

[Matthew Stone's blog](#)

22 May 2020

Dear OIE Staff,

Welcome to my OIE blog! After however many weeks of sending out emails through the HODs, enjoying the feedback offered, but not really knowing whether these emails were a bore and unwelcome chaff in your overloaded Inboxes, I thought I better join the 21st century, and create an opt-in for those who enjoy it. Not sure if Microsoft Teams is the perfect tool for blogging, rather than group-based participation, but I'm opening this channel with the primary intention of serving my mostly one way communication (😊), but with an open group membership for all OIE staff to join as a guest and few restrictions on posting. I have turned off some of the Teams functions of creating new channels and adding apps, but all Guests can post. So, feel free to ask a question if you want to, and I will always do my best to answer it.

And I what better first topic than communication? Physical isolation has both disrupted communications at the same time as thrusting them to the forefront. Watching and participating in the rapid uptake of new technologies has been super-interesting. As an organization we are only just coming to grips with it, but now after two all staff seminars we are recognizing the power inherent in the tools.

And with that comes recognizing the need to be efficient and discerning, since while it is easy to take up an hour of everyone's time, ensuring that is in the best interests of organizational efficiency is another matter. I'm hearing that teams are scaling back a little on team meetings – which have been so important in the early stages of the pandemic when we fiercely needed to reach out and connect, demonstrate solidarity and re-instate new ways of working. Now, we know we can connect at any moment. The challenge remains being well organized, adapting the agenda and discussion format to the intention and objectives – including simple but important objectives like staying connected as a team and supporting each other. For work-focused meetings, it's about being realistic about objectives, and establishing trust and confidence in our audience that we understand their time is important.

I would like to use this blog to:

- Inform you about things going on in OIE or our partners that I have come across and believe have wide appeal or interest
- Recognise and celebrate our milestones and successes
- Generate exchange of ideas on interesting technical or strategic topics
- Emphasise the personal touch, the sense of togetherness that binds us (something almost everyone in OIE remarks upon), the fact we all have lives and interests outside of work and revealing a little of that helps us understand each other.

I have always been a firm believer that every employee benefits from clarity about the big picture – the objectives and strategy of the organization, what we are trying to achieve, and how the system is supposed to operate. I also recognize that some people perhaps aren't interested in that, and that their preferred focus is the detail of a specific aspect – we need that too. But no position or task is an island – everyone connects in our

system somehow, with very few degrees of separation. And it seems to me that the big picture is important for an organization that enjoys the high rate of “mission buy-in” or belief amongst our staff in what we do. That connection to the mission of the organization is a huge asset for us, and we should nurture it by supporting all of our staff understand the good work we do and how we do it.

In recent weeks, there has been a huge focus on:

- Establishing the alternative procedure for 2020 Resolutions of the OIE World Assembly
- Preparing content to report on the activities of Specialist Commissions and Working Groups
- Continuing our COVID19 support agency role to WHO’s lead in the global pandemic
- OIEWAHIS user acceptance testing for Release 1, and detailed functional specification development for Release 2
- AMU Database vendor selection and contract development
- Global and regional disease control programme development and support across ASF, FMD, PPR, Rabies and AHS.
- Preparing the next rounds of AHG meetings and thinking forward to the September round of Specialist Commissions.

Not a complete list by any means, just an attempt to reflect the current focus in a few bullet points. The ISS HODs and I also frequently discuss our participation in the transversal activities ongoing in the OIE – like the digitalization strategy, the website review, the 7th Strategic Plan and roadmap development, data protection and privacy, WFH policy and secondments. There is an ongoing challenge to make space in a busy technical programme for these important organizational priorities, also experiencing the challenges of disruption from physical distancing.

Being very ambitious for our organization – both in the technical and transversal project areas – it is important to be realistic, systematic, and patient. We have to be deliberate and planned about where we put our focus, achieve what we set out to as efficiently as possible, and be confident and clear about our strategic direction in a changing world, and why OIE is important.

I hope you are safe and well, that you feel supported in confronting the personal and professional challenges we each face in 2020, and the opportunity of a long weekend will be restful and refreshing for you.

Nga mihi

Matthew

[Opt-in to Matthew Stone’s blog via Microsoft Teams.](#)

■ *OIE In-house Times* –29 May 2020