WHO WE ARE

Vétérinaires Sans Frontières International is a network of non-profit organisations working all over the world to support small-scale farmers, livestock keepers and local animal health and welfare initiatives.

Through the implementation of our projects and programs, we serve the most vulnerable populations whose livelihoods depend on livestock, and we act collectively to support small-scale family farming, pastoralism, animal and human health and a healthy environment.

OUR MEMBERS

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A year marked by the Covid-19 pandemics...

No need to say, 2020 has been a challenging year for all of us. The Covid-19 pandemics posed significant threats at many levels. Initially starting as a health crisis, the pandemics had severe repercussions on the day-to-day life of everyone, from the richest to the poorest countries, causing a massive disruption of international and local economies. The measures taken to curb the disease spread, ranging from quarantine to border closures, (partial) lockdowns and curfew, impacted every sphere of our lives. As usual, the most vulnerable groups have suffered the most.

In the countries where we work, poor livestock keepers suffered drastic losses of revenue overnight due to the effects of the measures in place in their country such as market closures, transport and movements restrictions, disruption of supply chains for agricultural inputs, and often a drop in the demand for animal-sourced food due to a misconception about the risk of infection from meat consumption.

As a network of NGOs, our presence at community-level is key to the delivery of services to the more vulnerable groups. But, especially at the beginning of the pandemics, field visits were limited or restricted, thus pushing us to find new ways to continue with project activities. Due to the high priority given to the control of Covid-19 spread, activities have also been reshaped to include awareness raising of prevention measures and provision of equipment such as portable sinks to wash hands, face masks, etc.

At our Head Offices we also had to learn new ways of working and collaborating remotely. Homeworking has become the rule, physical meetings and conferences have been replaced by webinars, and we organised the first VSF International General Assembly online in October. While this shift to virtual events is accompanied by a loss of contact and prevents the informal exchanges that are so important in our profession, it also offers new opportunities. It increases participation and inclusiveness, it reduces costs, and it also has a positive environmental impact due to reduced travel emissions! We all want to resume our work as we knew it before, and meet our colleagues again; but for sure many of the good aspects of this new way of working have come to stay.

... and increased insecurity

Besides the Covid-19 crisis, last year has been marked, once more, by growing insecurity and instability in many of the countries where we work, threatening the work of the humanitarian community: in the Sahel, in the Horn of Africa, but also Central America, Haiti…

In 2020 the VSF International network suffered the sudden loss of two staff due to violent attacks: Benoit Maria, country coordinator for AVSF in Guatemala, and John Chol Mawan, Assistant Project Manager for VSF Germany in South Sudan. We have been very shocked and moved by these tragic events that remind us how challenging and risky the humanitarian profession is, being threatened by many factors beyond our control. All our colleagues on the ground take these risks every day, and they give their very best to make a positive change in the lives of the families and communities we work with.

Although we cannot control all risks, in the VSF International network we are intensifying collaborations to prevent and mitigate risks, under the guidance of the Security Working Group. By strengthening our security management, we hope to be better prepared to be able to continue working and deliver services to vulnerable people in unstable contexts.

Due to the high priority given to the control of Covid-19 spread, activities have been reshaped to include awareness raising of prevention measures and provision of equipment.

We grieve the tragic loss of Benoit Maria, AVSF employee in Guatemala, and John Chol Mawan, VSF Germany employee in South Sudan, both killed in armed attacks.
THE VSF INTERNATIONAL NETWORK IN 2020

WHERE WE WORK

The VSF International network supports families and farmers’ organizations in 38 countries in Africa, the Americas and Asia. In 2020, the members of VSF International reached over 2 million families (direct beneficiaries), with an overall budget of 52.5 million €.

OUR SECTORS OF INTERVENTION

› Livelihoods and food and nutrition security
› Animal health, welfare and productivity
› One Health
› Sustainable Natural Resource Management
› Access to market and value chains
› Youth and women empowerment
› Emergency response and resilience building
› Advocacy and awareness raising
2020 IN NUMBERS

38 country programmes

€ 52.5 MILLION total income

2.07 MILLION direct beneficiary households

2.37 MILLION livestock keepers gained access to animal health services

4 700 animal health professionals supported including 4 300 Community Animal Health Workers

26.12 MILLION animals treated

976 300 people improved their professional and/or life skills thanks to empowerment, capacity building or income generation activities

97 800 animals distributed to recover from emergency or as income-generating activity

38

797 staff worldwide

90% in the field
10% at HQ

97 800

80 awareness raising events targeting European and Canadian youth

4 300

90 000 beneficiaries (5%)

WES TERN & NORTHERN AFRICA

WESTERN & NORTHERN AFRICA

112 000 beneficiaries (5%)

CENTRAL AFRICA

LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

ASIA

EASTERN & SOUTHERN AFRICA

1 890 000 beneficiaries (91%)

22 000 beneficiaries (1%)

32 500 beneficiaries (2%)

15 800 beneficiaries (1%)

976 300
THE HIGHLIGHTS OF 2020

The members of the VSF International network are autonomous organizations that directly implement projects in the field. As members of the network they share the VSF International mission and are committed to coordinating their activities in order to increase the overall VSF impact. The network facilitates exchanges, lesson learning, the development of quality standards and coordinates common advocacy and communication activities.

In this report we will present the key achievements of 2020 showcasing the successful collaborations and joint efforts between different member organizations. For more details about the field activities of each member, please refer to their respective annual reports.
The COVID-19 pandemic and the need to control the disease shed light on the importance of adopting an integrated approach to health that considers the interactions between the health and well-being of people, animals and the environment. This approach, called One Health, promotes collaborations between different sectors and disciplines as a key element in properly addressing complex health crises, to tackle disease spread from all possible angles and to create a solid basis for disease control.

Since the One Health concept was developed in the early 2000s, several attempts have been made to implement this approach on the ground. However, disease surveillance and response systems still remain siloed in many contexts, with the human, veterinary and environmental scientific communities working on parallel tracks. If collaborations were effectively put in place, we would be better prepared to respond quickly and effectively to new diseases.

In the global South, where the health systems often fail to reach the most vulnerable communities, these inter-sectoral collaborations inspired by One Health are even more urgent as they allow the optimization of the scarce resources that are available and strengthen public health initiatives. Joint efforts from different sectors are thus essential to develop sustainable solutions to the recurrent health challenges: human doctors; veterinarians; microbiologists; hydrologists, sanitation and hygiene experts; ecologists; sociologists; gender specialists; economists, etc.

In the current situation, One Health proves to be important not only as a response to a specific health crisis, but as a way to rethink the foundation of our societies and production systems. Examining how human, animal and environmental health systems can work together is clearly an important part of learning from the current crisis in order to build our resilience throughout this pandemic and as we prepare for other threats such as future pandemics and climate change related threats.

The global situation caused by COVID-19 is more than a public health emergency: it is a political, economic and social crisis that will have long-term impacts on the well-being of people, on their habits and on the role of politicians in managing complex global emergencies. In finding ways out of this crisis, we urge a deep questioning of our global models of production, consumption and trade; of local and...
international markets, of agriculture and livestock production. Sustainable agricultural practices such as agroecology can help to re-establish ecosystem balance by producing healthy food in an environmentally sound way, protecting biodiversity, promoting fair and sustainable marketing channels, supporting local food systems, and respecting animal welfare, all contributing to the wellbeing of humans, other living beings, and entire ecosystems.

If we want to be better prepared to face new diseases, we need to embrace One Health in all its nuances: by putting in place collaborations between the human, veterinary, and environmental communities, by strengthening public health, but also by changing drastically the way our societies and economies relate to nature, starting with supporting local food systems, small-scale farmers and agroecological production methods.

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This is an extract from the article “One Health to address future crisis”, published by VSF International in April 2020.

THE FULL TEXT IS AVAILABLE HERE
vsf-international.org/one-health-to-address-future-crises
In East Africa, the first months of 2020 saw the appearance of the worst Desert Locust outbreak in 70 years. The invasion, still ongoing today, poses an unprecedented threat to food security and livelihood in the entire sub region, where more than 10 million people in East Africa are already experiencing a high degree of food insecurity. The situation has been made worse by the impacts of Covid-19 and movement restrictions that were put in place at the start of the pandemic.

The Regional Desert Locust Alliance, incorporating several National and International NGOs active in the greater Horn of Africa, was created in February 2020 to coordinate a response to the desert locust crisis and to raise awareness of the dangerous combined impacts of COVID-19 and the desert locust invasion.

The alliance stressed the importance of continuing locust surveillance and control operations, as well as livelihood and food security responses, even with the movement restrictions in place to prevent the spread of the virus. It called for an integrated response that built on community-led actions. In particular, the involvement of pastoralist communities was deemed critical due to their intimate knowledge of the rangelands and some of the inaccessible locations which have been the source of these locusts.

VSF Germany, VSF Suisse and VSF Belgium (through CELEP), all active in the region, were part of the Alliance.

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1 EAST & HORN OF AFRICA: IPC Food Security Phase Classification and Desert Locusts (12 feb 2020)

ADDRESSING THE DOUBLE-CRISIS OF LOCUSTS AND COVID-19 IN THE GREATER HORN OF AFRICA

The involvement of pastoralist communities was deemed critical due to their intimate knowledge of the rangelands and some of the inaccessible locations.

PUBLICATIONS

Statement from the Regional Desert Locust Alliance: “Community-led action critical for locust livelihood response in the greater Horn of Africa” (March 2020)
— vsf-international.org/statement-locust-alliance-ghoa

Statement from the Regional Desert Locust Alliance: “Addressing the Double-Crisis of Locusts and COVID-19 in the greater Horn of Africa” (April 2020)
— vsf-international.org/addressing-double-crisis-locusts-covid19-ghoa
A new partnership agreement with OIE

During 2020 VSF international maintained active exchanges with the International Organization for Animal Health (OIE), which culminated in the signature of a partnership agreement between the two organizations in January 2021.

This new cooperation aims to promote knowledge exchange, joint advocacy and policy dialogue between the OIE – as a standard-setting body – and VSF International – as an organisation with broad experience working with Veterinary Services and stakeholders at a national and local level – with the aim of improved global animal health and welfare, and livelihoods.

The partnership agreement foresees collaborations in three main areas:

› towards the recognition of the roles and contribution of different animal health professionals, including Veterinary paraprofessionals (VPPs) and Community-Based Animal Health Workers (CAHWs), in the Veterinary Services in the Global South;

› towards the improvement of the quality of veterinary services for the prevention, control and/or eradication of diseases (e.g. Peste de Petits Ruminants, Foot and Mouth Disease, African Swine Fever and other tick-borne diseases and zoonotic diseases such as rabies, Rift Valley Fever, etc.);

› towards the promotion of responsible and prudent use of antimicrobial agents, contributing to the global action plan on antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

The partnership was launched in January 2021 with an initial meeting, where representatives of the two organizations exchanged information on the relevant areas of work and identified thematic focal points to pursue on the different topics of interest.

We are very excited about the development of this new partnership and joining efforts to strengthen animal health and the delivery of veterinary services in the Global South!

Partners of the Global Food Security Cluster

In October 2020, VSF International joined the Global Food Security Cluster (GFSC) which co-ordinates the interventions of the various humanitarian agencies and partners – including NGOs, donors and UN agencies – and is committed to saving lives through appropriate, efficient and well-sourced food security responses in major emergencies.

The GFSC was established in 2011 to coordinate the food security response during a humanitarian crisis, addressing issues of food availability, access and utilization, providing support to 35 countries facing emergency or protracted crises.

The Cluster is co-led by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and is structured into thematic working groups.

VSF International participates in the recently launched Agriculture Working Group, and more specifically in the livestock workstream. Knowledge exchange has been at the heart of the workstream in 2020 and VSF International’s contribution is appreciated for its experience in livestock-based humanitarian assistance and integrated programming as a practical implementation of the One Health-concept that has rapidly been gaining acceptance amongst implementors and donors/governments.

MORE INFO ABOUT THE GLOBAL FOOD SECURITY CLUSTER
fscluster.org
Members of the Action for Animal Health coalition

VSF International is a signatory to the Action for Animal Health, a new initiative led by an international coalition of partners and chaired by The Brooke, which calls for more investment in animal health systems and support for the development and implementation of a Global Action Plan on Animal Health.

The coalition has produced a Call to Action, launched in May 2021, which calls on governments and international agencies to prioritise strong animal health systems as part of operationalising One Health and in the attainment of the UN’s Sustainable Development Goal (especially SDG3). Five pillars of action have been identified:

- Support community engagement and equitable access to animal health services;
- Increase the numbers and improve the skills of the animal health workforce;
- Close the veterinary medicines and vaccines gap;
- Improve animal disease surveillance;
- Enhance collaboration for One Health.

From now on, the coalition will work towards short, medium and long-term goals, to contribute to strengthened animal health systems globally. The challenge has just started!

MORE INFO ON THE COALITION
www.actionforanimalhealth.org

2 As of July 2021, members include: Brooke, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), World Veterinary Association (WVA), Vétérinaires Sans Frontières International, GAVMed, Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARIC), Dogs Trust Worldwide, Send a Cow, the African Union - InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR), Soi Dog Foundation, Compassion in World Farming, SEBI-Livestock.

A cooperation agreement with the Inter-state Veterinary School of Dakar

In February 2020 VSF International and the Inter-state Veterinary School of Dakar (EISMV from its French title – École inter-États des sciences et médecine vétérinaires) signed an agreement to strengthen collaboration in the field of livestock development and veterinary medicine in Africa.

EISMV serves as the lead veterinary school and research centre for 15 African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d’Ivoire, Gabon, Mauritania, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Togo and Mali.

This cooperation agreement opens opportunities for the members of VSF International working in those countries to host students’ internships, to get support for the publication of scientific articles and of project documents, and in general the exchange of staff for educational and scientific purposes.
Regional cooperation: implementation of the Greater Horn of Africa (GHoA) strategy

In the course of 2020, VSF Suisse and VSF Germany have achieved key milestones in the implementation of their Joint Strategy for the GHoA, leading to improved cooperation structures in the region and the opening up of opportunities to join with other VSF partners.

The two organizations boosted the creation of the governance structures, which guide and steer the implementation of the joint strategy at the head offices (Executive Steering Committee), region (Regional Steering Committee) and country levels (Country Steering Committee). Operational plans were also drafted at the regional and country level, and a communication flow chart was developed to clarify the lines of communication in the implementation of the joint strategy. Finally, the membership application procedure for other VSF partner organizations interested in joining the Joint Strategy for the GHoA has been drafted.

Despite the Covid-19 Pandemic restricting travel and limiting physical meetings or engagements at various levels, virtual meetings offered a good way to continue interactions.

In the coming months the strategy will be presented at the country levels to key stakeholders to enhance the visibility of the partnership. The partners will pursue opportunities to streamline the Joint Strategy and to strengthen the engagements at regional and country levels as envisioned in the objectives of the joint strategy.

MORE INFORMATION ON THE JOINT VSF STRATEGY FOR THE GREATER HORN OF AFRICA 2019-2023
vsf-international.org/joint-strategy-ghoa
Updates from the One Health working group: a checklist for One Health projects

The One Health approach aims to attain optimal health for people, domestic animals, wildlife and their shared environment through a collaborative, multisectoral and transdisciplinary approach. Whereas at the beginning the One Health concept was mainly focusing on zoonotic diseases, over the past few years we have seen its scope rapidly expanding towards a more holistic approach, with a greater emphasis on the environmental dimensions of health, fuelled by climate change and the dramatic decline in biodiversity.

As outlined in VSF International’s Policy Brief “One Health implementation in the Global South”, the One Health implementation calls for significant efforts in setting up effective collaborations across sectors and disciplines, and including a broad range of stakeholders, from academia to technicians and practitioners such as NGOs and local actors, with special attention to the inclusion of local communities and farmers’ organizations who remain an important source of local knowledge. The benefits of these efforts will outweigh the costs in the long term.

However, practice teaches us that the One Health approach can be difficult to incorporate in project designs, and that its added value is hard to measure accurately. For this reason, the One Health working group at VSF International is working to develop a checklist to facilitate the incorporation of One Health in project formulation, implementation and evaluation.

In this exercise, the first challenge was to define what a “One Health project” was. Often, we see the One Health label applied to projects or actions that only focus on the interface between two dimensions (often the human and animal health dimensions), whereas the added value of the One Health approach is in the inclusion of the three dimensions and their interconnections. Therefore, in order to qualify as a One Health intervention, the project should include all three dimensions (human, animal and environmental health). This strict definition emphasises that not “all we do” can be defined as One Health, even if we are regularly tempted to adopt this term due to the concept currently being in vogue. From this starting point, the Working Group has been developing a set of indicators to measure directly the “One Health-ness” of the project or approach itself, as well as a (non-exhaustive) list of possible indicators to measure the outcomes in relation to the three different health components. The indicators will be then pilot-tested in some projects, to check the feasibility of their inclusion in the broader monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEAL) systems in place in the field.
Two new working groups on Rabies and CAHWs

2020 saw the creation of two new thematic working groups within the VSF International network: the Rabies and the CAHWs Working Groups.

The members of VSF International have been active for many decades in establishing and training Community-based Animal Health Workers (CAHWs). The 2018 Policy Brief "Community-Based Animal Health Workers: Guardians for quality, localised animal health services in the global South" builds on this extensive experience to point out some important requisites for a common understanding on the organisation of CAHWs, such as the need to select them in a participatory manner within communities and the need to have their work supervised on a day-to-day basis by veterinarians and/or veterinary para-professionals (VPPs).

However, the local context and legislative framework can be very different across countries, leading to a lack of standardized training and lack of common nomenclature, with CAHWs performing different functions related to animal production and epidemiological surveillance. A key challenge is the formalisation or legal recognition of the CAHWs' status at global level, as is already the case for veterinarians and VPPs, for whom the OIE has already produced competency guidelines.

The CAHWs Working Group is active in exchanging knowledge and experience among VSF International members on the training of CAHWs and business models in different countries in Africa and Asia, in order to promote the implementation of good practices in the projects involving CAHWs, but also to support the advocacy work of the network towards the recognition of the status of CAHWs and their competencies.

Similarly, the newly-established Working Group on Rabies provides a forum to discuss good practices and exchange knowledge in relation to the implementation of rabies control projects. Several members of VSF International are active in rabies control projects, both in the Global South (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, South Sudan, Malawi, Algeria) and in their home countries (Czech Republic), and there was a need to discuss past and current experiences in rabies control, including lessons learned, implementation mechanisms and results.

Our work is aligned with the global campaign to end rabies by 2030, and for this we are planning to establish strategic partnerships. The Working Group is already collaborating with our sister organization Vets Beyond Borders Australia, who have a well-established experience in rabies control in India, South-East Asia, the Pacific and Oceania.

Training on security management

Last year the Security Working Group has worked hard on organising a training on the management of security incidents. After months of preparation, the online training was held in November 2020 in two languages – English and French – and has been attended by 140 of our colleagues from head offices in France, Germany, Switzerland and Belgium and from the field offices in 16 countries. A big success!

The training explored tools and methodologies for the prevention and management of critical incidents for our employees working today in high-risk areas (banditry, kidnappings, conflicts, etc.). Such risks are unfortunately increasing in many of the countries where VSF International is active, and humanitarian workers are often the target of criminal or terrorist attacks. In 2020 we experienced first-hand the tragic loss of Benoit Maria, AVSF employee in Guatemala, and John Chol Mawan, VSF Germany employee in South Sudan, both killed in armed attacks.

Although there are many factors outside of our control, it is our duty towards all our staff and collaborators to put in place a solid risk management structure. This training was the first of a series, to be held in the coming two years, in order to strengthen our commitment to improve risk management and security protocols.
Vaccinate for Africa International: 2nd edition

In 2020, VSF International organised the Vaccinate for Africa campaign internationally for the second year. Despite the challenges posed by the pandemic, the campaign was still a success, and we keep on learning in order to improve year after year.

Due to the Covid-19 crisis, we had to adapt and modify the organisation of the campaign in all countries. In several countries campaign week which is usually scheduled in spring every year had to be postponed to allow a maximum number of veterinary practices and pet owners to participate. In other countries, the campaign was cancelled as the restrictions that came with the pandemic did not allow such an activity. But we are confident that, little by little, awareness of Vaccinate for Africa is increasing amongst vets and pet owners across several European countries.

Vaccinate for Africa is an international campaign that aims to engage veterinary clinics and pet owners to support African livestock keepers. In 2020, Germany, Switzerland, Sweden and the Netherlands each conducted a week-long campaign. In France, Vaccinate for Africa was extended across one full month in summer!

As part of the campaign, veterinary clinics collect the earnings from vaccinations and other treatments and donate part of them or their entirety to VSF in their country. These donations support the work of VSF in Africa to keep animals and people in good health. Vaccinate for Africa provides the opportunity for veterinarians to participate in an international campaign and talk about their support for VSF to their clients. But it’s not only about the veterinarians: pet owners can also contribute by bringing their companion animals to a participating clinic during the campaign.

In 2020 the campaign was supported by 1,300 veterinary practices in the five countries, whereas in 2019 it was 1,400 veterinary practices in 8 countries. We are so glad that, despite all the challenges, our supporters in each country are growing!

In 2021 the campaign continues with its third edition. For more information visit vsf-international.org/vaccinate-for-africa.
Overall, in 2020 the VSF International network had a total income of 52,529,300 €.

With varying budgets and structures, the members of the VSF network implement projects in the field, organise education and awareness raising activities in their own countries and support the common activities of the network.

The VSF International coordination office is financially supported by the members’ contributions, and is responsible for knowledge management, developing common quality standards and coordinating joint advocacy and communication activities, all the while ensuring that exchanges and network dynamics are running smoothly.
GOVERNANCE

VSF International is a non-profit organisation (a.i.s.b.l. from its French title) registered in Belgium. It is governed by a General Assembly, which is composed of all the members of the network and represented by the Managers in charge. The General Assembly meets annually and defines the global vision and strategy of the organisation, approves the financial statements and budgets, and elects the Board every two years. The Board is responsible for the implementation of the General Assembly’s decisions while supporting the day-to-day activities of the coordination office in Brussels. Board members also participate in different thematic working groups, along with other technical experts from the national VSFs.

The Board members were elected in October 2019 at the General Assembly meeting held in Dublin, and will be renewed in 2021.

VSF International is managed by a coordination office in Brussels (Belgium), which is responsible for fostering collaboration between members, coordinating joint projects and campaigns, leading external communication and representing the network at the international level.

MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

› Fréderic Apollin (Executive Director, AVSF)
› Elina Åsbjer (President, VSF Sweden)
› Mike Burke (Executive Director, VIVA)
› Piero Casale (President, VSF Italy)
› Jennifer Ogeer (President, VWB/VSF Canada)
› Sarah Farrand (Coordinator, VSF Netherlands)
› Christian Griebenow (Managing Director, VSF Germany)
› Marc Joolen (Executive Director, VSF Belgium)
› Dagmar Schoder (President, VSF Austria)

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD (AS OF JUNE 2021)

› Giorgia Angeloni (VSF Italy) – President
› Constanze Bönig (VSF Germany) – Vice-president
› Sébastien Tyrpak (VSF Belgium) – Treasurer
› Ana Batalha (VSF Portugal)
› Sonia Fèvre (VWB/VSF Canada)
› Nicole Litschgi (VSF-Suisse)
› Manuelle Miller / Antoine Lury (AVSF)