

Investing in preventative One Health

Notes from a virtual G7 meeting on Nature for Health

On Tuesday 8th November 2022, the G7 hosted a discussion on Nature for Health, preventing future pandemics by investing in preventative One Health and the upstream environmental drivers of zoonotic pandemics. The German Government facilitated a fruitful discussion with health and environment representatives from Canada, France, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, together with Consortium Partners from the new Nature for Health (N4H) initiative. Whilst it's not without its challenges, participants agreed that environmental conservation can play a critical part in preventing future pandemics. Germany concluded the event by calling for investment both in upstream prevention and in the Nature for Health initiative.

The number of zoonotic diseases spilling over into human populations are increasing due to anthropogenic pressures such as environmental degradation, climate change and biodiversity loss. The prevention of zoonotic disease emergence and spread, as well as other health-related risks, require strategically interlinked approaches across different sectors that contribute meaningfully and effectively to 'One Health' outcomes. 'One Health' is an integrated, unifying approach to balance and optimize the health of people, animals and the environment.

“A preventative One Health approach is not optional, it is essential”.

Remarks by a meeting participant

Nature for Health (N4H) is a new Multi-Partner Trust Fund that brings together leading environmental and health organisations to reduce the risk of pandemics at the source. The initiative aims to work in 50 low-and middle-income countries that face the highest risk of emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases. Activities of N4H include gathering and showcasing evidence on environmental drivers of pandemics as well as supporting governments to develop and implement effective legal frameworks to tackle these drivers. BMUV has provided an initial investment to N4H of €50 million via Germany's International Climate Initiative (IKI), and N4H now aims to raise a further €400 million.

On Tuesday 8th November 2022, the German Government facilitated a fruitful discussion with health and environment representatives from Canada, France, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States of America, together with Consortium Partners from the new Nature for Health (N4H) initiative. Key themes that were discussed included

Coordination: Implementing One Health is critical, but effective coordination between the different initiatives and approaches will be essential to ensure there is efficiency and impact. N4H's focus is on the environmental drivers of pandemics.

Measuring impacts – globally and nationally: Measuring pandemic prevention is difficult so success will be demonstrated through the reduced risk of pandemics. To do this effectively – N4H will link up relevant research projects that can help N4H with the monitoring, evaluation and accountability frameworks. N4H will start from the partner countries' current situation, and, by taking a systems approach and building on our consortium partners expertise, will apply this in a context where countries respond and tell N4H what they need. We will be using our four blocks of work (demonstrate, operationalize, enable, sustain) to inform and help countries go on their own journey.

Link to the post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework : Some Parties would like to have a much stronger mention of One Health within the Global Biodiversity Framework and have been pushing for a more biodiversity inclusive One Health approach. Some Parties even proposed a stand-alone target on the One Health approach. N4H will be able to inform and strengthen the biodiversity and health strategy at the CBD COP-15.

Country Demand: N4H had an open Expression of Interest (EOI) to ensure that this was a demand-driven process and received applications from more than 50 countries. N4H will start with the needs of the countries and ensure to not speak on behalf of countries, but rather engage with the countries to operationalize the initiative.

“When it comes to pandemic prevention, the weakest link really matters.”

Remarks by meeting participant

It has become clear that it is of the utmost importance not to forget pandemic prevention in the midst of multiple global crises. N4H is one of the few international initiatives that specifically addresses pandemic prevention by including biodiversity aspects.

N4H provides concrete and much-needed support to developing countries and the response to the first Expression of Interest process has been overwhelming. It clearly shows that the initiative fills a gap, but also that the magnitude of the task is considerable.

At least 50 zoonotic hotspots around the world are in need of support, and while the G7 Partners were eager to discover the first six selected countries at the CBD COP-15, the N4H Consortium Partners invite all G7 Partners to contribute to this endeavour and to strengthen their engagement, either through direct contribution to the N4H initiative or through other types of commitment to pandemic prevention.

“We are moving from a global discourse to practical, on the ground activities, helping countries set up the structures to make this a reality.”

Remarks by a meeting participant

The G7 meeting was held under Chatham House rules so the comments here are non-attributed. Please contact N4H with any questions or to enquire for more information: info@nature4health.net