

Best Practice

Professionalising Veterinary Paraprofessionals

Developing training curricula for veterinary paraprofessionals (VPPs)

Objective: To improve the skills of VPPs by developing relevant, high-quality initial training curricula that are aligned with both WOAHP guidelines and local needs.

Method	Outcomes	Stakeholders
Phase 1: Analysis - Identify needs and analyse the curricula of partner training institutions - Training on WOAHP guidelines and recommendations - Assess the level of curriculum alignment using the curriculum alignment matrix tool (CAM tool) Phase 2: Standardisation and development - Analysis of curricula using the CAM tool to identify courses, units or learning outcomes that may be missing - Workshops at each training institution to develop curricula, define learning outcomes (LO), increase the proportion of practical teaching, and draw up syllabuses Phase 3: Approval and implementation - Adoption of new curricula by national stakeholders - Official approval and implementation, backed up with monitoring	1. Development and adoption of curricula aligned with WOAHP guidelines - Integration of new key training modules: biosecurity, animal welfare, the One Health approach, zoonoses and emerging diseases, legislation and professional ethics, and general microbiology - A significant increase in the proportion of supervised small group work and practical sessions 2. Closer partnerships between training institutions: - Creation of an informal communication network - Participation in capitalisation workshops Outcome indicators - Number of curricula and syllabuses developed and adopted - Number of training courses on WOAHP recommendations and the WOAHP CAM tool - Number of workshops analysing curricula using the CAM tool - Number of workshops enabling the development of learning units and course syllabuses	Training institution (Teaching staff and representatives of the VPP training institutions partnering with the project) Experts in the development of VPP curricula (WOAHP, EISMV) Relevant government department (Department responsible for veterinary services and/or higher education) Relevant professional authorities (Veterinary statutory bodies and other equivalent bodies representing VPPs) Representatives of animal health professionals (Livestock farmers, former students, veterinarians, other animal health professionals, and, where appropriate, NGOs) Project Implementation Unit (P3V Coordinator and Technical Assistant, Focal Points) Accreditation bodies  (optional, if they exist and if they are an objective of the curriculum review)

Conditions for success

- **A rigorous approach:** The use of tried-and-tested tools (such as the CAM tool) and the involvement of international (WOAH) and regional (EISMV) experts ensures that curricula meet global standards. Taking into account the needs identified during the diagnostic phase ensures that the teaching is also relevant to national contexts.
- **Commitment and local support:** Success depends on selecting VPP training institutions that are committed to their local communities and have the political will to see the review process through to completion. 
- **Allocation of critical resources:** Ensuring that headteachers and teachers are available for the duration of the project. The resources the institution allocates to the process (brainstorming sessions, writing workshops) must be protected and funded to prevent the production of superficial curricula.

Key points

- **Support from the relevant authorities prior to curriculum analysis:** Before beginning the curriculum analysis, it is essential to ensure that the authorities understand the importance of the initiative and support it, that it is aligned with their strategic vision, and that they facilitate its implementation and application. 
- **Student-centred learning:** The competency-based approach (CBA) should be used to clearly define the expected learning outcomes for each teaching unit.
- **Alignment with existing approaches:** New curricula must be consistent with the training institution's policies and strategic plan in order to ensure that they are sustainable over the long term; if this is not the case, these framework documents must be updated at the same time.
- **Professional development and career opportunities:** Curricula should incorporate modules that broaden career opportunities and encourage entrepreneurship (e.g. modules on management, taxation and business studies), whilst also enabling students to meet the academic requirements needed to progress to master's programmes or to bridging courses that lead to a veterinary degree.
- **Gender equity:** It is important to ensure that training methods, teaching content and the way the profession is portrayed are inclusive, encourage female leadership, and do not create barriers to the training of female students.

Recommendations

- **Formal networks of training institutions:** Formalise collaboration between the project's partner training institutions within a structured network in order to capitalise on existing achievements and the exchange of expertise.
- **National quality assurance:** Use this review process to develop a certification process that is recognised by the authorities (e.g. collaboration with the National Authority for Quality Assurance in Higher Education [ANAQ-Sup] in Senegal) in order to guarantee the value of a qualification.
- **Standardisation and accreditation:** Establish a national accreditation process for new institutions wishing to train VPPs in order to limit unfair competition between VPPs from different institutions and to continue the process of standardising and improving skills at the national level. This process could be supported by WOAH PVS experts.
- **Regional ambition:** Advocate for the harmonisation of curricula across the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) or the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) in order to promote regional collaboration among professionals and the mutual recognition of qualifications.

Conclusion

Curriculum development is fundamental to the quality of future veterinary services. By aligning course content with WOAH standards, incorporating cross-cutting skills (such as entrepreneurship and One Health competencies) and taking the socio-economic context into account, the P3V project has supported training institutions in improving their curricula so that they can offer modern, inclusive and forward-looking training programmes.



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