Words in This Story

pathogen

英 ['pæθədʒ(ə)n] 美 ['pæθədʒən]

n. 病原体；病菌

toxin

英 ['tɒksɪn] 美 ['tɑksɪn]

n. 毒素；毒质

devastate

英 ['devəsteɪt] 美 ['dɛvəstet]

vt. 毁灭；毁坏

Strengthening Global Biosecurity

In today's interconnected world, a pathogen can travel around the globe in as little as 36 hours. Interactions between wildlife, domesticated animals, and humans can give rise to new and emerging infections. Spurred by urban density and international air travel, these diseases can spread around the world within days.

“Biological agents including viruses, bacteria, and toxins, can devastate local economies with their potential effects on humans and livestock,” wrote Kathryn Insley in a recent blog post. Ms. Insley is the Acting Director of the State Department's Office of Cooperative Threat Reduction, which falls under the Bureau of International Security and Nonproliferation.

“In addition to potentially catastrophic immediate impact, these agents could also set in motion long-term disasters, causing regional instability and challenging international security.”

To defeat potential outbreaks should they emerge, it is crucial that the world community is capable of quickly detecting, responding to, and containing infectious diseases or other biological pathogens anywhere in the world.

That is why the State Department funds projects around the world that improve the safe handling and responsible use of dangerous biological materials. Programs that teach local trainers how to manage possible biorisks within their own country have a multiplier effect.

The U.S.-Algeria partnership to develop biorisk management trainers is one such program. Scientists and professionals within Algeria's public and animal health sectors participated in trainings to help them develop the skills necessary to deal with biological pathogens. “More importantly, Algerian trainers developed the skills to design new courses tailored to local needs and independently deliver them where they are most needed,” writes Acting Director Insley.

“For scientists with a shared interest in global health security, these projects are a valuable opportunity to share information and learn from each other. They face challenges unique to their varied environments, but collaborating on ways to address threats and prevent disasters is among the most interesting and rewarding parts of their work. The State Department is proud to support efforts that mitigate biorisks around the world and strengthen global health security.”