



Dynamic Drivers of Disease in Africa

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For immediate release

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MEDIA RELEASE

Animal-to-human disease transmission: The science and poverty implications

As a new strain of SARS-like virus¹ is reported to have been identified by UK officials and a major new popular science book [*Spillover – Animal Infections and the Next Human Pandemic*](#) by acclaimed US journalist David Quammen is published in the UK and US, zoonoses – diseases that pass from animals to humans – are again making headlines.

More than 60 per cent of emerging infectious diseases in humans over the past few decades have jumped species from animals to humans. Some quietly devastate poor people's lives and their livelihoods; others have the potential to create dangerous global threats.

World-class scientists from the [Dynamic Drivers of Disease in Africa Consortium](#)² are available to comment on both the science of animal-to-human disease transmission and the poverty implications of these emerging and re-emerging infectious diseases. Drivers of Disease is an interdisciplinary international research programme exploring the links between zoonoses, ecosystems and wellbeing. Our experts include:

- Professor Melissa Leach, Director of the [STEPS Centre](#)³ and of the Drivers of Disease Consortium is a social anthropologist specialising in environmental and science-society issues. Her recent work considers policy responses to Avian flu, H1N1 ('Swine flu') and other epidemics. She co-edited *Epidemics – Science, Governance and Social Justice* (2010). She can speak on the poverty impacts of zoonoses and the implications for policymakers.
- James Wood is Alborada Professor of Equine and Farm Animal Science at Cambridge University. He is an expert on the processes underlying emergence of infectious diseases, particularly the emergence of virus infections from bats and how they might spread to domestic animals and humans. His work is focused in West Africa. He can speak on the processes and routes of zoonotic disease transmission.

- Dr Delia Grace is a veterinary epidemiologist. She leads work at the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) in Nairobi on interactions between agriculture and human health. She recently co-authored a major mapping study, [Mapping of Poverty and Likely Zoonoses Hotspots](#) (2012) which identified 13 zoonotic diseases which together cause 2.4 billion cases of human illness and 2.2 million deaths each year, mainly among the world's poorest people.

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Notes

1. A new SARS-like virus was reported to have been identified in the UK this week. The SARS virus, which causes serious respiratory illness, is derived from bats. It spread globally in 2002-3, killing hundreds of people.
2. The Dynamic Drivers of Disease in Africa Consortium is a research programme designed to deliver much-needed cutting-edge science on the relationships between ecosystems, zoonoses, health and wellbeing, with the objective of moving people out of poverty and promoting social justice. The three-and-half-year, £3.2m Consortium is focusing on four emerging or re-emerging zoonotic diseases in four diverse African ecosystems. Its innovative, holistic approach will marry the natural and social sciences as it builds an evidence base designed to inform global and national policy players seeking effective, integrated approaches to control and check disease outbreaks.

The work is funded with support from the Ecosystem Services for Poverty Alleviation Programme (ESPA). ESPA aims to deliver high quality and cutting-edge research that will produce improved understanding of how ecosystems function, the services they provide, the full value of these services, and their potential role in achieving sustainable poverty reduction. ESPA research provides the evidence and tools to enable decision makers and end users to manage ecosystems sustainably and in a way that contributes to poverty reduction. See www.espa.ac.uk for more details. The ESPA programme is funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and the Natural Environment Research Council (NERC), as part of the UK's Living with Environmental Change Programme (LWEC).

3. The STEPS Centre (Social, Technological and Environmental Pathways to Sustainability) is an interdisciplinary global research and policy engagement centre uniting development studies with science and technology studies. We are developing a new approach to understanding and action on sustainability and development and are funded by the ESRC. Web: www.steps-centre.org Twitter: @stepscentre

