

Program Report 2018--2020

A Word From the Chair



It is with great pleasure that I write this Chair's Report. Reflecting on the past two years with VWB/VSF, the incredible successes this organization has achieved never cease to amaze me. Being a small organization does bring many challenges, but the dedication, perseverance, and innovation from staff, board members, and volunteers continues to drive VWB/VSF Canada forward.

The COVID-19 Pandemic is a stark reminder of the necessity of a One Health approach. The interconnectedness of human, animal, and environmental health is inherent in our complex world. A holistic approach that considers these intersections and brings disciplines and community members together to enhance health across the spectrum is desperately needed. VWB/VSF Canada continues to be a leader in One Health in all of our programs as well as an advocate for this approach in the development sector.

One Health has been a foundational component of our volunteer sending program – Volunteers for Healthy Animals and Health Communities (V4H2) – supported by Global Affairs Canada (GAC). Over the past five years, we have worked with local partners in Ghana, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Laos and Vietnam to improve animal health and welfare and build community capacity in agriculture in a gender-sensitive, environmentally sustainable manner. Through this program we have sent 116 volunteers on 150 placements to exchange knowledge and build local capacity. This program included two study visits that brought community partners to Canada to participate in field visits and educational workshops and share their knowledge and expertise. I participated in the 2019 study visit and it was one of the highlights of my time as Chair.

V4H2 is over but we are delighted to be launching a new GAC-funded volunteer sending program. VETS (Volunteers Engaged in Gender-Sensitive Programming) will last 7 years and involve partnerships with organizations in Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam.

Our Northern Canada Program illustrates VWB/VSF's One Health approach in our own back yard. Many communities in Northern Canada lack basic access to veterinary care. Not only does this impact animal health and welfare, but also poses a risk of zoonotic pathogen transmission. Generous funding from PetSmart Charities Canada is allowing us to expand our partnerships with underserved communities and work on the foundational aspects of sustainable veterinary care in the North, including a review of current policy, and research into telemedicine opportunities.

As I wrap up my report, I would like to thank all of the people and organizations that make this work possible. We are very grateful for financial support from our partners in government and industry as well private foundations and individual donors. Your contributions are valued and important and we will continue to work hard to ensure your investments make a positive difference in the world.

My very best,

Katie Clow, DVM, PhD
Chair of the Board of Directors, VWB/VSF Canada

Improving Animal Health in Canada's North

In 2019, VWB/VSF passed an important milestone in its efforts to improve animal care in Canada's North. After more than a decade supporting the northern work of Canadian veterinary schools, VWB/VSF conducted its own temporary clinics in Wrigley and Ft. Liard, NWT and Toyoluk, Nunavut.

Volunteer veterinarians and vet technicians performed 87 sterilization surgeries, vaccinated 168 animals for rabies and other diseases, and de-wormed 161 animals. They also handled other veterinary tasks such as removing porcupine quills and entropion (droopy eyelid) repair surgery.

VWB/VSF's expanded role in the North is a response to service gaps identified through a survey conducted in 2017. That survey found 54 communities of 100 families or more without adequate veterinary service. It also found that there was little or no coordination or shared standards of care among the various stakeholders.

VWB/VSF's work in the North is built on a One Health model, acknowledging that animal and human health, and environmental sustainability, are inextricably linked and will work to ensure that all activities are conducted in full partnership with the communities involved.

In late 2019, VWB/VSF negotiated an important agreement with PetSmart Charities of Canada to expand its leadership role in the North. Funding from PetSmart Charities will allow VWB/VSF to increase veterinary care in underserved communities, facilitate coordination and collaboration, develop best practices and regulatory frameworks, and explore innovations such as telehealth, training local community animal management workers, and linkages with clinics in Southern Canada.



South Sudan

Sustainable Agriculture and Livestock Initiative (SALPI)

VWB /VSF is continuing its involvement in South Sudan as the country continues to face the ever-present threat of famine. SALPI is a food security project funded by the European Union, lead by Vétérinaires sans frontières Suisse, and delivered in partnership with and Help Restore Youth South Sudan (HeRY). Launched at the beginning of 2019, it will run until the end of 2021. VWB/ VSF has opened a field office in Maluakon in Aweil South and is responsible for direct implementation in two payams, Maleng Alet and Panthou. What follows are some key results from the first project year.

Livestock

Under the supervision of a veterinarian hired by the project, VWB/VSF has provided refresher training to 40 Community Animal Health Workers in the project area and has equipped them with essential veterinary supplies. Already they have treated an estimated 40,000 cattle, sheep, and goats, and are providing valuable field level disease surveillance.



Crop-based Agriculture

Tools and vegetable seeds have been distributed to 1,600 vulnerable families. Seventy per cent of those households are headed by women. Six Farmer Field Schools provided climate smart agriculture training to 180 farm households, and four community demonstration plots have been created. Forty farmers (28 men and 12 women) have received intensive ox and donkey plough training and 20 ploughs have been distributed. Using hand labour, the average subsistence farmer manages to cultivate between 1 and 4 acres. With animal traction, that number should increase to 10-15 acres per family. Just 4 per cent of the arable land in South Sudan is currently under cultivation. The project has established 2 tree nurseries and had distributed 1000 trees to 600 households. A network of 20 local vendors has been established to ensure a reliable supply of fairly-priced farm inputs.

Fishing

Two hundred families have received fishing gear to help them supplement their diets and earn income.

Peace Building

Conflict could easily be described as the single greatest contributor to food insecurity in South Sudan, killing tens of thousands, forcing millions off of the land, and destabilizing society at every level. Lethal weapons are readily available and communities have been left to manage internal conflicts on their own. The project has established community peace committees designed to deal with community level conflict. The committees work with local leaders, tribal chiefs, and cattle camp chiefs – the traditional mediators of conflict. So far, 10 conflict situations related to cattle or the use of resources have been successfully resolved and six forwarded to the county court for mediation.

Environment

Two communal natural resource management committees with a combined total of 50 members have been established to improve the management of resources such as water and grazing land. These committees are closely linked to the community peace committees since resources are often the source of conflict. As well, 10 community disaster risk reduction committees have created disaster preparedness plans and are working on COVID 19 prevention.

100 locally made energy efficient Jiko stoves have been distributed to pregnant, breast feeding, disabled and elderly household heads. The stoves use charcoal or small pieces of wood, eliminating the necessity for women and girls to search for wood far from home. That saves valuable time, and it also reduces one of the greatest risk factors for gender-based violence. The stoves also produce much less smoke, reducing the risk of lung disease among those who cook on them.

Gender Equality

An engendered value chain analysis has been completed, identifying opportunities and impediments for women's participation at the various stages of agricultural production, processing and marketing.

Staff and local stakeholder groups are actively monitoring gender-based violence. During the first year 4 cases were identified and the victims referred for medical treatment and counselling.



Successful Completion of Five-Year Program



VWB /VSF's largest volunteer-sending program officially came to a close March 31, 2020. By every standard the Volunteers for Healthy Animals and Healthy Communities (V4H2), an initiative funded by Global Affairs Canada with matching funds from VWB /VSF was a resounding success. One hundred and sixteen individual volunteers completed 150 volunteer assignments lasting anywhere from a few weeks to more than 2 years. That exceeded the target of 102 volunteers by 13 per cent. Volunteers worked with partners in Ghana, Kenya, Lao PDR, Tanzania, Uganda, and Vietnam.

More than 71,600 people, mostly small scale farmers, benefitted directly from volunteer-delivered training and support, developing new skills and capacity that increased their ability to produce food and care for animals. Another 3,100 people working as community animal health workers, extension officers, and partner staff members, as well as people serving in leadership positions with co-operatives, community organizations, and partner organizations received training in animal, human and environmental

health-related topics.

Not all of the educational opportunities took place overseas. Two study tours brought leaders and staff from partner organizations to Canada for classroom sessions with Canadian experts and visits to Canadian farms and processing facilities.

Throughout the project, significant effort was invested in ensuring that women would benefit from the opportunities available. VWB/VSF led by example. Ninety two volunteers were women, accounting for 79 per cent of the total. The majority of individuals trained were women, with women-only sessions for community animal health workers and farmers. Among the Canadian volunteers were 12 gender specialists who not only provided direct training to farmers and students, but also worked with partner organizations to identify and rectify barriers to the participation of women and girls. Some activities were exclusively for women, partnering with women's community organizations and agricultural groups to expand leadership opportunities and improve the social and economic situation of women.

Volunteering in Challenging Times

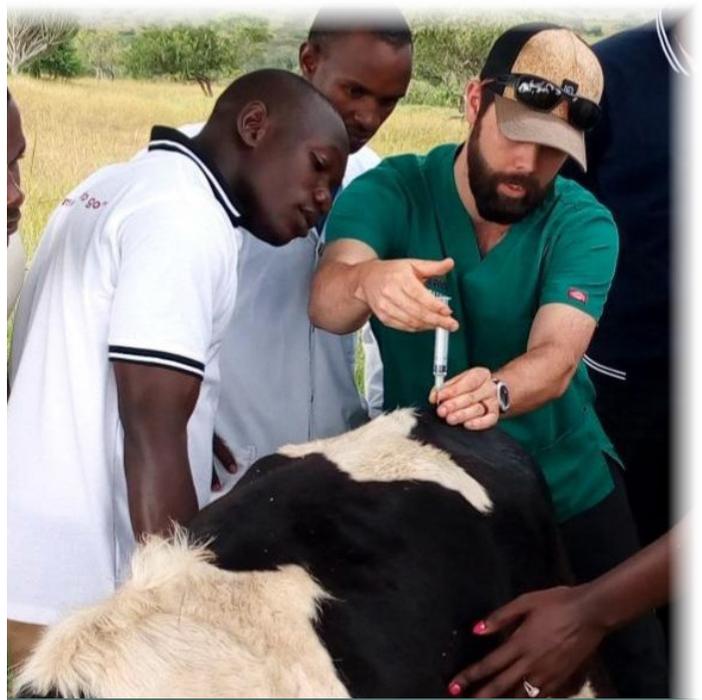
Like so many other human endeavors, the global COVID 19 pandemic has brought dramatic changes to international volunteer programs. Travel and health restrictions make it impossible to send volunteers overseas. VWB/VSF is grateful that all volunteers were able to return to Canada safely.

For the moment, VWB/VSF is focusing its energy and resources on ensuring that our partners overseas are equipped to survive the pandemic. Most partner countries have yet to experience the full brunt of COVID 19. With luck and good preparations some may be spared the worst of the epidemic. However, in the countries where VWB/VSF works, the social distancing measures implemented in Canada would be very difficult to enforce, and scarce health facilities could quickly become overwhelmed.

VWB/VSF is confident that a time will come when Canadian veterinarians and other professionals will again share their skills and knowledge with partners around the world. We encourage people interested in volunteer opportunities to stay in touch and to support our efforts in other ways until that time comes.

Young Volunteers Program

V4H2 allowed VWB/VSF to fully integrate its international volunteer program for students into the larger initiative. Between 2017 and 2019, 45 students completed 47 three-month placements with VWB/VSF partners overseas. The majority of these volunteers were vet students, but there were also veterinary technicians, students from other agricultural disciplines, and communications students who helped to document the activities of the volunteers and the partners.



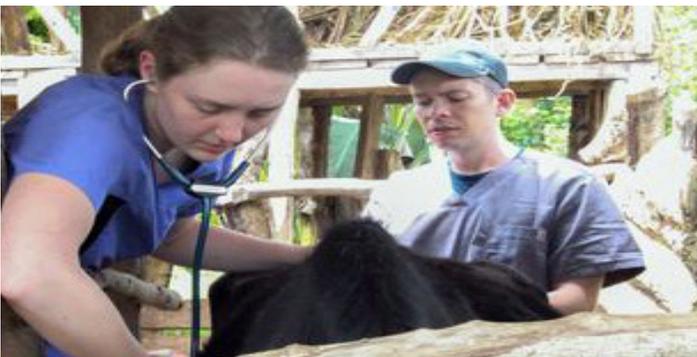
Volunteers Engaged in Gender-Responsive Technical Solutions

A new project is ready to pick up where V4H2 left off.

Volunteers Engaged in Gender Responsive Technical Solutions (VETS) is a seven-year initiative funded by Global Affairs Canada that will see 190 Canadian volunteers take on international assignments on behalf of Veterinarians without Borders/Vétérinaires sans frontières. The goal of the project is similar to that of V4H2 in that it will work to improve the economic and social wellbeing of the world's most marginalized people, particularly women and girls, in six countries in Africa and Asia.

The project will use the skills of Canadian volunteers to support smallholder farmers, primarily women, to reduce poverty by improving family income and nutrition, principally through improved production of livestock and crops. The project is built around the OneHealth concept which recognizes that the health of animals, people, and the natural environment are interconnected.

As with so many other activities, the COVID-19 pandemic has had a dramatic impact on the first months of the VETS program. Resources are being used to help VWB/VSF partners prepare for, and cope with, the crisis. Volunteers will be recruited for international assignments as soon as it is safe to travel.





Board members—2019

Katie Clow -- Chair
Jennifer Ogeer – Vice-Chair
Brendan Delehanty – Treasurer
Claire Card – Director
John Vanleeuwen – Director
Anna Mackay – Director
Carol Dolbel – Director
Dominique Charron – Director
Dale Smith – Director
Sonia Fèvre – Director
Emily Denstedt – Director

Completed Terms

Duane Landals
Cécile Aenishaenslin
Chip Coombs

A Proud Member of VSF International

VWB/VSF is the Canadian member of VSF International, a network of organizations working to achieve food and nutrition security and food safety through veterinary care and knowledge. VSF members are active in more than 30 countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia working to improve the living conditions of the most disadvantaged rural populations through veterinary and agricultural services, sustainable animal production, training, value chain development, and sustainable natural resource management. The 13 member organizations use the One Health approach to further healthy relationships between humans, animals and the environment. VSF International was created to strengthen collaboration between its members in terms of information and experience exchange, strategic thinking, geographical coverage, human resource sharing, and adoption of innovative solutions to improve the well-being of disadvantaged populations.

Staff at March 31, 2020

Monique Charron--Executive Director
Lucie Béchamp—Finance and Administration Manager
Kristen Rodrigues – Volunteer Cooperation Program Manager
Allyson Fradella – Program Officer, Volunteer Cooperation Program
Bul John Ajak – South Sudan Program Manager
Rosemary Moira – Finance Officer, South Sudan



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Veterinarians without Borders/ Vétérinaires sans frontières

420 – 700 Industrial Avenue, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1G 0Y9

+1.613.857.0521 info@vetswithoutborders.ca <https://vetswithoutborders.ca>

Facebook.com/vetswithoutborders.ca Instagram vw_b_vs_f_canada