With ever-increasing human intrusion into natural ecosystems, the growing demand for animal-based food products, international trade, international travel, and other factors, human exposure to zoonotic diseases has never been higher. Addressing zoonotic diseases and other threats at the human-animal-environment interface requires a One Health approach. The One Health approach is an interdisciplinary, collaborative effort to attain optimal health for people, animals, and the environment. When human health, animal health, and environmental experts work together, they have the opportunity to minimize zoonotic disease threats before they spillover into human populations and trigger a public health threat.

The Preparedness and Response (P&R) project is a key component of USAID’s Emerging Pandemic Threats 2 (EPT-2) program portfolio and the Global Health Security Agenda (GHSA). Specifically, the P&R project contributed to the goals of both EPT-2 and GHSA by working in 16 countries in Africa and Southeast Asia to achieve two major objectives: 1) national One Health platforms established and strengthened and 2) national preparedness and response plans developed, tested, implemented, and evaluated. P&R partnered with national governments to strengthen multisectoral coordination at the national level—in country government systems, policies, and practices—to improve preparedness and response to public health threats. By developing and supporting formal One Health platforms, P&R’s work laid the foundation for institutionalizing a multisectoral One Health approach—where human, animal, and environmental health assets join forces—as the standard way to prevent, detect, and respond to emerging disease threats. P&R’s approach to achieving sustainable results in 16 diverse countries with different risk profiles and governance structures was to facilitate a country-owned process. In each country, P&R identified One Health champions and stakeholders and paired a project technical advisor—a local technical expert with experience navigating the political landscape in their country—with a professional local or regional facilitator skilled at consensus building and workshop design. The technical advisor and facilitator guided stakeholders from different sectors through complex decision-making processes to take joint action, such as formalizing a One Health platform structure, developing or updating a One Health Strategic Plan, or developing or updating a National Preparedness and Response Plan. In addition to producing outputs that provided clear tangible guidelines for collaboration, the process of bringing multisectoral stakeholders together on a regular basis established a practice of collaboration, built relationships across sectors, and strengthened the capacity of each platform to accomplish more on its own.

At the global level, P&R looked across all countries to inform a holistic approach to activity design, planning, implementation, and learning. P&R developed common terminology, tools, and measurement indicators to improve quality, efficiency, and learning. This standardization facilitated consistent, high quality technical implementation while still allowing for adaptation to individual country contexts. Embracing an iterative process enabled P&R to continue to refine and improve the conceptual framework, supporting toolkits, and country activities throughout the life of the project.
P&R has contributed to the launch of national One Health platforms in eight countries, reinvigorated existing platforms in seven countries, and significantly advanced progress towards formalizing a platform in Côte d’Ivoire.

By successfully convening partners, demonstrating high management and technical standards, and carefully measuring progress, strong One Health coordination mechanisms move countries toward their health security objectives during both peacetime and outbreaks. P&R has strengthened operations of twelve One Health platforms by developing governance manuals, M&E plans, communications plans and protocols, and conducting leadership training.

P&R supported One Health platforms’ integral role in implementing multisectoral preparedness planning and response activities, such as zoonotic disease prioritization, simulations, preparedness and response planning, outbreak response, and after-action reviews. Preparedness and response planning was strengthened in fifteen countries and One Health Strategic Plans developed or updated in thirteen countries. P&R conducted twelve preparedness and response simulations across seven countries and provided technical assistance for outbreak response in seven countries.

Throughout the project, feedback from country learning guided project activity design, planning, and implementation. P&R compiled the evidence base to contribute to global learning materials to improve quality, efficiency, and sustainability of future One Health efforts. To date, seven P&R-authored articles have been published in peer-reviewed journals and seven posters have been accepted for presentation at international conferences. To synthesize the project learning on One Health coordination, P&R also developed a publication series that identified key dimensions of effective multisectoral coordination to improve health security and outcomes from One Health activities. The series shows how formal multisectoral mechanisms contribute to improved health security, and highlights an emerging body of evidence supporting the value of One Health.

To support the capacity building and country ownership of One Health platforms, P&R developed the One Health Assessment for Planning and Performance (OH-APP) for countries to self-assess their capacity and performance through participatory, evidence-based decision-making to prevent, detect, and respond to global health threats. P&R facilitated OH-APP workshops or touch base meetings in fourteen countries.