

# Capacity building on 'ecohealth' in Southeast Asia – successes and challenges

Fred Unger<sup>1</sup>; Delia Grace<sup>2</sup>, Rainer Asse<sup>3</sup>, Korapin Tohtubtiang<sup>4</sup>, Jeffrey Gilbert<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>International Livestock Research Institute, Hanoi, Vietnam; <sup>2</sup>International Livestock Research Institute, Nairobi, Kenya; <sup>3</sup>Rainer Asse, International Livestock Research Institute\*, Bangkok, Thailand; <sup>4</sup>Korapin Tohtubtiang, International Livestock Research Institute\*, Bangkok, Thailand; <sup>5</sup>Jeffrey Gilbert, International Livestock Research Institute\*, Vientiane, Lao \*Until Dec 2013



Beef farm, Yunnan, Unger, 2011

## Introduction

To address current challenges related to disease emergences in livestock and humans, new integrated approaches are needed to promote collaboration between involved actors and groups towards more effective control. Southeast Asia is considered a hotspot for diseases emergence as demonstrated with Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). Such new approaches include the 'ecohealth' (EH) concept, an approach pioneered over the last decades by the International Development Research Centre, Canada (IDRC).

## Materials and methods

Objective: To promote & build up capacity of EH for the control of zoonotic emerging infectious diseases (ZEIDs)

- Time frame: 2007 and 2013
- Where: 6 Southeast Asian countries
- 'learning by doing' approach

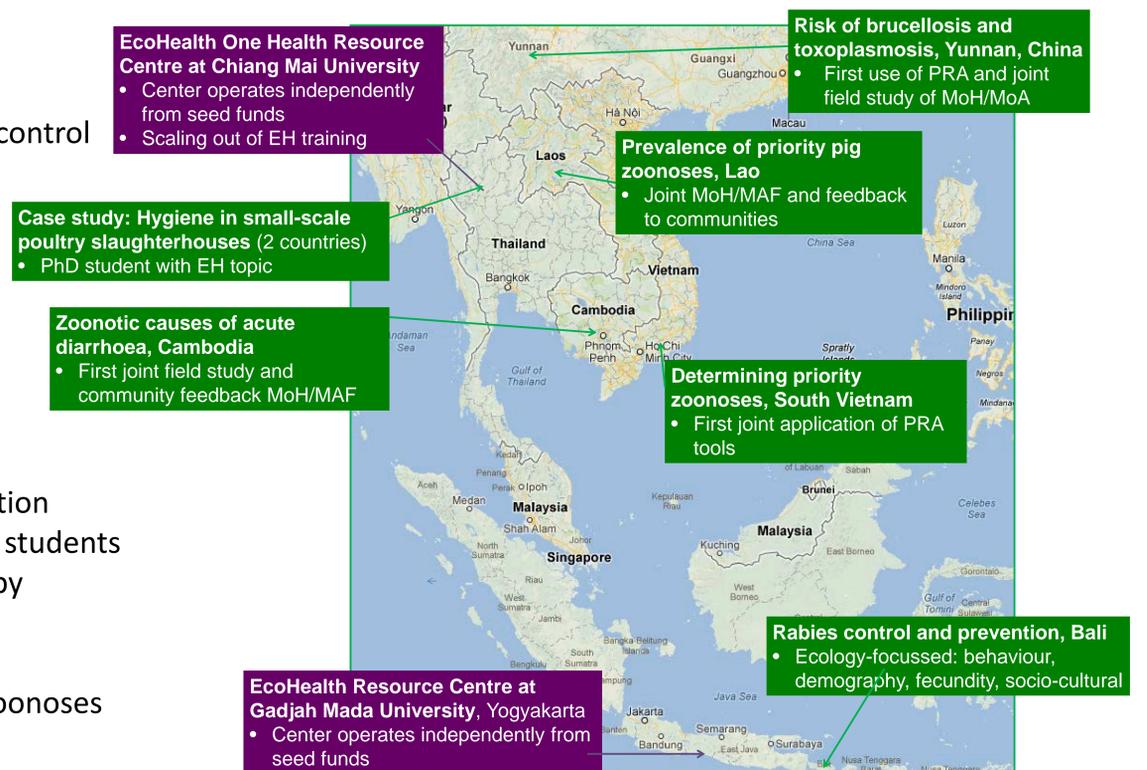
## Results

2 Ecohealth-(One Health) Resource centres established:

- Capacity building, research (multi-faculty), communication
- Training manuals, case studies, EH courses, PhD & MSc students incorporated EH in their thesis, EH ideas incorporated by students in KKN (Community Services)

6 Case studies:

- Multi-institutional studies on food-borne diseases or zoonoses following EH principles



## Challenges

- Various and complex
- 'loose' definitions of 'ecohealth'
- Find consensus on research topics and sharing of budgets
- Language and cultural barriers, silo thinking
- Qualitative meet quantitative researchers (initially limited understanding among both groups)
- Lack of qualitative research skills in most of teams but also on proposal writing, study design and analysis
- 'transaction' costs for collaboration

## Successes

- All teams have presented their case studies at international conferences
- Writing of publications in local languages and submitting to international peer-reviewed journals is ongoing
- Follow-up EH research proposals have been developed and funded for selected teams
- 1<sup>st</sup> Regional EH symposium organized for Southeast Asia (2013), 2<sup>nd</sup> planned for 2015 hosted by Ecohealth-(One Health) Resource Centre
- EH uptake demonstrated through outcome mapping for all teams

## Research into use

- Ecohealth-(One Health) Resource Centre's integrated in the university structure in both centre's
- Policy dialogue and briefs
- Teams accepted the use and recognised the strengths of combined qualitative and quantitative tools
- Change of silo-practice and promotion of regular meetings between MoA & MoH (e.g. Yunnan, China)



Example for focus group discussion "prior" (left) and after training of researchers, Yunnan. Unger 2012



Fred Unger, F.Unger@cgiar.org • ILRI, Hanoi, Vietnam • +84 129 295 1750 (mobile)  
<http://aghealth.wordpress.com> • [www.ilri.org](http://www.ilri.org)

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