

Building capacities in Caribbean animal health in the : The VEP (Veterinary Epidemiologist / Para-Epidemiologist) Project



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Skills in Epidemiology Lacking in the Caribbean

- Region made up of over 31 countries, territories, and protectorates, with concomitant differences in language, culture, and historical experiences.
 - **Disease surveillance and control** has historically been **difficult** with frequent introductions of exotic diseases and pests.
- Discontinuation of previous disease control programs left a **need for personnel trained in epidemiology and emergency response**.
 - Need for longer-term, tailored training in epidemiology, surveillance, and emergency response.

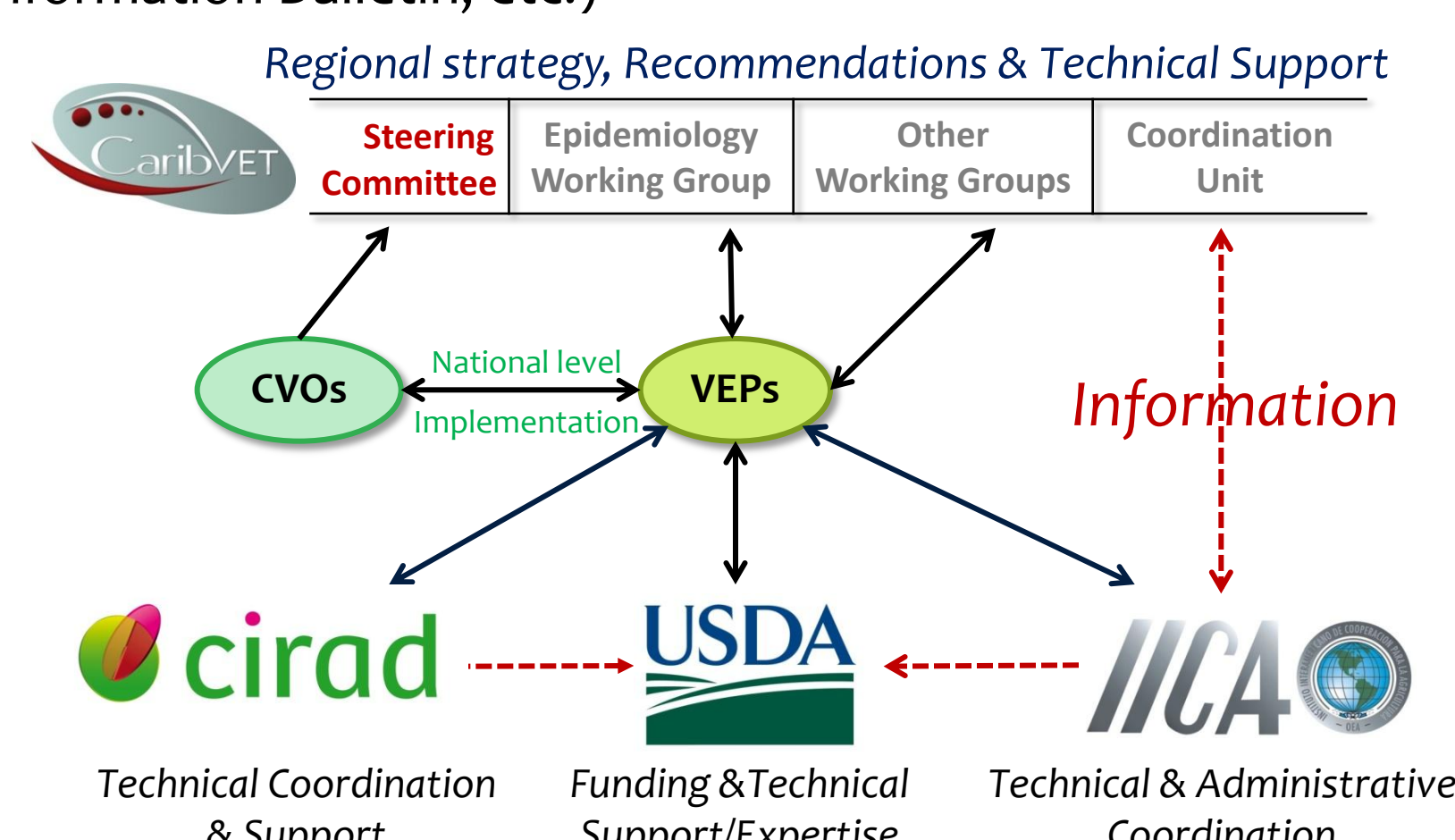
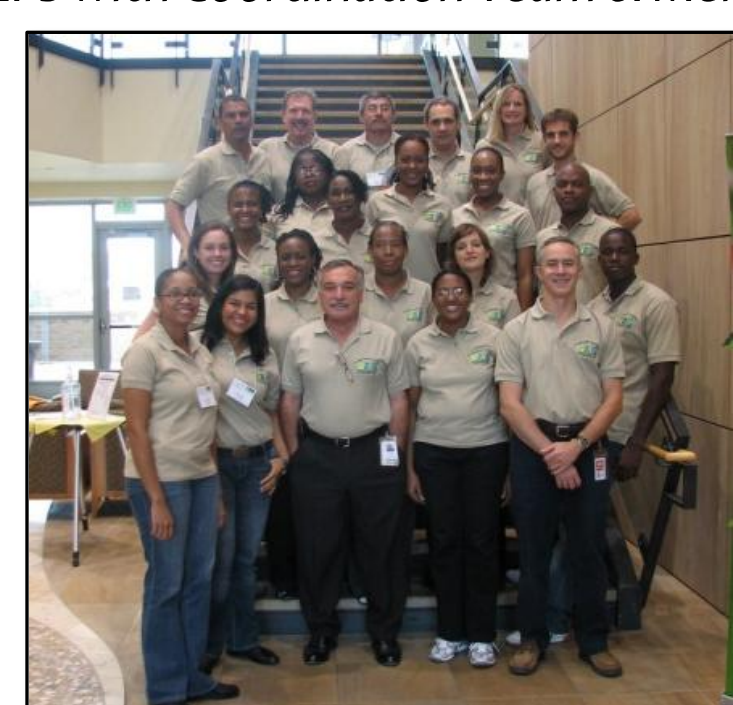


VEP Project Design, Coordination and Evaluation

- 4-year, 2 million USD, funded by **USDA-APHIS-IS** and implemented by **IICA**
- Technical coordination:** USDA, IICA, CIRAD
- General coordination:** The Caribbean Animal Health Network (CaribVET)
 - Steering Committee & Epidemiology WG:** ensure that VEP project meet the needs of the participating countries, as well as the region overall
 - Joint activities:** participation in CaribVET meetings and trainings, sharing internal and external communication means (fora, Website, Information Bulletin, etc.)

External Evaluation

VEPs with Coordination Team & Mentors



Program and practical implementation in the countries

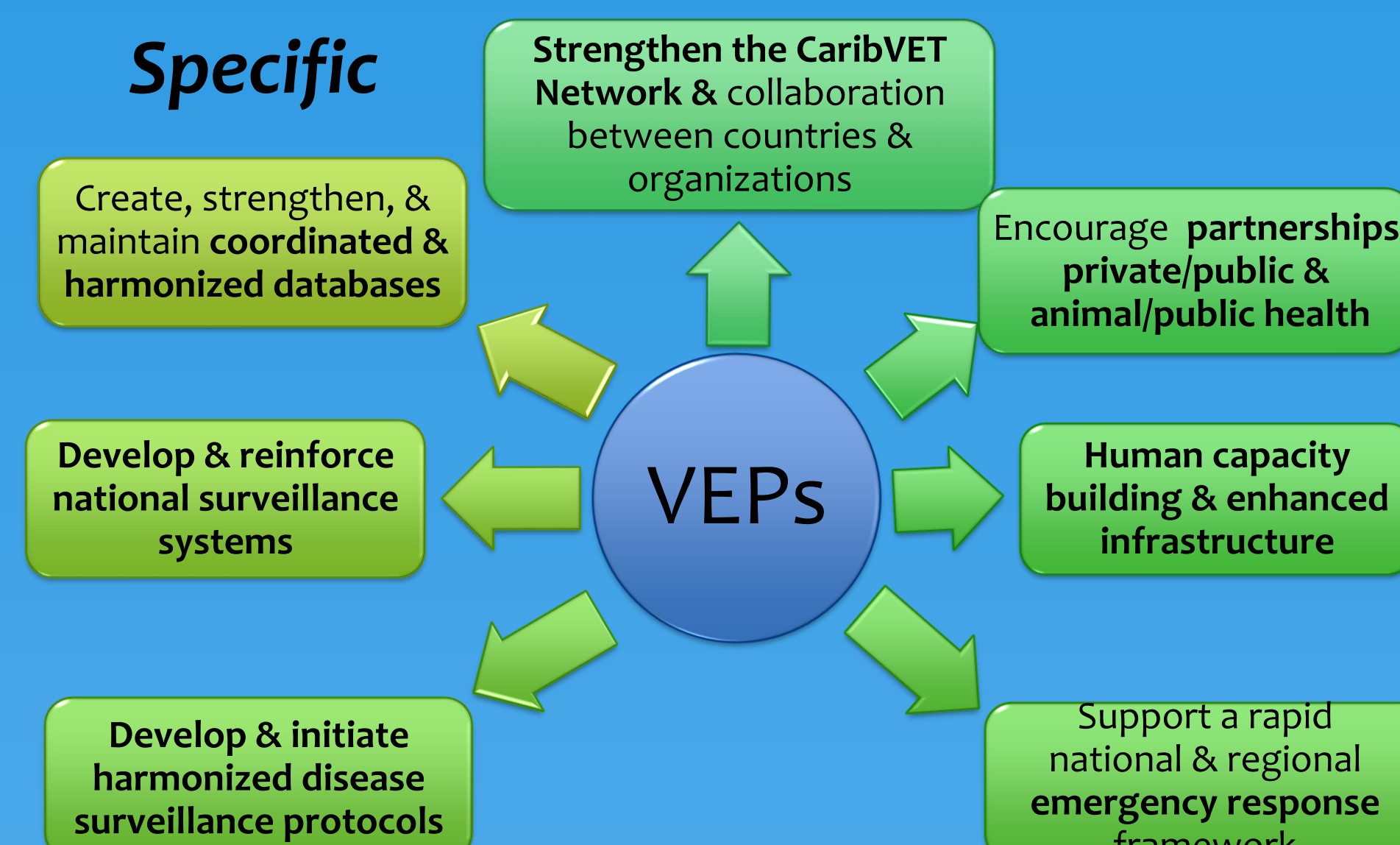
- Capacity Building Program:** developed by epidemiologists from IICA, USDA, Colorado State, Univ. of Florida, & CIRAD → **Theory, practice, & hands-on experience**
- One participant (a “VEP”) nominated by the government in each participating country, formerly involved in CAP* program → VEP Working as full-time government employees throughout the project, allowing for **immediate application of knowledge and skills** gained from training
- Funds provided to pay incentives (participation) & to purchase surveillance supplies
- Monthly Action Report used for follow-up of VEP activities

Project Objectives

General

To strengthen the animal health surveillance and rapid response systems of National Veterinary Services in the Caribbean Region through the formation of a group of veterinary epidemiologists or para-epidemiologists: the “VEPs”

Specific



Countries, Participants, and VEP Responsibilities



Responsibilities transferred to the VEPs to meet Project objectives

- Assist in the building /coordination of the epidemiological **surveillance network**
- Participation in external **evaluation of their surveillance activities** by SNAT*
- Coordinate **sample collection, preparation, and submission**
- Design & manage surveillance **databases & GIS**, farmer registries & livestock census info
- Conduct disease prevalence surveys** based on the country's needs and priorities
- Emergency situations:** review of plans, participate in simulation exercises
- Establish and/or maintain **communication** with stakeholders
- Prepare and submit **regular activity reports** to the CVO* and to VEP coordinators

Training program focused on 5 key areas

- 7 Workshops, online and short course trainings
- 10 in-country epidemiologic projects completed in collaboration with a mentor
- 2 outbreak simulation exercises
- 1 final regional Simulation exercise involving all VEP countries



Sample Handling & Shipment
IATA certification, sample shipment simulation exercise

Basic Epidemiology
Epidemiology short courses (CSU), online RANEMA program, mentored epidemiologic projects

Data Collection and Management & GIS Analysis

Training



Disease Knowledge
Endemic and exotic diseases

Emergency Response
Table-top and field simulations, use of the Incident Command System

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the project participants in each country, their CVO's, and animal health staff; epidemiologists and veterinarians from CIRAD, IICA, USDA, CaribVET, CSU and University of Florida; and USDA-APHIS-IS for funding the VEP project. Also, thanks to Linda Logan and Dave Hird for serving as external evaluators.

Abbreviations used:

CAP: Caribbean Amblyomma Program; SNAT: Surveillance Network Assessment Tool (tool from the Epidemiology Working Group of CaribVET); CVO: Chief Veterinary Officer, CSU: Colorado State University

Impacts and Conclusions

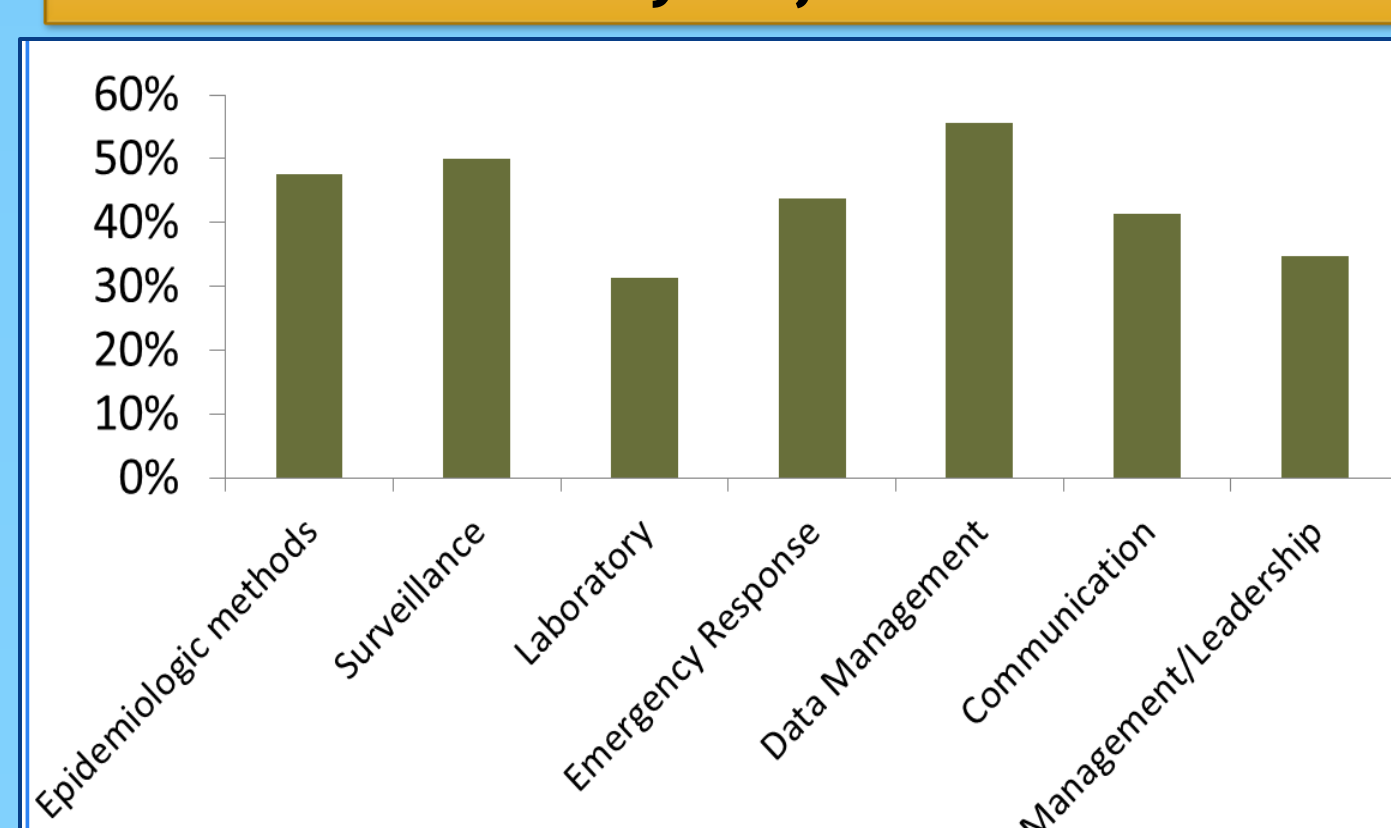
Results of the project:

- Strengthened collaboration** between countries/territories through the VEPs activities
- Very **positive feedback from the participants** after self-evaluation of improvements in capacities
- Individual-level results based on indicators built upon action reports, show variation among the VEPs.

Conclusions:

- Project design allowed for continuation of action by CaribVET, even after project funding ends** e.g. regional emergency preparedness & capacity building – **Recommendations of the VEP project integrated in the Work Plan of the Epigroup of CaribVET**
- For future capacity building projects, recommend:**
 - ⇒ **Improved participant oversight** and development of concise **indicators** for monitoring training and activities
 - ⇒ Planning for **formal recognition** of the training program to motivate participants to complete all training

% Improvement in Core Capacity Domains Measured by Self Assessment



Sample Indicators Based on Monthly Action Reports From VEPs

Period from June 2010 to April 2012	Average per VEP	Group level (Min-Max)
No. databases developed	2	0-4
No. questionnaires developed	1.8	0-4
No. maps created	1.4	0-4
No. Surveillance plans developed	0.3	0-6
No. Emergency preparedness activities	3	1-7

For more information on the project, visit <http://www.caribvet.net/en/vep-project>

