoonotic threats, International Animal Rescue's (IAR's) One Health programme emerges as a beacon of hope. Its goal is to prevent future pandemics through education in biodiversity conservation and smart wildlife trade regulation.

In the face of illegal and unregulated trade and the risk of disease transmission between humans and animals, this transformative initiative stitches together a tapestry of collaboration, communication, education and capacity building. The programme addresses the pressing issues of public health, wildlife trade, wild meat consumption, and environmental degradation by involving multiple stakeholders, divisions, and communities. The positive impact? A world where humans, animals, and the environment coexist harmoniously, safeguarded by the principles of the One Health approach adopted by International Animal Rescue's holistic conservation strategy, IARconserves.

Dr Wendi Prameswari, Senior Programme Officer One Health and Welfare at YIARI, IAR's implementation partners in Indonesia, whose team are putting the IARconserves holistic conservation strategy into practice, said: *"We are working closely with communities and actively educating them about the health risks associated with the trade and consumption of wildlife. The IARconserves One Health initiative works by raising public awareness and promoting community-led efforts that aim to reduce the risk of zoonotic diseases."*

The team have also engaged key stakeholders involved in the management of markets selling live birds and other wildlife in Java and has begun to carry out targeted interventions. The programme facilitates cross-sectoral collaborations between a range of different groups, including veterinarians, environmentalists, and public health experts, to maximise its impact. By reducing the illegal and unregulated trade, as well as the consumption of wildlife, it is hoped that we can prevent another zoonotic pandemic and the devastation another outbreak would cause.

By targeting markets selling live wildlife with poor animal welfare standards and that lack proper sanitation and biosecurity, which pose high risks of disease emergence and transmission, IARconserves strives to improve conditions and change behaviours. The programme includes government capacity building, seminars and talk shows to raise awareness about rabies and other zoonotic diseases, the co-formulation of locally appropriate One Health Strategies for wildlife markets, vaccinations of over 650 animals for rabies, sterilising over 60 dogs and cats, and distributing educational materials to local communities.

"Reducing the likelihood of another viral spillover sweeping the world requires a fundamental change in how we interact with nature. It requires minimising health challenges at the human-wildlife-environment interface; eliminating transmission points where the likelihood of viral spillover to humans is high, such as unhygienic commercial wild animal markets; better regulation of the legal wildlife trade; diligently suppressing the illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade; and conserving natural habitats. We are working to raise public awareness and change perceptions towards trading and eating wildlife. We are pleased with the success so far, which shows if we continue to educate, we can change behaviours and prevent a future zoonotic-related pandemic." Said Gavin Bruce, CEO of International Animal Rescue.

To find out more about IAR's One Health programme, please visit

<https://www.internationalanimalrescue.org/>

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