

Annual Review Template

Title: Animal Health Systems Strengthening (AHSS) Project		
Programme Value £ (full life): £4.9m	Review date: June 2024	
Programme Code: AHSS-36850	Start date: 01/04/2022	End date: 31/03/2025

Summary of Programme Performance

Year	2				
Overall Output Score	A				
Risk Rating	Amber/Green				

A. SUMMARY AND OVERVIEW

Acronyms

AHS	Animal Health System
AHSS	Animal Health Systems Strengthening
ALB	Arm's Length Body
AMR	Antimicrobial Resistance
AMU	Antimicrobial Use
APHA	Animal and Plant Health Agency
APHW	Animal and Plant Health and Welfare Directorate
BHC	British High Commission
CEFAS	Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science
CBS	Country Based Staff
CAHWs	Community Animal Health Workers
DCVO	Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer
DD	Deputy Director
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
DgC	Defra Group Commercial
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care
DLS	Department of Livestock Services - The Gambia
DVS	Department of Veterinary Services – Zambia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
GAH	Global Animal Health
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
HMG	His Majesty's Government
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IHR	International Health Regulations
KPIs	Key performance indicators
LMICs	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NVRI	Nigeria Veterinary Research Institute
ODA	Official Development Assistance
OGDs	Other Government Departments

OH	One Health
PMO	Project Management Office
PVS	Performance of Veterinary Services
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SR	Spending Review
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TWG	Technical Working Group
UKHSA	UK Health Security Agency
VFM	Value For Money
VMD	Veterinary Medicines Directorate
VPP	Veterinary Paraprofessionals
VSD	Veterinary Services Directorate – Ghana
WHO	World Health Organisation
WOAH	World Organisation for Animal Health (formerly Office International des Epizooties - OIE)

A1. Description of programme

The Animal Health Systems Strengthening project aims to work with Responsible Authorities in Low-and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs) through bilateral technical assistance to build resilient health systems by strengthening capabilities in animal health systems, based on a One Health, all-hazards, system strengthening approach. This will help to: protect from, and detect and respond to, known and emerging diseases; improve food security through stronger, healthier, and more productive animals; improve livelihoods; and enhance global health security. The [World Organisation for Animal Health \(WOAH\) Performance of Veterinary Service \(PVS\) Pathway](#) is used as an operating framework to inform the scope and delivery of Defra's technical input. This is an internationally recognised methodology for evaluating the effectiveness of countries' terrestrial and aquatic veterinary services, including capacity building activities for systematic strengthening and monitoring improvement.

The project objectives are:

- To enhance biosafety and biosecurity through improved veterinary terrestrial and aquatic animal health services, laboratory quality management systems and disease surveillance capabilities to reduce the frequency and impact of animal disease outbreaks and minimise the risk of disease emergence and transmission.
- To enable rapid and effective emergency response to animal disease outbreaks, thus reducing the risk of spillover of animal pathogens into the human population, by developing early warning systems and strengthening intersectoral collaboration of animal and public health systems.
- To improve livelihoods of livestock keepers by reducing losses attributable to disease through strengthened animal health services.
- To tackle gender equity and social equity in veterinary services by ensuring women and other marginalised groups are fairly represented as beneficiaries and in the facilitation and participation of training and development.

The project is managed by Defra's Global Animal Health (GAH) Division ODA PMO Team, a sub-team of Defra's Animal & Plant Health & Welfare Directorate (APHW). It is delivered in partnership with Defra's Arm's Length Bodies (ALBs): Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA), Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) and Veterinary Medicines Directorate (VMD). Visiting technical experts from Defra's ALBs are supported by a small resident country-based team (at the British High Commission) to support sustainability, value for money, technical continuity, and effective oversight. An Agile project management approach is adopted with Phase I (Year 1) - the Discovery Phase focused on assessing need and understanding the landscape and Phase II – Implementation (Years 2 and 3) focused on refining and scaling up delivery. Focusing on both terrestrial and aquatic animal health this year the project operated in four focal countries: Ghana, Nigeria, Zambia, and The Gambia. Country selection for all the first three countries were determined in year 1, informed

by the process reported in the year 1 annual report: Following a high-level request for support, to tackle a novel outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI), The Gambia was added as an additional focal country in June 2023.

85% (£1,596,968) of the Year 2 allocated budget was achieved, with most of the underspend attributed to procurement (securing a global logistics supplier and external partners slower than anticipated procurement processes) and staffing capacity, due to staff turnover.

A2. Summary supporting narrative for the overall score in this review

This annual review relates to the second year of an initial three-year project and focuses on the Implementation Phase. The project has broadly met or exceeded the expectation for all three outputs (see section C for specific details). **Building capabilities are core central to a technical assistance approach, the project achieved a 108% of training and engagement targets across all three outputs, training and engaging a total of 2,946ⁱ key stakeholders with a 37% participation rate amongst women in a traditional male dominated sector** (see section C for further information). In general, substantial progress has been made across the project, however strengthening laboratory networks in Ghana and Zambia was hampered by staff turnover and two training guides that were not completed within the agreed timeline. Despite these two deviations, considerable progress has been achieved: implementing the recommendations arising from the year 1 annual review, establishing country-based teams in Ghana and Zambia, progressing with delivery in four focal countries - Ghana, Zambia, Nigeria, and The Gambia and strengthening the monitoring evaluation and learning framework. Given the upward trajectory of the project an A grading (Outputs met expectation) is awarded for the second year of the Animal Health Systems Strengthening Project.

A3. Major lessons learned and recommendations for the year ahead

Towards the end of Year 2, an anonymous survey was circulated to the project team, followed by an independent facilitated face to face session, to drill down on issues arising and agree actions/next steps. Below is a summary of lessons learned and recommendations for the year ahead.

Lessons Learned

Governance

Decision making processes can be improved by clarifying roles and responsibilities between teams. In line with the roll out of the implementation phase, the delivery model has been reviewed. A shared responsibility box has now been added, which has helped to address some of the underlying uncertainty. Further refinement is required,

ⁱ Reference reduction by 25% due to overlap

which in part will be informed by a Responsible, Accountable, Consulted Informed (RACI) matrix inserted to the country level Gantt charts.

Communication

Internal communication was cited as a key theme throughout the Year 2 feedback survey. It was felt the PMO could improve more timely information flow across the project team. Specific actions to improve communication are captured under governance, Ways of working.

Ways of Working

In general, the project team are committed to working together achieving an average score of 3.36/5 on the feedback survey. Room for improvement to achieve more coherent programming was acknowledged. Many of the points raised reflect Tuckman's stages of group developmentⁱⁱ, with comments resonating with the storming and norming phase. Addressing the issues arising the team hope to move into a more consistent performing phase next year.

Collaborative and joined up ways of working are essential to effective delivery. The drafted Ways of Working document has now been updated. It will be kept as a live document and updated to capture emerging issues and circulated across the project team to enable more consistent ways of workings.

Recommendations

- Minutes from the quarterly Oversight Board meetings will also be circulated across the project team, to enable all members of the team keep abreast with discussions and senior decision making.
- Insert a RACI matrix in the project Gantt Chart to help define specific roles and responsibilities.
- Improve internal communication and clarify terms of reference and roles and responsibilities between PMO/Senior Leadership and technical delivery.
- TWG terms of reference to be reviewed to improve efficacy and PMO to be invited in an observer capacity, to enable efficient decision making.
- Ways of Working document to be kept as live document and regularly updated.

ⁱⁱ[Forming Storming Norming Performing | Tuckman's stages of group development explained \[with diagram\] — BiteSize Learning](#)

Recommendations from Year 1 Lessons Learned

Recommendations	Progress	Status
A more considered approach to working with future focal countries should continue to be applied, building on the experiences and lessons learned from engagement in Ghana.	Actively incorporated into project planning and meeting with key stakeholders	Ongoing
The project should develop and implement a robust communications strategy with input and advice from the recently established Communications Working Group. This would help to establish clearer mechanisms for sharing accurate key messages externally and support the PMO in providing regular updates to the project team. Such an approach would improve performance and ODA compliance, in line with the new Defra ODA Hub Operating Manual.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Working Group established (chaired by SRO) • Key lines document produced. • Ways of working document produced. 	Ongoing, improving internal communication
We should pivot towards a major focus on delivery. The AHSS Technical Working Group (TWG) was established to agree and implement joined up ways of working to support delivery, including partnerships with other government departments, namely UKHSA (to embed a One Health Approach) and FCDO (particularly in the focal countries to ensure our project is embedded in the wider country plan and can benefit from leveraged expertise at post).	TWG established. Terms of reference reviewed for efficiency as part of Year 2 AR.	Ongoing
We should strengthen the MEL framework for Year 2, including setting clear timelines for deliverables and key strategic and operational decisions that teams can be held accountable for. Developing and making use of the Logframe with corresponding indicators will support effective monitoring and measurement of delivery performance.	Completed	Further actions captured in section C2
Effective and timely procurement mechanisms will be central to the success of	Improved: DgC capacity	Ongoing

the project going forward. ALBs will need to establish efficient logistics to enable effective, responsive, and compliant operational delivery.	increased, and global logistics supplier appointed	
Feedback/recommendations from the Social Development Direct report on the first year of project should be incorporated within AHSS to improve GESI awareness. GESI indicators should be included in baseline data collection and incorporated into routine monitoring/data collection disaggregated by gender, disability, age, region, tribe/clan, and grade. This will begin to help us to identify and assess the differential impact of the project on social inequalities, including unintentionally exacerbating inequalities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GESI Audit & Action Plan undertaken • Disaggregated data included in Year 2 AR 	Completed Ongoing monitoring
We should continue to develop a reporting framework that captures not only the technical assistance delivered under AHSS, but other projects/activities leveraged by AHSS/ALBs that help to create a bigger impact by Defra Group in the Animal Health System Strengthening space in focal countries.		Ongoing

B: THEORY OF CHANGE AND PROGRESS TOWARDS OUTCOMES

A draft Theory of Change (ToC) was developed during Phase I. Following appointment of a full-time senior MEL Officer in October 2023 and feedback from the Year 1 Annual Review, a Global Theory of Change has now been produced and Country Level Theories of Changes for Ghana, Zambia and The Gambia, with corresponding Logframes (Global, Ghana, Zambia and The Gambia) have also been developed. As part of the participatory annual review process the Theories of Change, were interrogated. Whilst the assumptions are consistent at the global and country level, the risk and barriers have been nuanced at the country level to account for our emerging knowledge and the political economy of each country. For example, **the complexity of Africa’s most populous country has made operating in Nigeria difficult**, however some limited work was undertaken in Nigeria in partnership with UKHSA. **Both Ghanaⁱⁱⁱ and Zambia^{iv} are subject to IMF structural adjustments,**

ⁱⁱⁱ 1 IMF Executive Board Approves US\$3 Billion Extended Credit Facility Arrangement for Ghana

^{iv} IMF Reaches Staff-Level Agreement with Zambia on the Second Review of the Extended Credit Facility

resulting in a reduction in public spending. This makes investment in animal health systems challenging, whilst the need for food security and poverty alleviation grows ever more pressing. We are still confident that the theory of change holds true acknowledging the following limitations/caveats.

- **Timeframe** - the timeframe for translating outputs into outcomes cannot be easily monitored within two years of delivery. This transformative change is likely to be realised over a longer timeframe, particularly when attempting to measure the change of institutional strengthening on end users. Continuation funding is being sought in the next spending review to optimize and realize the return on investment.
- **Contribution not attribution** - The strategically important investment of £5m across focal countries is small, but with a potential to yield positive changes in the livestock sectors, as articulated in the project's economic case. AHSS works collaboratively with other key stakeholders, including other UK government departments, national governments, and UN agencies to maximize inputs and outputs to achieve sustainable change and strengthen the performance of veterinary services. The outcomes achieved are therefore a result of collective contributions and not a single attribute.
- **There is a compelling case to made for the contribution of veterinary services to animal production, and global health**, as articulated by [WOAH, Strengthening Veterinary Services through OIE PVS Pathway](#). However, evidence gaps exist for differential impact of animal disease burdens (particularly in the Global south) and return on investment on different livestock sectors. We are working with [Liverpool University](#) on some targeted research in our focal countries, to help inform the policy dialogue between national governments and development partners for more sustainable solutions.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI)

There has been an increased focus on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), noting that the inclusion of women and other marginalised groups is necessary to achieve equity and reduce poverty: specifically in reference to AHSS this includes: 1) Improved livelihood of livestock keepers including women, subsistence farmer and rural communities; and 2) increased access to training/capability building for female animal health professionals including those from prioritised rural communities.

The Social Development Direct GESI audit assessed the project as GESI unaware, and identified, further work is required to transform the project to GESI sensitive by March 2025. This will help ensure the benefits of the project and realised by groups most in need by tackling gender inequalities and other marginalised populations. The audit recommendations have been captured and interventions outlined in the GESI action plan. A GESI analysis, will utilise the knowledge of the country-based teams in Ghana and Zambia with support from Social Development Advisor at post in the British High Commission and in the UK. The business case has been updated to incorporate

GESI relevant KPIs. Terms of Reference for the end of project audit are being developed and resources allocated.

- 1) **Engagement:** Throughout Year 2, the project in Ghana has engaged with key stakeholders, including African Women in Rural Farming, key stakeholders in the Upper East Region (a prioritised rural region in Ghana) to inform project design and future strategic investment. A deep dive into Fulbe tribe (nomadic pastoralist across northern Ghana) has been postponed due procurement delays at post. The project in Zambia formally commenced mid-way through year 2. Now the country team are in place an engagement plan has been developed to identify key stakeholders.
- 2) **Monitoring:** Baseline data has been collected across countries and workstreams. To date, 1,213 (37%) of the 3,272 participants trained across all AHSS focal countries and workstreams are women (38%, 23% and 31%) in Ghana, The Gambia and Zambia respectively. Historically animal health sector in general is dominated by men, both as veterinarians and livestock keepers. Women have a nuanced role in this sector, for example as livestock keepers of small ruminants and continue to be significantly under-represented as vets. The GESI audit will help to better understand the landscape and set realistic targets going forward.
- 3) **Team capacity:** GESI teams have been organised to build capacity within the AHSS team, including with ALB partners and in-country teams. The GESI analysis will help to inform the team about the operating environment.

B2. Describe where the programme is on/off track to contribute to the expected outcomes and impact. What action is planned in the year ahead?

The project is broadly in line with the outputs agreed for Year 2. In year 3, the project will aim to recuperate the slippage in output 1 – strengthening laboratory network, attributed to staff turnover, and continue to refine its delivery model, progress agreed workplans in three focal countries – The Gambia, Zambia and Ghana for greater impact and refine indicators to measure the application and outcome of our technical assistance. The GESI audit and action plan will also be implemented to tackle social inequalities and strengthen results to reduce poverty, particularly amongst the most marginalised populations.

B3. Justify whether the programme should continue, based on its own merits and in the context of the wider portfolio

Based on the above performance, and comparison with similar programmes^v, AHSS has met most of its Year 2 deliverables and continues to create a solid foundation based on evidenced need, collaboration, relationship-building, strategic partnerships, continuous learning, and capability and capacity to deliver. Delivering an effective technical assistance programme takes time, as FCDO and UKHSA have also found,

^v FCDO's Tackling Deadly Disease in Africa Programme (TDDAP) and UKHSA's International Health Regulations (IHR) Strengthening Project

but AHSS now has the fundamental building blocks in place to enable successful and sustained delivery, which can then be built on in future years.





The case for investment in animal health systems in LMICs continues to develop including emerging evidence on the intersection with climate change and biodiversity loss, and the role of livestock production in tackling poverty. These environmental pressures can drive spill-over of pathogens from animals to people (zoonoses), which is the predominant cause of emerging infectious diseases (OHHLEP, 2023), potentially triggering another pandemic.

A One Health approach to prevention of spill-over costs just one third of the cost of managing a pandemic (World Bank, 2022), with LMICs disproportionately affected by such shocks. The UK Biological Security Strategy recognises the UK’s increasing exposure to the spread of infectious diseases originating overseas. Despite this, there is still a significant gap in HMG’s global health offer around animal health, which this project is designed to help address.

C. DETAILED OUTPUT SCORING

C1. Briefly describe the output’s activities and provide supporting narrative for the score.

The project consists of three key outputs comprised of 7 separate, interlinked workstreams. Technical delivery (Workstream) by output and focal country.

					
Output1	Laboratory Strengthening	✓		✓	
Output 2	Surveillance & early detection	✓	✓		
	Disease Control	✓	✓	✓	✓
	Enhanced Emergency Preparedness	✓			✓
	Fish Health	✓		✓	
	Bee health	✓			
Output 3	One Health Coordination	✓			

Key Partners



Please find below a summary of Year 2 activities by workstream and outputs.

Output Title	Enhanced sustainability, effectiveness, safety, and efficiency of the national (public and private) laboratory system (or network)		
Output Number	1	Output Score	B
Impact Weighting	30%	Weighting revised since last AR	n/a

Indicators	Milestone for this review	Progress
1.a Number of laboratory staff trained disaggregated by country, gender, age, disability & designation	Target 143 - Achieved 122 25% female participation	Moderately missed (85% achieved)
1.b Value of Laboratory equipment donated/supplied (GBP)	Target £20,000 - Achieved £22,219.21	Exceeded (111%)
1.c Number of proficiency tests (PT) successfully completed	5 x tests successfully completed 6 tests issued	Confirmatory results currently not available

Workstream 1: An efficient, effective, sustainable national laboratory system is core to a functional veterinary service. APHA, VMD and FAO have been working with veterinary research institutes and national and regional veterinary labs (including food safety), in Ghana, Zambia and The Gambia to enhance capabilities in routine diagnostics e.g. Salmonella and HPAI and assist towards achieving ISO 17025 Quality Management status. Residue testing in honey training for the National Food Safety Laboratory was not undertaken, because the prerequisite documents were not sufficiently developed by the veterinary services. Due to staff turnover, training targets were marginally missed by 21 people (15%). The confirmed [Proficiency tests](#) results, to assess learning, were still not available at the time of drafting this report. To support this output £22,219.21 was also provided in laboratory equipment and consumables, (including reagents, PCR machines etc) to assist the laboratory diagnostic capacity and progress towards quality management status - exceeding the target by 11%.

Output Title	Strengthened capacity to prepare for and respond to animal health emergencies, to carry out surveillance and control diseases including in relation to wildlife and non-traditional farm enterprises (NTFE)		
Output Number	2	Output Score	A
Impact Weighting	60%	Weighting revised since last AR	N/A

Indicators	Milestone for this review	Progress
2.a Number of people trained disaggregated by region/province, gender, age, disability & designation	Target 2,400 - Achieved 2,438 27% female participation	Met (101%)
2.b Number of animals vaccinated, disaggregated by animal/pathogen/country	Target 25,000 – Achieved 26,332	Exceeded (105%)
2.c Number of simulation exercises participated in	Target 1 - Achieved 2	Exceeded (200%)
2.d Number of knowledge products commenced and produced by type	Target - 8 commenced and 4 to be completed this year. Achieved – 8 commenced and 2 completed.	Under target 75% achieved

This output consists of the following workstreams:

- **Workstream 2:** Improved capacity to carry out surveillance and early detection in animal population including wildlife – **Met**

The project has been working at the community level to strengthen the provision including last miles services for some of the most remote communities to bridge the gap in veterinary services. This includes:

- The development of a pilot Bushmeat surveillance system in Kumasi (Ghana)
- Training for Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs), including the revision and validation of their training manual (Ghana)
- Enhanced training in HPAI surveillance and reporting (The Gambia)

- In partnership with Veterinary Service Department (VSD) in Ghana the update and validation of their Animal Disease Surveillance Guide, ready for rollout next year.

A total of 203 (against a target of 198) people have received training in early surveillance and detection, including CAHWs, Veterinary Paraprofessionals (VPPs) and veterinarians, of which 60 are CAHWs in the Upper East Region. Two activities to be delivered in partnership with an external partner did not take place (due to lengthy procurement and approvals processes). These activities will be rescheduled in year 3. Despite this delay, the project marginally exceeded its training target by 5.

- **Workstream 3: Broader application of disease control measures – achieved**

Linked to the workstream 2 above, AHSS has been working to strengthen national capabilities and in partnerships with FAO and community organisations to implement prevention, control, or eradication programmes for priority diseases in some of the most vulnerable communities:

- **In Nigeria**, a “Rapid Response Toolkit for Rabies” containing required rabies-specific SOPs has been developed to enable governmental animal and human health professionals to action effective rabies surveillance activities, supporting key actions arising from the recent simulation exercise (conducted in workstream 5)
- **In The Gambia**, in partnership with FAO, the campaign to expand HPAI containment has commenced.
- **In Zambia** resources were provided to tackle a national anthrax outbreak.
- **In Ghana**, a collaborative food safety awareness campaign was undertaken with National Food Safety Laboratory.

The target to vaccinate 15,000 poultry against Newcastle disease; and 10,000 small ruminants against PPR in Ghana was exceeded by 5.3%.

- **Workstream 5: Enhanced Emergency Preparedness and response to threats - Exceeded**

This is a limited workstream, with one proposed activity for a joint simulation exercise with UKHSA in Zambia. Although this did not manifest, AHSS seized the opportunity to continue their collaboration with UKHSA and WHO, to add value through input and active participation in a state level zoonoses simulation exercise in Nigeria (Rabies) and a national level table-top exercise on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in Ghana.

- Workstream 6:** Strengthened provision of Aquatic Animal Health Service - **Met**

Fisheries are one of the fastest growing sectors in Africa, making it an affordable source of nutritionally rich animal protein for an increasing proportion of the population. Cefas has been working with the competent authorities to strengthen biosecurity measures and develop a curriculum for the next generation of VPPs, to mitigate uncontrolled loss as the industry rapidly expands. A total of 60 veterinarians, fish health officers and technicians were trained in Ghana and Zambia with more people engaged through wider stakeholder events, such as AMR and AMU use in lakes and fishponds.
- Workstream 7:** Raised awareness and understanding of bee health for safer food production – **Met**

Ghana’s promising apiculture industry has been hampered by recent regulatory export failures. APHA have been working with key stakeholders to train veterinarians and beekeepers in bee health and disease control measures, including a study visit to the UK Bee Health Unit. They have also commenced work on the development of a field manual for veterinarians and VPPs to consolidate learning and aid the identification of key bee health issues in partnership with the veterinary schools in Ghana to develop a bee health curriculum for the next generation of veterinarians. Key milestones were achieved including training and engaging of 51 veterinarians and farmers in bee health.

A total number of 8 products commenced this year, with 4 to be completed by the end of year 2. Completion of the Animal Disease Surveillance Guide & Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) have been delayed due to validation processes; but should be finalised ready for printing by the end of Q1 in year 3.

Output Title	Improved competency of the Veterinary Services to strengthen regulation and better coordinate resources and activities at all levels, including with other government authorities (via a One Health approach)		
Output Number	3	Output Score	A+
Impact Weighting	10%	Weighting revised since last AR	n/a

Indicators	Milestone for this review	Progress
3.a Number of One Health meetings actively supported /participated in	Target 4 - Achieved 4	Met
3.b Number of events/products produced	Target 3 - Achieved 3	Met
3.c Training and engaging public officials and other key stakeholders	Target 135 – Achieved 713	Exceeded (528%)

Sustainable technical assistance is reliant on strong partnerships, effective regulation, and a conducive operating environment to enable transformative change. AHSS has been working with veterinary services to influence their capacity to strengthen their competence and mandate and competence to coordinate resources, including one health inter-sector coordination with other key stakeholders and government ministries, through a one health approach. This includes:

- Three successful high profile launches in Ghana, The Gambia and Zambia and One day stakeholder workshop in Zambia to raise awareness of the issues of residues of medicines in food of animal origin, with 40+participants including representation from across government, food industry, and vet profession helped to raise the profile of our work to strengthen Anima Health, with influential key stakeholders across the sector
- 3-day Veterinary Global Benchmarking Tool workshop for Zambia national regulator ZAMRA, supporting application of this self-assessment tool aimed at strengthening veterinary medicine regulatory systems by identifying gaps, and effectively generating institutional development plans (IDPs). The workshop highlighted the importance of having a strengthened regulatory system that is dynamic, adaptable, transparent, and proficient in carrying out its regulatory assignments for the assurance of public health safety.
- Work has commenced on the development of an economic case for investment in veterinary services in partnership with University of Liverpool.

C2. Describe any changes during the past year, and any planned changes as a result of this review.

- Nigeria - due to size of the country, complex social and political environment, project’s limited budget and progress made to date the AHSS Oversight Board agreed to formally postpone activities in Nigeria and concentrate on activities in the remaining three focal countries where a difference is more likely to be made. Subject to successful continuation funding in the next Spending Review, Nigeria will be reconsidered as a Phase II focal country.

- Actions arising from GESI audit implemented, GESI Action Plan implemented and SEAH Risk Assessment conducted, with ongoing monitoring for active implementation.

Planned changes because of this review.

- Update Logframe:
 - Refine indicators to include proxy outcome indicators at the global and country levels to help measure the uptake, application and efficacy of the training delivered to date.
 - Refine Output 3 to better capture the rationale of transformative enabling environment.
- Engage an external agency to review progress against key milestones, assess value for money and help refine metrics for Output 3.
- Priorities regions agreed – for coalesced investment to highlight the focus on poverty reduction:
 - Ghana - Volta Region, Upper East Region, and Oti Region
 - Zambia - Copperbelt Province and Northern Western Province
- Project key performance data, including disaggregated GESI data to be routinely shared with ALBs and CBS to help inform and drive progress towards key milestones and continuous improvement.
- Review delivery model to improve internal communication and clarify terms of reference and roles and responsibilities between PMO/Senior Leadership and technical delivery.
- Improve reporting mechanism – to better link narrative and agreed KPIs.

C3. Progress on recommendations from the previous AR (if completed), lessons learned this year and recommendations for the year ahead

Recommendations from year 1 Annual Review	Progress	Status
Section A		
Explain how this programme will deliver on core poverty reduction, gender equality, and do no harm commitments (DNH) under ODA and SDG commitments and include in the theory of change.	Incorporated into revised Year 1 AR	Completed
Gender, Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI). acknowledge the findings of the Social Development Direct audit and provide disaggregated data and qualitative assessments of progress against GESI indicators.	GESI Audit & Action Plan undertaken Disaggregated data included in Year 2 AR	Completed

Section D: Risks		
We need to know how safeguarding policies and codes of conduct are being operationalised to mitigate the risk.	SEAH Risk Assessment undertaken	Completed
Section E		
Include lessons learnt from commercial delays		Completed
Section F		

D: RISK

Overview of risk management

The AHSS project takes a proactive and dynamic approach to risk management, regularly identifying, discussing, and reviewing risks and mitigations at all levels (e.g. in scheduled team and board meetings, technical working groups, narrative reports, involving the PMO, technical lead, SRO, DD and ALBs). We continue to work with Defra’s ODA Hub to improve our approach to risk management, including development of more detailed risk registers which conform with Defra ODA requirements, Delivery Chain Risk Mapping. Training on risk management has also been undertaken including by the PRO and SRO.

The risks and mitigations have evolved since the business case was produced and have been regularly reviewed and updated since the year 1 annual review as summarised below:

Risk Description	Mitigation strategy	Yr. 2 Residual risk rating	Yr. 1 year’s residual
Strategic & Context			
social/economic/ political situations in UK & focal countries (e.g. 2024 election in Ghana & UK) IMF restructuring in Zambia and Ghana; LGBT Rights engagement may be limited / compromised in key institutions impacting capacity to delivery.	Mitigating actions were deployed to minimise any impact on the project, such as reviewing delivery approach (e.g. using trusted third-party suppliers) and pivoting to another focal country.	6	N/A

Programme/Project			
Limited procurement capacity to meet project needs in a timely manner.	Global logistics supplier appointed, multi -year awards, monthly pipeline meetings with DgC, ALBs, CBT and FCDO to forward plan and avoid crises management	6	12
Inadequate MEL framework, to robustly measure progress and outcome	Dedicated MEL Officer appointed. ToC and Logframe developed. Annual review actions completed. Independent end of year review to be commissioned	6	12
Delivery model. Disconnect between PMO/technical leadership/lack of clarity regarding roles and responsibilities		9	9
Delivery/Operational			
Staffing capacity/recruitment freeze	Exemptions and received approval for additional ALB resource. Recruitment of CBS. Consider trusted 3 rd Party	6	12
Protracted approval process with some external partners	Build approval timeline into commission process Consider alternative delivery mechanism.	6	N/A
Quality assurance – suboptimal delivery in terms of timeliness	Include break clause, not progress unless benefits significantly outweigh risks. Regular monitoring of key milestones/ performance management	6	N/A
Absorption capacity of partners	Regular engagement with key stakeholders to assess & reassess need. Assess need to capacity building & strengthen	6	12
Risk to staff of working in LMICs	All UK staff to complete mandatory SAFE training. Travel	4	9

	Risk assessment, incl. security briefings on arrival. CBS employed via HMG platform. Follow FCDO guideline and protocols.		
Financial and Fiduciary			
Underspend due above issues	Costed workplans agreed for focal countries. CBS in place enabling delivery to progress at pace. +ve response to high-level request for programming in The Gambia to tackle HPAI outbreak. 20% over programming	4	16
Safeguarding	PMO attend safeguarding drop-in sessions. Safeguarding is everyone's responsibility. SEAH & Safeguarding to be retained as agenda item on quarterly joint planning meeting & included as item on monitoring visit	6	8
SEAH	SEAH clauses included in all agreements (internal MOUs and external subcontracts) SEAH retained as standing agenda item on JPM Actions arising from SEAH audit to the implemented and monitored for progress and compliance		N/A

The project has scored and overall Risk Rating 6 a significant reduction on last years' risk rating of 12.5 and is operating within its risk appetite, although there is still room for continuous improvement.

E: PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT: DELIVERY, COMMERCIAL & FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

Summarise the performance of partners and Defra, notably on commercial and financial issues.

The project is managed by Defra's Global Animal Health (GAH) Division's ODA Team, in the Animal & Plant Health & Welfare (APHW) Directorate, and delivered in partnership with Defra's ALBs: APHA, Cefas and VMD. Visiting technical experts from Defra's ALBs are supported by a small country-based team to enable oversight, technical continuity, country ownership and project sustainability and VFM.

APHA lead on activities relating to Output 1, Enhanced sustainability, effectiveness, safety and efficiency of the national (public and private) laboratory system (or network), Output 2 – Workstreams 2, (Improved capacity to carry out surveillance and early detection in animal population including wildlife), 3 (Broader application of disease control measures) – 5 (Enhanced Emergency Preparedness and response to threats) and 7 (Raised awareness and understanding of bee health for safer food production). APHA delivered the most activities across the project teams, and delivered 74% of planned activities, the main delays were attributed to residue testing in bee health.

In comparison, Cefas's footprint is significantly smaller, leading on Output 2, Workstream 6 (Strengthened provision of Aquatic Animal Health Service), but also leading on technical leadership and have led on the procurement of a global logistics supplier for use the project. Cefas achieved 100% of its planned activities. The country-based teams (co-located at the British High Commission in Ghana and Zambia) have led primarily on Output 3 but have also provided logistics and monitoring support across the workstream. The teams delivered 71% of planned activities, with the majority of these taking place in Ghana. VMD's input has been comparatively limited - strategic (ensuring alignment with their wider capacity strengthening programme in Zambia on veterinary medicine regulation and AMR, delivered under other funding sources) with two deliverables in Zambia towards the end of year 2, on which the team delivered 100% on agreed activities.

The delivery summarised above, echoes many of the comments, received in the Year 2 Annual Review feedback survey:

- APHA scored an average rating of 4.18 out of 5 with comments such as: “***APHA have taken the initiative in setting up and leading the technical discussions with country teams, and appear proactive in responding to queries, raising technical issues, pushing for solutions to barriers encountered. Helpful that***

readouts from their activities are circulated in a timely manner; likewise, the monthly update on wider activity relevant to the programme is appreciated. Are working across the widest remit and managing to generate substantive outputs despite headcount challenges”.

- CEFAS also scored 4.18 out of 5 - ***“Aquaculture related activities seem to be on the front foot and well planned, fit to country needs, from reporting seen to date. Cefas have also been in the foreground to unlocking some key issues such as procurement, we have benefited from structures and experience gained from their other programmes”.***
- The country-based teams scored 3.18 out of 5 - ***“support to ALB activities has been very good. planned technical delivery by the in-country team has not been achieved in full,” “country teams need to accept more responsibility for delivery and discuss all delivery options with ALBs”.***
- VMD, had the smallest footprint in the project with input limited to a strategic capacity and some small-scale delivery in Zambia, reflecting that VMD remit is much narrower than other ALBs, that veterinary medicines regulation is not a central theme in AHSS - ***“A comparatively lower input into the project compared to the other ALBs, but when provided best summarised as constructive criticism, with strategic insights”.***
- Global Animal Health – PMO capacity scored 3.56 out of 5 – ***“Doing ok but could be improved with increased capacity to collaboratively build ODA compliance and response to issues arising in a more timely manner”.***

Two monitoring visits have been conducted to Zambia and three visits to Ghana by the PMO and technical lead. For efficiency and value for money, the monitoring visits have been combined with other events such as staff inductions, project launches etc. The monitoring visits have been particularly useful to generate feedback from key stakeholders and are broadly in line with the comments arising from the year 2 survey. The project has been operating within the terms of reference of the MOU agreed with the ALBs.

Sustainability - has been mainstreamed throughout the project. From the outset the project adopts a systems strengthening approach, informed by [WOAH's PVS](#), which provides a pathway for sustainable improvement of national veterinary and aquatic animal health services, as articulated in the theory of change. Country-based teams in Ghana and Zambia, continue to provide a presence helping to reinforce and sustain the training delivered by visiting UK experts from Defra's ALBs. Or in the case in The Gambia, the project operates through a trusted third-party FAO, who have a long-standing presence and relationship with key stakeholders. The project also adopts a

trainer of trainer approach to delivery to embed and cascade knowledge within relevant agencies.

Safeguarding and Sexual Exploitation and abuse and harassment (SEAH) - The Social Development Direct audit, conducted in May 2023, recommended child safeguarding policy for all activities involving children. The partner delivering a school-based animal welfare project in Ghana, has subsequently provided a safeguarding policy, which also includes a clause on SEAH.

With support from ODA Hub a SEAH risk assessment was conducted with internal project delivery team (PMO, APHA, VMD, APHA and Country based teams located at the British High Commission) – Delivery partners and activities we assessed to be low risk. The following actions have been agreed and are monitored regularly for progress.

1. A SEAH safeguarding policy was developed for core Defra, APHA and VMD. Cefas have developed their own policy
2. All Defra and country-based staff completed SEAH safeguarding training (either Civil Service Learning or HERA and are aware of the policy and escalation process
3. SEAH and Safeguarding are now a standing agenda item at Joint Planning Meetings and are regularly discussed at project meetings.

Commercial arrangements have improved this year due to DgC's increased capacity; a global logistic provider being appointed by Cefas, and multi-year agreements in place for third party suppliers. Regular pipeline agreements have been maintained with DgC to help maintain oversight of the project's commercial activities.

Financial – The project achieved 85% (£1,596,968) of the Year 2 allocated spend. Underspend was attributed to procurement (securing a global logistics supplier, external partners slower than anticipated procurement processes) and slower than anticipated recruitment timeline for Zambia team to be in place. Now all teams are in place and VMD's participation has increased, the project is expected to spend year 3 allocated budget in full.

E2. Assess the VfM of this output compared to the proposition in the Business Case, based on performance over the past year

Discuss any changes in the cost of major inputs critical to delivering the programme outputs, and how these affect the cost per beneficiary. Consider the equity of the programme outputs, including [gender equality](#) (referring to the BC Strategic Case), disability and leaving no one behind.

Economy - £1,869,754 was allocated to year 2, of which £1,596,968 (85%) was spent. 96% (£1,528,605) of the budget was spent by the delivery partners - APHA, CEFAS, VMD and country-based teams in Ghana and Zambia, including subcontracts valued at **£374,838 (24.5%)**.

Analysis of expenditure revealed:

- £95,664 (6%) of the budget was spent on logistics.
- £191,960 (12%) was spent on staff travel and subsistence.
- £22,219 (1%) was spent on laboratory equipment and consumables, of which a small proportion was considered capital.
- 4% was spent on MEL and other PMO costs not covered elsewhere such as monitoring visits.

It is difficult to assess the proportion of costs spent on project management compared to direct delivery, as the same members of staff are often involved in both aspects of work interchangeably. Further investigations will be undertaken in year 3 to disaggregate costs to assess opportunities for better value for money.

Leveraging finance: No direct additional funding was leveraged this year. However, APHA harnessed additional resources (directly benefiting partners), including e-training and follow-up Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) assessments, directly contributing to achieving the project outcomes.

Efficiency - The Year 2 feedback survey, referenced in Section E, indicated very good performance by APHA and Cefas, with both teams scoring 4.18 out of 5. The country-based teams scored lowest (3.18 out of 5) but given they are new and operate within a complex matrix management and delivery model^{vi} effective ways of working will take time to embed. Improved communication was recommended in the section on lessons learnt, as a mechanism to enhance delivery across the project teams. The efficiency and effectiveness of delivery models will be further assessed by an independent review, towards the end of year 3.

While Nigeria remains strategically important with evidenced needs, delivery has been intermittent (referenced in sections B & C2). Some traction was made by working in partnership with UKHSA's [IHR Strengthening project](#) on zoonoses^{vii}, specifically rabies. In line with the project scope, Defra has leveraged its scientific expertise to add value to existing HMG investments and fill a gap in the current global health security offer. The inputs in Nigeria, valued at £25,292, have not been lost, and are being taken forward by UKHSA as part of their workplans, rabies remains the priority zoonosis in

^{vi} Reference delivery model and governance structure

^{vii} Diseases passed from animals to humans

Nigeria. This 1.58% input into Nigeria is not likely to have a diminishing impact on achieving the overall project outcomes.

Effectiveness - Structural adjustments are driving inflation in Ghana and Zambia ^{viii}, increasing operational costs. We are working with FCDO to keep sight of these increases and build contingencies into budgets. It is not anticipated that this will result in a postponement of activities. However, the worst drought in decades in southern Africa ^{ix} is fuelling price increases and threatens the achievement of outcomes in Zambia whose hydro-driven electricity is subject to recurrent power cuts of 12-14 hours a day, rendering the laboratory barely functioning and diminishing the chances of achieving Output 1 targets. The drought is also driving disease outbreaks, increasing demand on Output 2 (surveillance, disease control and emergency preparedness). In the short term, baseline targets will be reviewed, and resources reallocated to meet changing demands. In the medium term, subject to successful continuation funding, ICF (International Climate Finance) targets will be incorporated into phase 2 to support climate change mitigation, adaptation, and resilience in the animal health space. As referenced in Section C3, the logframe has been revised to include outcome indicators to help assess the application of the training to help measure the effectiveness of the technical assistance. This will also be further assessed as part of an independent review, towards the end of year 3.

Equity - AHSS was assessed as GESI unaware in the 2023 GESI audit by Social Development Direct. As referenced in section B, work is being undertaken to make the project GESI sensitive by March 2025, including the inclusion of relevant KPIs. Analysis of results to date indicate the following participation rates:

- Women - 37%
- Age - 74% youth participation (under 30s) across male and female (attributed to the school-based animal welfare activities that had a significant reach)
- Designation
 - 81% -Community beneficiaries including school children, CAHWs and farmers
 - 2% -Technical officers (including labs)
 - 17% - Professionals, including vets & directors.

The high percentage of community beneficiaries is attributable to schools-based engagement.

Conclusion - At the end of year 2, the project was on target to achieve the high-level change articulated in the Theory of Change. However, climate change driven risk factors in the operating environment, particularly in Zambia, means the trajectory for

^{viii} The annual inflation rate in Zambia rose to 15.4% in July 2024, marking the highest increase since December 2021 and in Ghana inflation has been above 20%, with a recent decrease dropping from 25.8% to 22.5

^{ix} [Bulletin CPI June 2024.pdf \(statsghana.gov.gh\)](#)

year 3 is likely to change. Further analysis is required to understand delivery modalities and impact of GESI intersectionality to ensure benefits from inputs on institutional strengthening are realised, effective mechanisms for transformation across the animal health sector are utilised and return on investment as articulated in the business case is achieved. This will be undertaken as part of the year 3 external review process.