

PANDASIA PRESS RELEASE

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Thailand communities support the field data collection of PANDASIA's team of experts

The PANDASIA's experts from various disciplines and a pool of external experts developed and adopted a novel approach to collect socio-ecological interactions at different animal-human interfaces.

Prof. Dr. Alongkorn Amonsin, Director of the Center of Excellence for Emerging and Re-emerging Diseases in Animals (CUEIDAs) under the Faculty of Veterinary Science from Chulalongkorn University (CU) leads Work Package 1 (WP1). WP1 obtained approval from Thai government agencies and local authorities to conduct PANDASIA activities in selected communities. From March until October 2023, they engaged with relevant government agencies and local authorities in Thailand to carry out stakeholder mapping, key informant interviews (KIIs), and focus group discussions (FGDs) in Chanthaburi and Chiang Rai provinces.

PANDASIA's Work Package 5, under the leadership of Prof. Dr. Till Bärnighausen and Dr. Marina Treskova, works on the co-development and evaluation of knowledge interventions. They designed questionnaires for the baseline survey to identify people's behaviors that lead to contacts with reservoir hosts at different interfaces and gather baseline knowledge and attitudes towards zoonotic spillover.

Dr. Treskova, from the Heidelberg Institute for Global Health, is positive that this collaboration is about co-development and co-designing that will lead to understanding the realities on the ground. "During the first year, we worked together with our partners in Thailand to gather initial data that will inform the co-design activities. We aimed to understand the current practices and baseline knowledge related to zoonotic infections," she shared.

“As the spillover system encompasses multiple pathways, we are keen to tease out together with the community what and how we can change with a knowledge intervention,” she stressed. She pointed out the importance of working with the community to tailor the content of PANDASIA interventions. “We also collected and evaluated current international ‘One Health’ educational material. This was carried out in collaboration with an inspiring intern from the Yale University who spent her summer internship at Heidelberg. We look forward to work together with the community to tailor this content and evaluate the effects of the intervention with the Work Package 1 (WP1) team,” she pointed out.

In 2023, the project began a collaboration with the Universidade de Lisboa (NOVA). The new partner will specifically support the work of Chulalongkorn and Heidelberg universities. NOVA will work on the ‘One Health’ preventive interventions, citizen’s perspectives, and community empowerment initiatives to understand the communities’ journey towards pandemic prevention. Activities in 2024 includes continued field work, especially collecting biological samples from wild animals, bats and rodents, etc., livestock animals, and insect vectors, such as mosquitoes and flies, as well as humans. These collections will support the identification of human-animal environmental interfaces.

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