



Co-Building the One Health approach from the grassroots

The accelerating pace of climate, environmental and health crises underscores the profound interdependence between human, animal, and ecosystem health. In response to these systemic challenges, governments and international organizations are rallying around the One Health concept.

Working with rural communities—which are most exposed to these risks—AVSF distinguishes itself through a participatory, locally rooted, sustainable One Health approach tailored to local realities.

1. A global context that calls for an integrated approach to the three health domains

According to the One Health High-Level Experts Panel (OHHLEP¹), the One Health approach aims to sustainably optimize the health of people, animals, and ecosystems by recognizing their interdependence. It calls for coordinated action across sectors, disciplines, and communities to prevent sanitary threats, ensure safe and nutritious food, meet collective needs for clean drinking water, clean energy, and clean air, preserve the environment, and contribute to sustainable development.

OUR KEY MESSAGES

- In the face of escalating global crises, **the One Health approach is now essential**, particularly for rural communities in the Global South, which are on the front lines of health, climate, and ecological imbalances.
- **AVSF implements an integrated One Health approach**, combining animal and human health, agroecology, sustainable natural resource management, and the development of resilient food systems.
- To be sustainable and address the challenges faced by communities, **the One Health approach must be territorial**, developed in collaboration with all relevant local stakeholders, and aligned with national policies.
- One Health initiatives can only be undertaken **with the full participation of all stakeholders representing the three pillars of health**. They therefore require a transdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach, as well as a significant effort to coordinate and facilitate collaboration.

¹ The High-Level Expert Group on “One Health” serves as the scientific and strategic advisory body for four partner organizations—the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH)—in the context of their collaboration on the “One Health” concept.

The One Health approach: a necessity in a changing world

The major global changes currently underway are increasing risks to human, animal, and environmental health around the world.

The rural communities with which AVSF works are particularly vulnerable to these risks, due to their location in more exposed areas and because they live at the heart of human-animal-environment interactions. The impacts are directly observable:

- An increase in the frequency of extreme weather events, such as cyclones in Madagascar and Haiti, which threaten the food and nutritional security of populations.
- Direct effects of pesticide use in cotton-growing and vegetable-growing areas in West Africa on the health of producers and the soil.
- Degradation of forest areas, which increases the risk of zoonotic diseases emerging in Madagascar.
- Significant presence of veterinary drug residues in food products in Africa.
- The presence of antibiotic-resistant bacteria in all countries in Africa and Asia.
- The regular emergence of epizootics with pandemic potential in Southeast Asia (avian influenza, coronavirus).

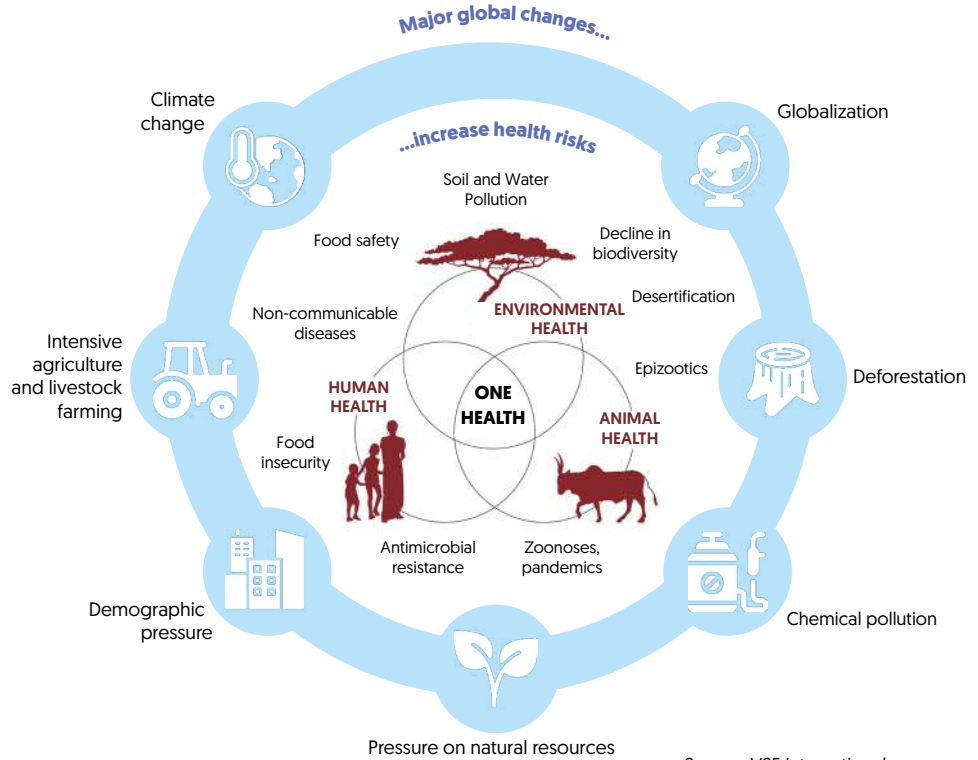
To strengthen populations' resilience in the face of these complex health risks, taking action on various fronts through the One Health approach is essential.

2. Implementing One Health at the local level: AVSF's expertise

Since 1977, AVSF has been working in areas that are intrinsically linked to the One Health approach.

Strengthening local animal health

Since the 1980s, AVSF and its network VSF International have been supporting the establishment of community-based animal



Source: VSF International

Workers (CAHWs). They provide advice, care, and preventive services to livestock farms in the most remote areas, under the supervision of veterinarians. The contribution of CAHWs to livestock development, food security, and the surveillance and control of emerging animal diseases is well established. The WOAHP has recognized their role and validated the guidelines for their training in 2024².

AVSF has strengthened these initiatives by incorporating the One Health approach into CAHWs' training programs over the past few years. This development promotes the responsible use of veterinary drugs, reduces residues in food, and contributes to the fight against antibiotic resistance. In Madagascar in 2024, agents trained as part of the SANUVA³ project have led to a measurable decrease in the use of antibiotics in animal husbandry⁴.

At the regional level, integrated health systems that bring together professionals from the three health sectors at the local level have proven highly effective⁵. These community health associations (ASACO),

officially recognized in 2015, bring together doctors, veterinary technicians, nurses, and environmental guides. These mobile teams enable joint management of family and livestock health, a coordinated approach to zoonosis prevention, and monitoring of habitat and resource quality (pastures, water sources). It is also a highly effective system for epidemiological surveillance and rapid response to outbreaks, as well as a powerful tool for interdisciplinary communication⁶.

Finally, integrated health surveillance systems are also being tested in contexts vulnerable to pandemic outbreaks, such as communities living in biodiversity hotspots⁷. Thus, in Madagascar and Southeast Asia, as part of the AfriCam and ASAMCO programs of the international PREZODE initiative⁸, AVSF supports the establishment of "three-health" networks at the community level. These networks enable surveillance, rapid response, and coordinated prevention against zoonotic risks, as well as improved collective management of health issues in the region.

2 See webinar : Launch of the Capacity Guidelines for CAHWs, WOAHP

3 The SANUVA project aims to improve the effectiveness of local services to enhance nutrition among farming households in Vakinankaratra. The project is implemented with support from the EU, the Indian Ocean Commission (SANOI), and AFD, and in partnership with Agrisud International, GSDM, and APDRA.

4 Read (in French): APPSA: Key Players in the One Health Approach in Rural Communities, AVSF, 2025

5 The N'Gourti-Termit Pastoral Systems Security Project (PSSP NT), implemented in partnership with the NGO Karkara in northeastern Niger. Food Security Program for Nomadic Communities and Livestock (PNT), implemented in partnership with the NGO ADESAH in northern Mali.

6 Read (in French): Integrated Human and Animal Health Services in Pastoral Areas: An Innovative and Promising Approach, AVSF, 2010

7 A biogeographic region with a high level of biodiversity that is particularly threatened by human activities.

8 PREZODE is an international collaborative initiative aimed at strengthening prevention, early detection, and resilience in order to prevent or contain emerging infectious diseases of animal origin with pandemic potential.

Supporting resilient agroecological and food systems

AVSF supports producers and livestock breeders in implementing agroecological practices in both crop and livestock systems.

This approach improves productivity while reducing the use of chemical inputs, preserving soil health, ensuring a supply of healthy and diverse food, and giving producers greater economic autonomy⁹.

In 2021, AVSF led the development of an open access training guide¹⁰ on the dangers, reduction, and alternatives to the use of pesticides and veterinary drugs. More than 250 people from 25 partner organizations in 7 countries across Africa and Latin America have already been trained.

In the field of crop production, the development, testing, and dissemination of bio-inputs are central to efforts to reduce chemical inputs, serving as alternatives to herbicides and biocides.

As for animal husbandry, numerous studies have made it possible to collect traditional ethno-veterinary knowledge and confirm the efficacy and safety of certain traditional remedies. Thanks to the local dissemination of these remedies, the use of allopathic drugs, particularly antibiotics, has decreased.

Biosecurity measures in animal husbandry are also central to maintaining good health while minimizing input use. These measures provide protection against the emergence of new zoonotic risks linked to interactions between wildlife and domestic animals, as well as against epizootics that could decimate herds. For example, in Southeast Asia, AVSF has supported several biosecurity programs to combat African Swine Fever [ASF]¹¹.

The approach developed by AVSF also includes the preservation of “cultivated” biodiversity by producers. Whether it involves the preservation of animal genetics, producer-led improvement of local goat breeds in Mongolia and Madagascar, or the conservation of local plant varieties through seed banks, these actions enable better adaptation to climate change and diseases.

Finally, the establishment of fair supply chains, the development of income-generating activities (such as the creation of women-led vegetable gardens in Senegal or locust farming in Cambodia), **and the improvement of production services** contribute to food security and the economic resilience of households—an essential prerequisite for sustainable integrated health.

Preserving natural resources and ecosystems

In pastoral areas of Mongolia and West Africa, AVSF supports **community-based natural resources management** through the creation of pasture user groups. As part of the Sustainable Cashmere project in Mongolia, for example, these groups plan pasture use, manage carrying capacities, monitor pasture health, and protect water sources.

The degradation of wild ecosystems also poses a risk of pandemics emerging and contributes to global imbalances (climate change, the spread of invasive species, etc.). Supporting communities living near or within sensitive natural areas (national parks, forests) **to develop agricultural activities that generate income while avoiding the extraction of resources from these ecosystems** (animals, timber) is a key strategy for protecting these biodiversity-rich areas. This is notably the objective pursued in Zambia¹², where AVSF supports job creation by promoting sustainable value chains and strengthening forest conservation.

Localizing the One Health Approach

AVSF deems that the One Health approach at the territorial level is essential to its effectiveness. Participatory assessments enable communities to identify their own health and environmental priorities. This is particularly the case in Cambodia, with the organization of community health days¹³, as well as in Senegal and Madagascar, where a survey on perceptions of health determinants served as the basis for developing the AfriCam-PREZODE project.

In Laos, as part of the ASAMCO-PREZODE project, **AVSF supports the establishment of committees bringing together village authorities, Village Veterinary Workers,**

their public health counterparts, and nature reserve rangers, so that they can collectively decide on priority prevention actions and ensure the reporting of unusual events to district authorities.

Finally, AVSF facilitates the **creation of spaces for dialogue** among various local stakeholders who, connected to national One Health networks, can share on-the-ground realities and advocate for actions better tailored to the needs expressed by communities. This is the case, for example, within the Thiellal¹⁴ project in Senegal, with the aim of adapting public policies to local contexts.

Develop partnerships and networks

Since an integrated and systemic approach is intrinsic to the One Health framework, it must be carried out in collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders. Accordingly, **AVSF works across all its projects with local, national, and international stakeholders from the three health and various sectors** (private, public, and civil society). The organization also works closely with the research community in the fields of human, animal, and environmental health, as well as the humanities and social sciences. These partnerships enable a better understanding of practices, perceptions, and the social determinants of health—a prerequisite for the effectiveness and sustainability of the actions implemented.

AVSF is also a member of various **national and international networks committed to the One Health approach** (PREZODE, One Sustainable Health Forum, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières International) to help develop high-impact One Health programs and policies.

9 Read (in French): *Agroecological livestock management*, AVSF, 2025

10 Read: *Agroecology as a Substitute for Pesticides*, AVSF, 2021

11 In particular through the project BIG: Biosecurity in Pig Production, implemented from 2022 to 2024 in ASEAN countries, with support from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in partnership with Vetagrosup, ILRI, and AVSF.

12 The Bush2Business project aims to develop commercial opportunities for non-timber forest products in Zambia; with support from AFD.

13 Read the innovative action note: *One Health in Cambodia's farming communities*, AVSF, 2020

14 The Thiellal project aims to connect producer organizations with professionals in the health, agriculture, and environmental sectors; with support from the AFD.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS

For public policies that are truly aligned with the One Health approach:

→ To the attention of public authorities in the Global South

- Promote **intersectoral and transdisciplinary linkages** (research, training, etc.) to protect human, animal, and environmental health.
- **Support the decentralization** of One Health guidelines into operational national and territorial policies.
- **Strengthen and operationalize existing regulatory systems**, while ensuring the effective implementation of international conventions and agreements on synthetic pesticides and veterinary drugs.
- Recognize and facilitate the **use of alternatives** to synthetic pesticides and veterinary drugs.
- **Strengthen the human and financial resources** of health systems (human, animal, and environmental) to improve diagnostic, surveillance, care, and response systems.
- Recognize, through national legislation, **the status and training of CAHWs**, and promote the establishment of CAHWs networks across regions to provide local services to livestock farmers and enable local epidemiological surveillance.

→ To the attention of French and European public authorities:

- Ban the production and **export to third countries of the most dangerous pesticides** and active ingredients that are prohibited within the European Union.
- **Allocate funding**, particularly through public development aid, to support the most vulnerable countries in implementing the One Health approach.
- **Raise awareness and train future professionals** in health, agriculture, environment, social sciences, and development on the challenges and principles of the One Health approach.

REFERENCES

Preventing and reducing the risk of zoonotic disease outbreaks in Laos: through the ASAMCO project, AVSF teams are strengthening community surveillance and early detection capacities, training veterinary workers, and supporting the creation of local One Health committees.

Towards the proper and prudent use of veterinary medicines in Madagascar: the SANUVA project aims to ensure quality food for more than 8,000 people, while reducing the use of pesticides and veterinary medicines.

Putting the “One Health” concept into practice in the Haute Casamance region: the Thiellal project in Senegal adopts a participatory and integrative approach involving a wide range of local stakeholders from various sectors (agriculture, livestock, human and veterinary medicine, environment) at the regional level, to identify, prioritize, and then address the community’s human, animal, and environmental health issues in a sustainable manner.

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- *Les APPSA : acteurs clés de la démarche One Health dans les communautés rurales*, AVSF, 2025
- *Animal health and veterinary public health: an important global issue*, AVSF, 2021
- *Reducing the Use of Pesticides and Veterinary Products*, AVSF, 2024
- *L’agroécologie pour sortir des pesticides*, AVSF, 2021
- *Agroecology as a Substitute for Pesticides*, AVSF, 2021