

INTERNSHIP OFFER

Prudent use of antimicrobials in the context of growing AMR concerns: Inventory of VSF International's activities and projects

Location: Brussels (VSF International office) or remote

Duration: 6 months, preferably full-time

Starting date: February 2024

Languages required: English and French

Type of contract: Internship (unpaid)

ORGANISATION

Vétérinaires Sans Frontières International (VSF-Int) is a network of 13 NGOs operating in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Oceania to support small-scale farmers, livestock keepers and local animal health and welfare initiatives. Through the implementation of our projects and programmes, 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. The members of VSF International are autonomous organisations that directly implement projects in the field, but they are all aligned around the same vision, inspired to One Health, under the motto "*healthy animals, healthy people, healthy environment*".

BACKGROUND AND RATIONALE

Through its interventions, VSF-Int improves access to and quality of animal health services for livestock keepers living in rural areas. These services are provided at the grassroots level often by community animal health workers (and sometimes animal health assistants/technicians), who work under the supervision of a veterinarian. Our support actions can include community awareness-raising and sensitisation on animal health, training and equipping of animal health service providers, and the set-up of private veterinary pharmacies.

Antimicrobials refer to antibiotics, antiparasitics (including anthelmintics), antifungal and antivirals¹. These products are widely used over the world and have led to significant improvement in animal and human health. However, microbes naturally develop antimicrobial resistance (AMR) upon contact with antimicrobials through genetic changes, which ultimately decreases their effectiveness to treat infections. The main drivers of AMR include the misuse and overuse of antimicrobials; lack of access to clean water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) for both humans and animals; poor infection and disease prevention and control in health-care facilities and farms; poor access to quality, affordable medicines, vaccines and diagnostics; lack of awareness and knowledge; and lack of enforcement of legislation¹.

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/antimicrobial-resistance>

AMR is of growing concern. In 2019, an estimated 4 million human deaths were linked to AMR, including 1.3 million human deaths directly caused by resistant bacteria². In 2016, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched its [Global Action Plan on AMR](#). The same year, the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE) launched its [Strategy on Antimicrobial Resistance and the Prudent Use of Antimicrobials](#).

Building on the presence of VSF International at field level, WOAH and VSF International signed a partnership agreement in 2021 aiming notably to strengthen information-sharing between the 2 organizations on antimicrobial use and falsified and substandard veterinary medicinal products.

VSF International has also recently joined the newly established [AMR Multi-Stakeholder Partnership Platform](#), supported by the Quadripartite (WOAH, WHO, FAO and UNEP).

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this internship is to **better understand the breadth and depth of VSF-Int interventions that contribute to the prudent use of veterinary medicinal products (VMPs) and identify areas where further action is needed for more impact.**

For this, the following activities are expected:

- (i) **Inventory mapping of VSF International interventions** through interviews with VSF teams (field and HQ) and review of internal documents. VSF's interventions can target a wide range of audiences (from end-users (farmers) to animal health service providers and drug sellers) and may include awareness-raising and training activities; supporting establishment of veterinary pharmacies to strengthen the local formal supply chain; monitoring the use of VMPs at field level; development of alternatives to antimicrobials, etc. The inventory mapping will need to explore all these different aspects.
- (ii) **Analysis of the local contexts** under which the VSFs operate:
 - VMP marketing chain: how important is the informal market compared to the formal market? What factors drive the ongoing use of informal products?
 - Reporting structure, if any, for treatment failure, suspected AMR cases and for substandard/fake veterinary products (either at VSF, sub-national or national level). Is it effective and if not how to make it more effective?
- (iii) **Analysis of the strengths and weaknesses** of our current interventions and **recommendations** to address the gaps identified in the study.

EXPECTED OUTPUTS

1. A **methodology and survey tools** will be developed by the intern with support from VSF International.
2. An **excel database** with key indicators will be built to record projects' information collected during the study.

² Murray CJL et al. The Lancet 2022, Vol. 399, Issue 10325. doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(21)02724-0.

3. A **study report** will provide an overview of key areas of interventions, highlighting successes and weaknesses and providing recommendations to further promote the prudent use of veterinary medicinal products in our interventions.
4. An online **presentation** of the lessons learned to VSF-Int working group One Health

PROFILE

- Preparing or having a MSc degree in relevant discipline, such as veterinary medicine, One Health, animal production, tropical medicine, rural development, international studies
- Excellent knowledge of English and French, spoken and written (interviews and data collection to be held in the two languages)
- Ability to establish and maintain good working relationships in a multinational and multicultural environment, and to collaborate remotely with distant teams and stakeholders.
- Identifies him/herself with the mission, vision and values of VSF International

WHAT WE OFFER

- Internship duration: 6 months, preferably full time
- Possibility of a field trip in Senegal to better understand the local context and test the research tools
- Preferably based in our office in Brussels, but possibility to work remotely or from one of the VSF-International members office
- Support and supervision by VSF-International staff
- An introduction to VSF International and the possibility to learn from the network's experience and activities in different fields related to animal health and sustainable livestock systems.
- A multicultural environment: online interviews with VSF staff in Africa and Asia

The internship can be realized as part of an MSc thesis. VSF International is open to discuss with the counterpart university.

HOW TO APPLY

Please send your CV and motivation letter by email to coordinator@vsf-international.org before 26/01/2024 quoting the reference "internship AMR".

Any questions? Please contact Margherita Gomasca (coordinator@vsf-international.org)

More information on VSF International website: <https://vsf-international.org>