The International Health Regulations (2005) have identified surveillance and response capacity for emerging infectious diseases (EIDs) as one of the key areas of core capacity development for its implementation in Member countries. More than 70% of EIDs are of animal origin, and therefore it is necessary to promote intersectoral cooperation between human and animal health sectors for prevention and control. Zoonoses control is one of the priority areas for implementation of the Asia-Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases (APSED), and SEARO and WPRO are working together in this area.

Development of core capacities for implementation of IHR (2005) at the country level requires political commitment from the national government and technical assistance from international partners. The World Bank, AusAID, USAID, ADB and other donors are providing technical and financial assistance to Member countries for Pandemic Influenza preparedness, and it will definitely contribute to strengthening national capacity for surveillance and response of EIDs, including zoonoses.

**Achievements**

The WHO biennial work programme for 2008-2009 has highlighted activities to strengthen surveillance and response capacity for zoonoses. WHO-SEARO has developed a Regional Strategic Framework for Prevention and Control of Zoonoses in the South-East Asia Region with the involvement of regional experts. A regional zoonoses meeting was organized in Jakarta, Indonesia on 6-8 November 2007, which reiterated the need for implementing the Regional Strategic Framework in line with IHR (2005) and APSED.

SEARO has taken the initiative to mobilize resources for strengthening surveillance and response capacity for highly pathogenic, emerging and re-emerging diseases (HPED) including zoonoses in South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and Association of South-East Asian Nations ASEAN countries. The European Commission has made a commitment of 4 million euros for the HPED project for four years, which will cover six SAARC and seven ASEAN countries and will be important for participating countries to develop core capacities for surveillance and response of zoonoses.

Zoonoses risk assessment tools were developed and used in Maldives. The results of risk assessment will be shared in a national workshop on zoonoses, and a national strategy for zoonoses control will be developed based on risk assessment. It is planned to conduct risk assessment in Bhutan, Maldives and Sri Lanka in 2008 and other countries of South-East Asia Region in 2009.

**Gaps and needs**

There is a need to further strengthen intersectoral collaboration between human and animal health sectors. A joint outbreak investigation by medical and veterinary professionals at the field level should be encouraged. Networking of medical and veterinary laboratories and utilization of available resources through mutual cooperation will help to improve case detection rate. It is high time to review existing medical and veterinary curricula so that a new generation of medical and veterinary professionals will understand the spirit of a “one health—one medicine” approach in line with a coordinated approach to improve and protect human and animal health.