In Ethiopia, Digital Solutions Facilitate Communication Among One Health Partners

Zoonotic diseases (ZDs) continue to be a global public health burden. Ethiopia is especially vulnerable to ZDs due to its location, biodiversity, and population. As part of the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA), Ethiopia has adopted the **One Health** approach to respond to existing and emerging threats. However, the operationalization of this approach requires real-time information exchange and resource sharing among the different sectors. In 2017, Ethiopia established a National One Health Steering Committee (NOHSC) with the joint agreement of the Ministry of Health, Ethiopian Forest and Climate Change Commission, Ethiopian Wildlife Conservation Authority, and several other members. The main objective of NOHSC is to provide a framework for national stakeholders to address gaps in multisectoral communication, coordination, and collaboration.
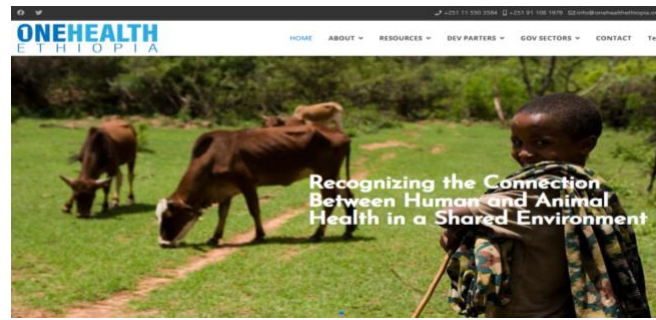
> **One Health** is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals, and ecosystems. It recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent.

As part of implementing the One Health concept, members of the Steering Committee agreed to share information with each other regularly. However, the different sectors involved have different reporting lines, which hinders information sharing and makes using data/information for programming difficult. To address this and to support information and resource sharing among members of NOHSC, the committee consulted with Breakthrough ACTION, a project funded by the United States Agency for International Development. Breakthrough ACTION assisted in establishing the following communication platforms:

- One Health Ethiopia website (http://www.onehealthethiopia.org)
- Ethiopian National One Health Telegram group and channel
- Five subnational-level One Health communication Telegram groups
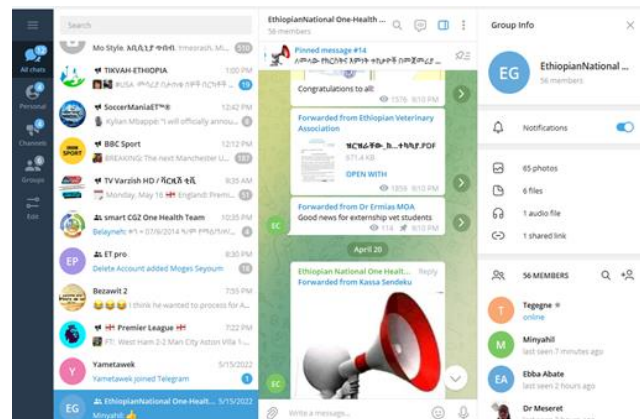
NOHSC set up the **One Health Ethiopia website** to share national One Health information. The website includes information about One Health, profiles of stakeholders and partners, and national resources such as strategy documents and guidelines, among other resources. Breakthrough ACTION is currently managing the website but expects to hand it over to the Ethiopian Public Health Institute in 2023.

The One Health Ethiopia website.

NOHSC also established several pages on [Telegram](#), an application similar to WhatsApp. Telegram is the standard for public and business communication in Ethiopia. The health sector and their partners widely use Telegram to share information on ZDs, particularly related to priority ZDs (rabies, anthrax, brucellosis, highly pathogenic avian influenza, and Rift Valley fever). Stakeholders and partners of One Health Ethiopia prefer Telegram because it uses less memory on the types of smartphones that many Ethiopians have, is easy to use, and supports video.

One of the Ethiopia One Health Telegram pages.

The **Ethiopian National One Health Telegram channel** is available to NOHSC members and technical working group leads to share documents, guidelines, updates on endemic diseases, and global and regional alert information on transboundary and pandemic ZDs.

NOHSC established the **Ethiopian One Health Telegram group** to provide opportunities for members of the national and subnational One Health groups to chat and share documents, guidelines, photos, updates on endemic diseases, global and regional alert information, outbreak calls and responses, and monthly reports on ZD prevention and One Health activities. This group has no restriction on posting and sharing information. Anyone who has access to the group channel has the right to post relevant information. The page administrators follow the interaction and take necessary action should there be any misuse of the platform.

Mr. Awol Jemal, the public health emergency focal person in Waghimra Zone Health Office, Amhara region, spoke about the benefit of the zonal One Health telegram group:

"In the public health system, we are using the Telegram communication platform, but its use was limited to sending reports. Currently, the Waghimra Zone One Health Telegram communication group is an interactive communication platform that serves both the human and the animal health sectors. It is a platform for knowledge management where experts advise members of the group on new ways of doing things, advise on case management of sick people or animals, share educational photos and community level activities, and collect and address issues related to rumors and misconceptions."

The subnational Telegram groups are similar to the national Telegram groups, except they use local languages. The information circulated on these pages focuses more on the local situation (regional or zonal) than on the national page.

Challenges and lessons learned

One challenge in utilizing the One Health webpage is that some stakeholders and partners do not actively update their profiles or share resources to upload on the website.

However, One Health teams and members at different levels utilize Telegram to a high degree for sharing timely information with each other. If NOHSC also engaged with other communication platforms, such as Facebook and WhatsApp, it could increase the reach of information and communication to additional key stakeholders.

To learn more about Breakthrough ACTION's work in Ethiopia, please contact Simon Heliso (simonh@jhu.edu), Breakthrough ACTION Ethiopia Chief of Party, and Tegegne Shiferaw (tegegnes@jhu.edu), GHSA Risk Communication Project Manager.