

Shared Knowledge and Local Practice: The Evolution of Public Health Cooperation between China and Mainland Southeast Asian Countries

Lei Zhang

Abstract

Through fieldwork and interviews, this article explores why bottom-up local practices effectively institutionalize regional public health governance. From the 1990s to 2003, functional and informal cooperation in China-Myanmar border areas laid the groundwork for a joint response to infectious diseases. Since 2003, bilateral efforts to address infectious diseases in border areas have incrementally evolved into a multilateral joint prevention and control mechanism for cross-border infectious diseases between China and mainland Southeast Asian countries. As part of this process, local knowledge of regional public health cooperation has been generated and disseminated. Through continued interaction among diverse stakeholders, local knowledge frames the structures and activates mechanisms for regional public health cooperation, which are subsequently integrated into ASEAN+ public health governance networks. The success of regional public health cooperation between China and mainland Southeast Asian countries largely depends on how society is organized. Incorporating diverse stakeholders into governance systems to promote normative and technical knowledge sharing and transformation is essential for good public health governance.

Lei Zhang is Associate Professor at Institute of International Relations, Yunnan University and Senior Fellow at Yunnan Center for Belt and Road Initiative Studies. Correspondence should be sent to zhangleipku@ynu.edu.cn.