

Disrupting Crime, Improving Disease Surveillance Across Borders in the Mekong – A case study

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One Health

Definition:

One Health is a collaborative, multisectoral, and transdisciplinary approach — working at the local, regional, national, and global levels — with the goal of achieving optimal health outcomes recognizing the interconnection between people, animals, plants, and their shared environment.

Framing and Application:

Tends to focus on the interface between animals, plants and humans in the context of emerging infectious (zoonotic) disease

Gaps and Challenges

- Animal and human infectious disease surveillance can be very patchy in high-risk geographical zones (Mekong region cross border areas and Sub Sahara and Africa more generally)
- Traditional drivers of zoonotic infections have origins in the illegal commodity markets (wildlife trafficking, environmental crimes more generally, human trafficking)
- Security sector/Law Enforcement agencies not necessarily part of disease surveillance despite cross over of issues and geography



TRAFFICKING OF CONTAGION

**ENVIRONMENTAL
CRIME AND BIOLOGICAL
THREATS IN THE
GREATER MEKONG**

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Very little evidence that responses to enviro-crimes are informed or strengthened in any way by their associations with biological threats

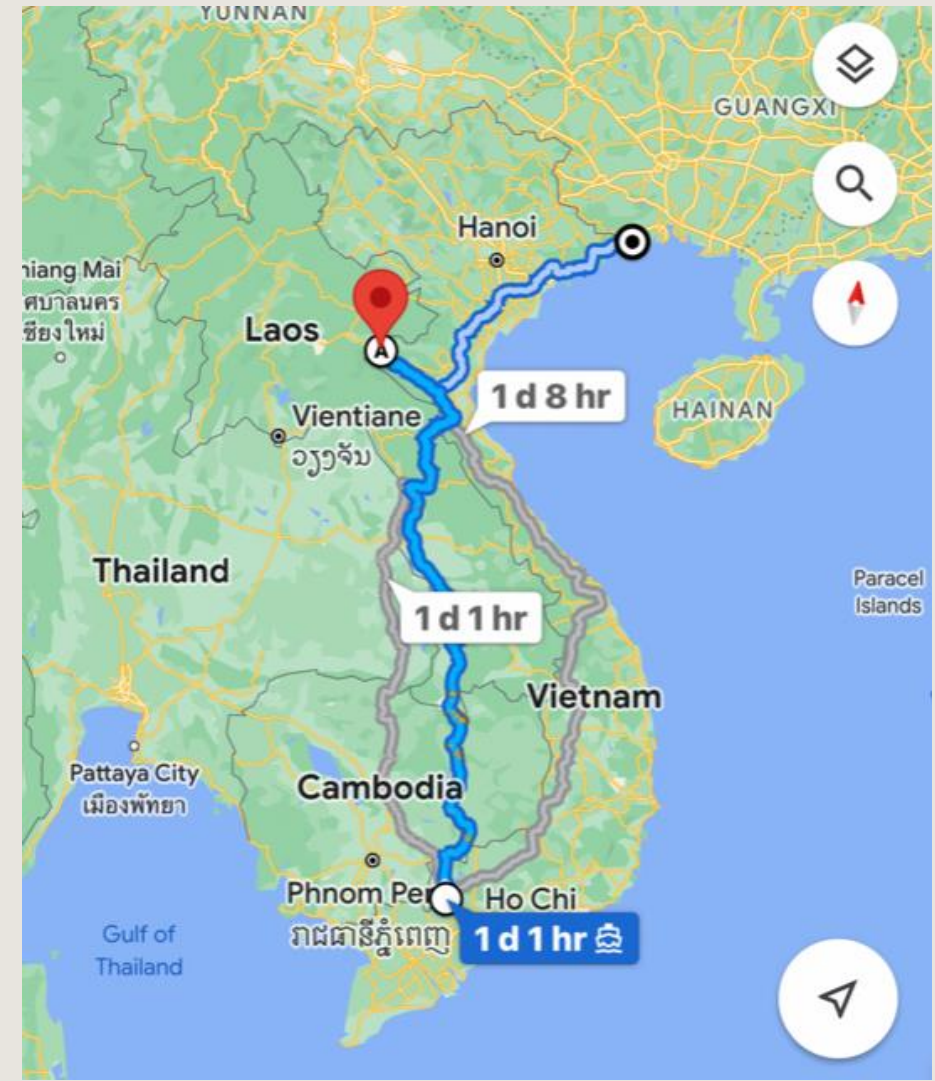
Cross border points in the GMS are essentially are chokepoints where transboundary corridors funnel migration, trade, and transport and increasingly are becoming known as hotspots of emerging infectious disease

Biological threats are also exacerbated by the informal and formal flow of livestock and plant materials across the borders yet biosecurity responses to these flows are also often conducted in silos with limited interaction between the health and security agencies

In advancing the health and security sector interface there are opportunities to foreground health as a driver of national security imperatives. Yet that requires national authorities to give much greater consideration to biological threat potential of environmental crimes when developing national security strategies

Mekong Case Study

Conducted three cases studies at three specific cross-border locations



Key Lines of Inquiry

- **Knowledge, attitudes, practices and risk perceptions of security sector personnel to biological threats as it related to their role in disrupting TOC**
- **Exposure to relevant training and preparedness in the context of biological threat and TOC**
- **Experience of working cross sector with health, agriculture and natural resources in relation to the nexus**



Findings

- 1. Only a third of law enforcement personnel report some basic knowledge of biological threats in relation to cross border commodity movement (illegal and legal)**
- 2. Almost none are concerned that in disrupting crime they could be exposed to biological threat**
- 3. Almost none report active collaborations with health or agriculture in relation to perception of disease threat or early surveillance**



Major Points

1. Security sector actors in Vietnam are unprepared and untrained in anything to do with biological threats at the border
2. Human and Animal health sector people are marginalized and not engaged in border agencies work in relation to crime and biological risk
3. National security actors are not quite ready for conceptualizing biological threats as national security issues
4. Donors continue to fund in silos unaware of the huge gaps in global health security



Mekong Meeting March 2023

- Meeting of executive leadership personnel from police, immigration, customs together with health, agriculture and natural resources to discuss findings and next steps – Bangkok, March, 2023, supported by ADB and DFAT with DFAT Implementation through GITOC
- Explore innovative multi-agency projects to improve enforcement and improve early warning disease surveillance

Pacific Case Study

- Recent multi-agency research highlighted just what a critical role police, immigration and customs played as partners to health in the COVID-19 response
- Link between TNC and biological threats still under explored
- Fiji Police keen to take lead on developing a training package to build biological threat literacy across root and branch which will be easily adapted for Immigration, Customs and RFMF

Pacific Case Study

- At request of National Security Secretariat in Fiji we are now developing an “Early Warning and Multi-Agency Biological Threats (and all hazards) Surveillance Project”
- Considerate of suite of threats (biological, water, food, climate, disaster AND Transnational Crime)
- Draw on the best surveillance capabilities of key agencies including but not limited to RFMF, FPF, NDMO, Immigration, BAF, Health, Agriculture AND Community

Way forward for One Health and Early Warning Surveillance

- Challenge the operational definition of One Health and foreground strategies within a national security priority framework
- A networked response across agencies and sectors, i.e. collaboration between law enforcement, customs, border and coast guards with practitioners in health, agriculture and biosecurity sectors.
- Increase levels of biological threat preparedness among law enforcement sectors in terms of both occupational health and safety and contagion risk to populations/countries
- Bring security sector surveillance into disease surveillance