

Taking veterinary students on board to improve animal health and welfare worldwide

A new project between the OIE and the IVSA aims to create stronger links between veterinary students and the different actors involved in the veterinary profession worldwide. The first results are very promising.

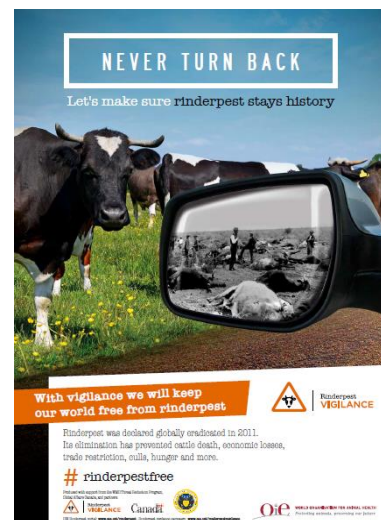
Veterinary students are the future of the profession: they will contribute to assure the health and welfare of animals, and thereby, the social and economic wellbeing of populations. Aware of this challenge, the OIE and the [IVSA](#) (International Veterinary Students' Association) strive to best prepare future veterinarians in their missions through a new collaborative project.

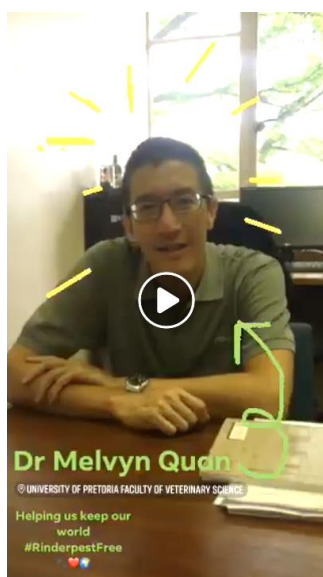
The OIE Junior Ambassador project was launched in September 2018, recruiting more than sixty student ambassadors from thirty-one different countries, with all five OIE regions represented. Each Ambassador takes the responsibility to remain aware of and closely follow animal health and welfare actions undertaken at global level, and to then share the information within his or her university. During the couple of months that the project has been running, the ambassadors have proven to be quite successful in disseminating information amongst students and faculties.

A first focus was given to rinderpest awareness. Using the various tools from the [OIE Rinderpest campaign](#), the ambassadors were introduced to the disease and why it is important to stay vigilant in the post-eradication era. Other crucial topics will be addressed along the year, such as antimicrobial resistance, the OIE international Standards and the OIE as an organisation. Furthermore, certain diseases such as rabies, peste des petits ruminants and bovine tuberculosis will be addressed.

So far, the project is off to a strong start. Students played a central role in propelling the OIE Rinderpest Challenge forward throughout the month of October and the OIE Junior Ambassadors were very creative in generating student involvement, as described in the examples below.

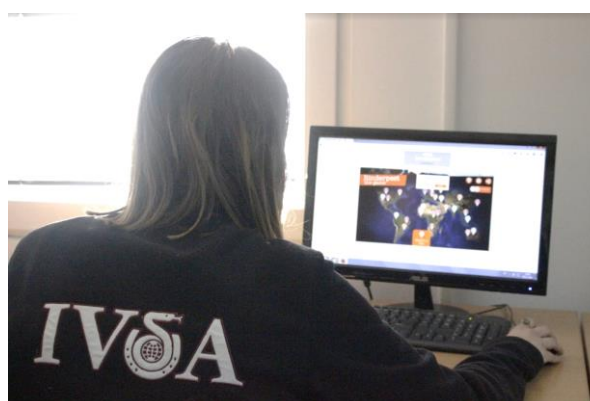
To raise awareness on the disease locally and to encourage students to participate in the OIE Rinderpest Challenge, ambassadors started by hanging OIE Rinderpest posters in their universities. Others also organised events to open a more detailed discussion on rinderpest and how there is still a risk of resurgence despite the disease being eradicated. They held presentations at student meetings, in-class or during lunch breaks, and organised meetings to play the Rinderpest Game collectively. Professors and teachers also offered support, some of them even incorporated information on rinderpest into their class.





Nabeelah from South Africa chose a different approach to collaborating with teachers at her faculty. She interviewed a professor of veterinary infectious diseases, Dr. Melvyn Quan from the University of Pretoria, on the OIE Rinderpest Game and why it is important to still learn about eradicated diseases. Dr. Quan stressed the need to stay vigilant, as the Rinderpest virus is still held in certain laboratories across the world. He also expressed that “gamifying” certain subjects is a good way to make them more student-friendly.

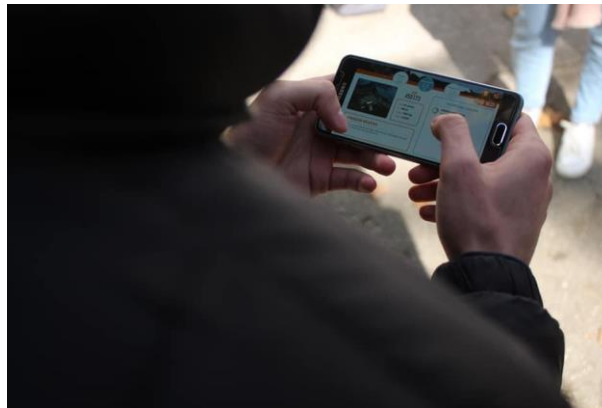
Some ambassadors reached beyond their own faculties to spread the word on rinderpest. **Bajram from Kosovo** and **Ivana from Macedonia**, both OIE Junior Ambassadors, took advantage of an exchange between Polish, Macedonian, and Kosovan students to collaborate on the subject of rinderpest. With the help of a farm animal disease professor, they presented on the rinderpest virus, its significance and how the disease was eradicated, to thirty students from these three countries. Afterwards, they split into groups and played the OIE Rinderpest Game from different student accounts on their phones and computers.



Lucia from Czech Republic, for instance, did not only target veterinary students and teachers in her communications, but also reached out to the Czech OIE Delegate, Dr. Zbyněk Semerád. They met and discussed about the OIE, each of their roles, the campaigns and how they relate to veterinary students, as well as how they could collaborate to disseminate them.

Not to be forgotten, online communications represented a great opportunity for ambassadors to disseminate the Rinderpest Campaign beyond their own faculties. Student activities promoting the OIE Rinderpest Game were seen on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram in at least twenty-two different countries, as well as on the internet and in local press.

Patrycja from Poland created a [website](#) for Polish veterinary students dedicated to the different OIE campaigns and **Hyunju from South Korea** published an [article](#) on DAILY VET, a local veterinary magazine, in which she announces the OIE Rinderpest Challenge and encourages students and veterinarians to play the game.



Through the OIE Junior Ambassador project and other forms of collaboration, the OIE strives to build solid links with veterinary students and to partly contribute to their education. By joining forces, the OIE and IVSA aim to improve the future of the veterinary profession and to safeguard animal health and welfare worldwide today and tomorrow.

Useful links

- [OIE Rinderpest campaign “Never turn back”](#)
- [OIE Rinderpest game](#)

■ December 2018