

## Wicked Environmental Problems: A One Health Approach

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**Environmental problems** are often rooted in a slurry of complex social, cultural and economic issues. We call these types of problems *wicked environmental problems*. Climate change is, for example, a hotly debated wicked environmental problem.

Because wicked problems are complex issues, environmental scientists frequently work in trans-disciplinary groups to help solve them. It is common, for natural resource managers to regularly collaborate with policymakers, lawyers, sociologists, gender experts, engineers, musicians and teachers to develop solutions to wicked environmental problems. Also common is that the medical science community is often glaringly absent from these trans-disciplinary teams.



Contamination of rivers and streams due to human activity is a "wicked" environmental problem.

### One Health to the Rescue!

The One Health approach is a push to encourage veterinarians, physicians and other health professionals to become part of trans-disciplinary teams that address wicked environmental problems.

The One Health Jamaica team, consists of two veterinarians, a public health officer and an environmental scientist.

### One Health Jamaica

To address a climate change issue in Scotts Hall, St Mary, One Health Jamaica, has partnered with the Jamaica Conservation and Development Trust (JCDDT). Dr Susan Otuokon, the head of the JCDDT, is not just an expert in natural resource management but has extensive experience in working with communities and various stakeholders. Another key partnership is with musician Bay-C. Bay-C, is the bass vocalist of the international, platinum-selling, reggae/dancehall group TOK. Bay-C will serve as a celebrity judge for a river health song competition, as part of the outreach, training and education related to climate change, farming and river health in Scotts Hall.

By bringing a diverse set of skills – entertainment, socio-ecology, animal health, human health, natural resource management – together, the One Health Jamaica team and its partners hope to have a positive impact in Scotts Hall.

### Trans-disciplinary Teams Needed

Medicine alone cannot solve health problems. Politics, history, environmental science, and the arts are important parts of the solution. Working in trans-disciplinary teams requires 'big-picture' thinking, respect, openness to new

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perspectives, and patience to translate and understand the jargon of other disciplines. Training and experience are necessary to develop skill in working with others who come from various professional philosophies, armed with different tools, yet have the same overall goal as the entire team.



It is my hope that, with the One Health approach, an increased number of physicians and veterinarians will join other professionals and communities to help address and solve wicked environmental problems in Jamaica and the wider Caribbean.

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