



One Health Consortium

Why in News

Recently, the **Department of Biotechnology** has launched the **country's first [One Health consortium](#)**.

- The Department of Biotechnology is an Indian government department, **under the Ministry of Science and Technology**

Key Points

▪ About:

- This **Consortium consisting of 27 organisations** is one of the biggest one health programs launched by India in post-Covid times.
- It **envisages carrying out surveillance** of important bacterial, viral and parasitic infections of zoonotic and transboundary pathogens in India.
- It also **looks into the use of existing diagnostic tests** and the development of additional methodologies for the surveillance and understanding the spread of emerging diseases.

▪ Significance:

- It will provide a **holistic approach** to understand the health of human, animals and wildlife to minimise the damage caused by **future pandemics**.

▪ Related Government Steps:

◦ National Expert Group on 'One Health':

- A **National Expert Group on 'One Health'** as a multi-sectoral, transdisciplinary, collaborative group was set up by India in May 2019.

- Recently in **April 2021**, the Group submitted its report with inclusion of **Subject Specific Health Action Plans** on identified **Climate Sensitive Diseases and 'One Health'**.

◦ Malé Declaration in 2017:

- In the context of **Green and Climate Resilient Healthcare Facilities**, India became signatory to the **Malé Declaration in 2017** and agreed to **promote climate-resilient healthcare facilities** to be able to withstand any climatic event.

◦ [Universal Health Coverage](#):

- Its goal as stated in the **UN [Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs no. 3\)](#)** is one of the most significant commitments to equitable quality healthcare for all.

- India moved a step closer towards its commitment to the SDGs, when in 2018 the country launched a **national health protection scheme**,

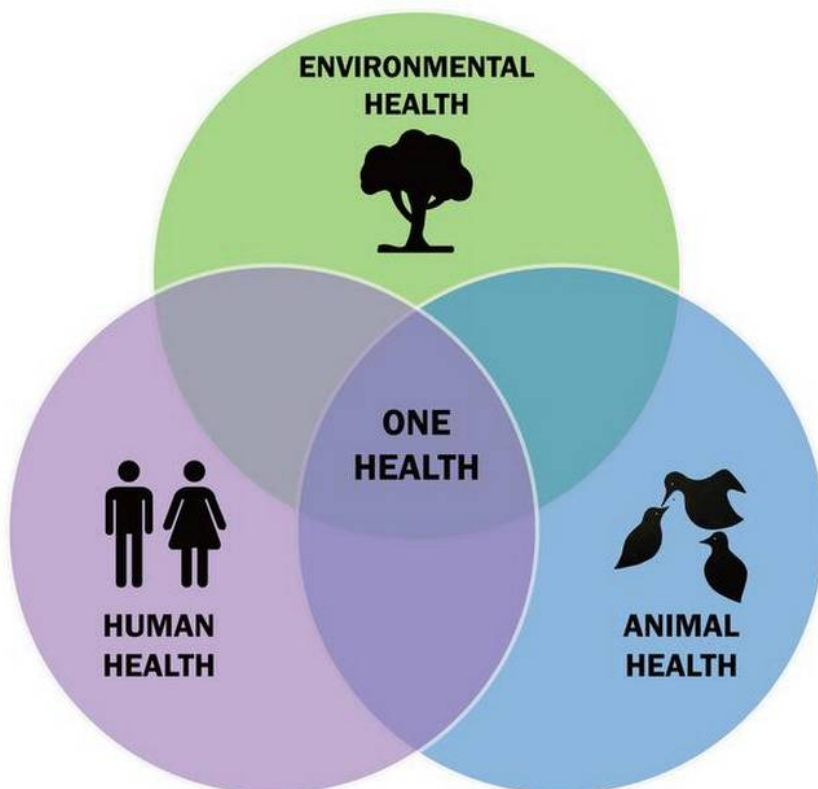
[Ayushman Bharat](#), to achieve UHC.

One Health Concept

▪ About:

- One Health is an **approach that recognizes that the health of people** is closely connected to the health of animals and our shared environment.
- **One Health' vision** derives its blueprint from the agreement between the **tripartite-plus alliance** comprising the [Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(FAO\)](#), the **World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)**.
- It's purpose is to **encourage collaborations in research and sharing of knowledge** at multiple levels across various disciplines like **human health, animal health, plants, soil, environmental and ecosystem health** in ways that improve, protect and defend the health of all species.

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- **Increasing Significance:** It has become more important in recent years because **many factors have changed interactions** between people, animals, plants, and our environment.
 - **Human Expansion:** Human populations are growing and expanding into new geographic areas due to which close **contact with animals and their environments provides more opportunities for diseases to pass** between animals and people.
 - Of the contagious diseases affecting humans, **more than 65% are of zoonotic or animal to man origin.**
 - **Environmental Disruptions:** Disruptions in environmental conditions and habitats can provide new opportunities for diseases to pass to animals.
 - **International Travel & Trade:** The movement of people, animals, and animal products has increased from international travel and trade due to which diseases can spread quickly across borders and around the globe.
 - **Viruses in Wildlife:** Scientists have observed that there are more than 1.7 million viruses circulating in wildlife, and many of them are likely to be zoonotic.

- This implies that unless there is timely detection, India risks facing many more pandemics in times to come.

Way Forward

- The **Covid-19 pandemic** showed the relevance of '**One Health**' principles in the governance of infectious diseases, especially efforts to prevent and contain **zoonotic diseases** throughout the world.
- India needs to **scale up such a model across the country** and to establish meaningful research collaborations across the world.
- There is a **need to develop best-practice guidelines for informal market** and slaughterhouse operation (e.g., inspections, disease prevalence assessments), and creating mechanisms to operationalise 'One Health' at every stage down to the village level.
- Awareness generation, and increased investments toward meeting '**One Health**' targets is the **need of the hour**.

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