

**Southeast Asia Regional Inter-agency information sharing/coordination  
Meeting on avian & human influenza**

*Hosted by the International Federation of Red Cross & Red Crescent Societies,  
Southeast Asia Regional Delegation, Bangkok*

On behalf of



**Strengthening Community Based Approaches  
to Management of Avian and Human  
Influenza (AHI) in Asia**

**July 3, 2008 (Thurs), 2 - 5 PM**

Imperial Queen's Park Hotel, Sukhumvit Soi 22, Bangkok

**Theme: Media Engagement & experience on cross-border issues  
from Avian Flu Series of 'Imaging Our Mekong'**

These minutes, presentations, handouts, and information about future and past meetings can be found on the **AHI-NGO-RC/RC Asia Partnership on Strengthening Community Based Approaches to Management of Avian and Human Influenza in Asia**, comprised of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), CARE, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Federation) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and funding partnership by the ADB, project website: <http://www.adpc.net/communityAHI-Asia/MEETING/Default-MEETING.asp>

Full project details can be found here: <http://www.adpc.net/communityAHI-Asia/Default.asp>

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Chair: Chadin Tephaval, World Health Organization (WHO), Communications Officer

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**1405-1420 hrs.**

**Welcome Address**

- Welcome to this month's inter-agency AHI forum. The media plays an essential role in getting information across. How to handle the information, the release, and cross-border issues in the media. Today's agenda is divided into 2 parts: our 1st experience sharing will be a multi-venue sharing by Interpress service (IPS) Asia Pacific where they will present on media issues surrounding AI and brief about their journalist fellowship program, IPS will show a press story on "Chicken Smuggling" along the China Vietnam border, and during the tea break we will have the opportunity to browse over their photo exhibit that is on display. Then after a break, we will re-convene to hear about AI research from ILRI.
- Any comments to the agenda?
- Roundtable introductions: There were 24 participants from:

**Organizations Present:**

1. IPS Asia Pacific
2. ILRI
3. UNSIC
4. AusAID
5. Thai Red Cross
6. WFP
7. OIE
8. FAO
9. Rockefeller Foundation
10. MBDS
11. Keenan Institute Asia
12. Finnish Red Cross
13. ADPC
14. IFRC
15. London School of Tropical Medicine & Hygiene
16. Nestle
17. WHO Thailand

### **Organizational Updates:**

AusAID-funded ASEAN +3 Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID) Program launched their new website last 17 June 2008. The website, known as the Information Centre on Emerging Infectious Diseases in the ASEAN +3 countries, can be assessed at <http://www.aseanplus3-eid.info>

AusAID: The website aims to facilitate communication and information sharing on EID among various stakeholders of the ASEAN Plus Three Countries (e.g. policy makers, researchers, EID program managers, media, technical agencies, donors, and civil society). Greater information sharing and dialogue will assist in improving health interventions and raise awareness on health-related issues across the region.

AusAID, in partnership with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), is also designing a new Regional Research Program for Emerging Infections Disease. A regional consultation process was recently conducted in Singapore and Bangkok for the development of this new program. Interested agencies may contact AusAID (Julia Landford or Royce Escolar) for more information.

OIE: we are continuing our project on Strengthening Veterinary Services with a National forum for Thailand next week which includes the Department of Livestock Development, universities and the private sector.

ADPC: We regularly send updates from our Public Health in Emergency (PHiE) program. If you are interested in receiving email updates and information about our upcoming PHiE trainings, please contact [phe@adpc.net](mailto:phe@adpc.net)

IFRC/ADPC/CARE/IRC: We would like to give an update on the next steps of our regional partnership project the AHI-NGO-RC/RC Asia Partnership funded by ADB. The Partnership held an external editorial board Peer Review Process 16-17 June. This small voluntary group that consisted of a cross section of NGO and health and animal technical agencies edited and finalized the technical chapters of the toolkit that is the primary output from the Community Practitioners workshop held in March. Many of the members of the Peer Review process are also members of this regional inter-agency forum. The toolkit is scheduled to be released in the coming weeks.

IFRC: The Southeast Asia Regional Delegation has several changes in staff that we would like to share. The Regional Health Programme Officer, Molly Schmidt, will be departing at the end of July and relocating to Manila with her family. Sadly, this was her last meeting, and expressed gratitude for all the collaboration with partners over the last 3 years in organizing these monthly meetings. The Federation will continue to host these meetings under the AHI-NGO-RC/RC Asia Partnership until October 2008, and Ms. Wanree Saisamuth, the Federation's SEA regional public health officer will continue to organize these meetings and act as the community and public health focal point within the Federation for this region.

### **1420-1530 hrs.**

#### **Experience Sharing: Johanna Son, Director, IPS Asia-Pacific, Imaging Our Mekong programme, Reporting Avian Flu: Beyond Disease, Death & Disaster?,**

- Inter Press Service (IPS) Asia Pacific programme entitled "Imaging Our Mekong" is a media training program run by mainly 2 organizations: PROBE, a TV/film training foundation and IPS, with the support of The Rockefeller Foundation
- My title for today's presentation "Reporting Avian Flu: Beyond Disease, Death & Disaster?" is a question mark because, as you will see, it's a challenge to report on the AI and AHI situation that goes beyond the catchy headline and gets to the heart of the real situation.
- The programme has been opened since 2002 by journalists including print, photo and film from 6 Mekong countries to support media work on regional development and social change. As of March 2008, 185 journalists have worked for the programme.
- We have a wire service and a mandate to focus on SEA countries, so Mekong countries were a natural area for our journalist to report. Their stories focus heavily on cross border issues, and were shown locally on TV, in web publications, some government media, news print in local language papers.
- In our "Imaging Our Mekong" programme we focused on Avian Flu because of the problems here in SEA and the cross border issues. For the Avian Flu cross-border series, there were a total of 22 fellows: 15 fellows for print/photo and 7 for film who reported & produced their story in local languages.
- Each fellow chose a different area to report on and published in a variety of different mediums within the Mekong countries. We call them 'Voices from the region' because they are local journalists, so

submissions in local language is encouraged. For the films, the voices are all in local language with subtitles in English.

- The process of the fellowship is as follows: application, screening, selection, opening workshop, production, peer review and dissemination outputs (book, DVD set, exhibition). The stories have to be published or shown in local sites. The book 'Opening Borders' is the 5<sup>th</sup> book in the series, and this one has a chapter on AI.
- Outputs & samples of the work: We publish in 3 main areas: 1) PHOTO EXHIBITS (Thailand, India, Philippines, China, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam & at regional conferences), 2) BOOKS, DOCUMENTARY DVDs, 3) LOCAL & INT'L MEDIA (Print, Web & TV)
- Challenges after 2 years:
  - § Looking beyond the sensational hooks – eg death and disaster, bad news is news, 'police story approach', going beyond description of problem. It's a problem so the information sells but the challenge is how to get media to report sensitively and accurately without making it a sensational slant.
  - § Issue-based reporting vs event bound reporting. How to go beyond the description of the problem – we cannot go on telling people AI is here and a pandemic will happen – we need to focus on deeper, more real problems ie how are people coping, what factors are helpful and hurtful, how AI is not just about health it's about disasters, politics, rural development, economics.
  - § Looking at the other side, beyond national interests and angles. We need to look at the other side, ie for cross border issues
  - § Go beyond the usual powers ie. Usually the village chief is the one consulted, but what about the voice of the villagers or the women?
  - § Working with diverse media environments and cultures. In some countries, interviews are difficult and some are easy. At the border areas it's a bit skewed. The differences and advantages between local and foreigner journalist.
- Taking Stock – some lessons learned
  - § The positives: Journalists are creative, willingness to do something new for their media.
  - § The weaknesses: not enough reliance on figures and accuracy, mixing up the technical terms ie pandemic, AI, AHI, reliance on the Internet leads to one sided until the other side can be vetted, finding appropriate times/places to release stories.
  - § Cross-fertilization ie how a Lao journalist might report, is different than a Chinese journalist
- Engaging the media
  - § Creating awareness and venue for discussion, and communicating accurate public health messages is of course the reason why journalist report.
  - § But even in one country, even within one organization, there are differences in the best way to engage the local media.
  - § Look for the journalist in publications that you feel would do justice to your program, and seek out those specific journalists – journalists are human and naturally tend to report in their own style.
  - § Research and technical expertise are needed, so help your journalist report the news accurately. Selecting what kind of stuff you give to whom ie a press release. Give contacts to an interviewer or to verify facts.
  - § Organizations need to identify with someone who can really speak on the issue and on behalf of the organization. Communication officers are often the bridge - they can link the technical experts with the journalist - but often the technical experts are not comfortable talking with the journalist.
  - § Every piece of good data should be given. Simplicity.
  - § Giving no information is worse
- Comment: by nature we are sensitive because we are answerable to our members and shareholders. We do not want to be caught in the middle. It's difficult to handle public health events especially when it involves several countries. Comments can be taken as a criticism from one country to another. The blame game doesn't help anyone – it doesn't matter where AI originates. The intention should not be who to blame, but what to do. At the end you won't have cooperation and won't be in a position to stop the spread. The workshops that IPS held helped in sharing the sensitive issues, and of course are related to access. It's a circle, because some organizations need to get the information out, but don't want to be the one to say it first. It's important to set parameters – ie some communication officers do not have clearance to speak to the press, although they may work with the press on a daily basis.
- On issues related to the Mekong region. We have an AI page and ask our fellows to continue posting reports
- We watched a 13 minute film called "chicken smuggling" along Vietnamese-Chinese border. For more information: [www.newsmekong.org/avianflu](http://www.newsmekong.org/avianflu)

Q&A:

Q: This was a powerful film. It really showed the on-the-ground situation. After this was filmed, where was this shown? This could reach a wider audience and play an influential role in education on different topics.

A: This film was done by a team of 2 Vietnamese journalists. It was shown only in Vietnam on Vietnam digital tv. I am open to your suggestions on how this might be of interest to other groups or in other ways. How to bring it to organizations and office settings?

Q: I agree it could be very useful – it was extraordinarily done. After the fellowships, do you keep in contact with them? For organizations, they might be interested in contacting journalists who already have experience in AI stories. Ideal to develop a network of journalists.

A: The print journalist, yes we keep in touch, so they can continue to contribute in a variety of other ways. They often have a creative way of reaching wider audiences. For film, it's a bit harder. Next year we are having a 'Mekong media arts festival' in Cambodia to showcase all.

Q: This was fantastic example of what's actually happening with AI in communities at the region. If you have any ideas for use for them, please let me know and I can circulate the DVDs.

Comment: I would like to share experience from Indonesia, you always see movies on the trains to raise awareness on AI, and now after 4 years the farmers are getting used to it, and there is no behavior change. That is a challenge.

A: It's difficult for journalists to measure the impact of their stories.

### 1600-1640 hrs.

Experience Sharing: **Fred Unger, Veterinary Epidemiologist, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)**, posted at the Health System Research Institute (HSRI), Thailand.

Topic: "ILRI research on HPAI in Indonesia – an overview on ongoing activities"

- The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) is a livestock research center for poverty reduction. The 3 main research objectives are related to securing assets of the poor to reduce vulnerability, increasing productivity to improve livelihoods, Market opportunities to increase incomes of the poor
- Headquarter in Nairobi, and branches in West Africa, India, Asia, Southeast Asia, offices in SE Asia are in Hanoi, Jakarta and Bangkok (HSRI)
- Our programs in Asia/SE Asia focus on Smallholder production and market development, Avian influenza surveillance and control (Indonesia), Epidemiology and economics, Conservation of locally produced materials
- ILRI activities on AI in the region. 1) Operational Research in Indonesia for more effective control of HPAI, 2) HPAI Risk Reduction Strategies just started several weeks ago in Indonesia, 3) Support of the IDRC funded APAIR project (coordinated through the HSRI, MoH, Thailand)
  - 1) Operational Research in Indonesia for more effective control of HPAI:
    - Background on the situation in Indonesia. AI is endemic in many parts of the country, sporadic but continuously reported human cases. The National strategic plan is currently under revision. Tremendous effort needed (e.g. to vaccinate village poultry – we are talking potentially 317 million village poultry to be vaccinated quarterly countrywide, High turn over rate in backyard flocks.
    - Main objectives:
      - Evaluate the feasibility of implementing alternative control methods for HPAI in backyard poultry and evaluate the impact of the control strategies on HPAI incidence in backyard poultry
      - We have Operational research: research to evaluate activities conducted in the midst of on-going programs that is both rapid and action oriented
    - Study design: the treatments chosen by stakeholders. In each selected district we have 3 treatments groups: (a) PDSR + AI vaccination, (b) PDSR + combined AI/New Castle (ND) vaccination, (c) PDSR + fully supported compensation. and a control group (PDSR). Each treatment unit consist of around 100.000 village chicken and ducks (may enclose several sub-districts)
    - Which vaccine should be used in Indonesia? The strain "Lekog H5N1" from 2003 has been found to be the most effective. For ND an eye drop vaccine will be used, Comment: Farmers may be more willing to cooperate if AI vaccination is combined with ND
    - All treatments applied in 16 districts in 3 provinces of Java. A description of the methodology image: 3 province, in each province we selected 4 - 7 districts, and in each district we select the 4 treatment groups (1 control & 3 treatments)

- Progress to date: Treatment preparations are finalized. Upgraded storage and cold chain capacity. Important outcome: What is the vaccination coverage in the backyard farms . Thus, community mobilization is very important.
  - Culling and compensation indicators will be also recorded (e.g. time of depopulations after an outbreak) Impact assessment: we will measure by: (a) incidence rates of H5N1, (b) the % of poultry culled and the time when the farmers receive compensation and (c) vaccination coverage
  - Impact assessment will be done every three month , participatory techniques will be used , to measure incidence of HPAI events, using a standard case definition
  - District profiling: questionnaire includes sector 1-4 production sites, checkpoints, markets (80% with live birds), poultry movements, slaughter places ect.
  - comment: farmers are used to their chickens dying, some traders may even buy sick chickens to sell at a cheaper price because some people will be happy to buy those chickens at cheaper prices
  - Additional targeted research component: Main research questions: to evaluate appropriate vaccine regime (ie booster vs double dosage) and the level of immunity that can be achieved. How efficient is HPAI diagnosis via clinical signs (sensitivity and specificity), and what is the economic impact on livelihoods
- Highly Pathogenic HPAI risk reduction strategies.
    - Purpose: HPAI is not just a veterinary problem. Small holders and the poor especially important. it is a crisis for society as a whole including smallholders
    - Acceptable preparation and risk-reduction strategies can only be successfully implemented with the involvement of small holders
    - Despite international pressure to act quickly on control measures, one size will not fit all, or even most, local conditions.
    - The team includes veterinary and economic scientists and 4 African and 4 SE Asian countries covered
    - Activities: Pathways by which HPAI can spread to poultry and likelihood for each pathway, Epidemiological impact of various control strategies and their economic costs and benefits, Identification of the institutions and incentive mechanisms that would support adoption of strategies that are both effective and targeted to small holders  
How can these be facilitated by interaction with involved institutions?

Q: (a) This was a very technical update on your research activities in Indonesia. My question is a methodological one. Are you distinguishing between backyard, medium, and large scale poultry producers?  
(b) Is it possible to put a tracer on live chickens to see where they go?

A: (a) We agreed on a flock size of up to 5000 for backyard flocks involved in the study.

(b) Several organizations working on value chain factors. In the district profiling we visited traditional wet markets, every 5 days the market is open for 1 day, and they move from A to B to X to Z – movement analysis is a new research. This will not be easy as it's very dynamic. We are planning to follow chicken movement in an upcoming project which is under development

Q: It is a huge challenge trying to vaccinate all standing ducks and chickens – you mentioned nearly 1 billion village poultry that need to be vaccinated on a yearly basis (if vaccinated quarterly) – and that is Indonesia alone – the cost must be enormous. Are you also including cost benefit in your feasibility study? And how are your results being linked with policy and government decision-making processes?

A: The economic factor, both risk and benefit, is on the minds of all the partners, and is included in the analysis of the treatment option. Related factors to be considered: Vaccination is free of charge in sector 4 and that is important. Some farmers fear vaccination (even if its free) because there can be some side effects (e.g. transmission of ND or AI through vaccinators or not proper injection of the vaccine)

## **AOB**

**1640-1700 hrs.**

- We have entered the final stage of these monthly inter-agency AHI forums, and the last one will be in October 2008. The organizers would like to develop the plan of speakers now for the final 3 month plan of activities. Please put forward ideas, so these regional forums reflect your interests.

The group recommended:

- Hearing from the EC on 1) overall EC projects on AI, 2) report on EC gender and AI study, 3) ASEAN + 3
- Invite the “Greater Mekong Professions”
- FAO on 1) media video, 2) the anthropologist researcher will do a similar AI study in Timor Leste

- UNSIC – Thailand has a new National Plan
- More journalistic films on different subjects
- Many members of the group expressed that they want to see the inter-agency forum continue in some alternative fashion. The Federation has hosted these meetings continuously for 3 years on a monthly basis. And for the past year, the Federation has organized these meeting on behalf of the AHI-NGO-RC/RC Asia Partnership funded by ADB. At this point, reflecting on the current AI/AHI outbreak situation, the value of monthly meetings has to be evaluated. There is significant value in the network of organizations and professions, but the frequency and structure and ownership of the group needs to be assessed. It was suggested that a consortium of interested organizations should convene to discuss how to take up these meetings.

#### Meeting Details

- These Minutes, and all future regional forum meeting minutes & presentations & handouts, will be posted on the AHI NGO/RC Partnership on Strengthening Community-Based AI project webpage, hosted by ADPC at: <http://www.adpc.net/communityAHI-Asia>. Also, notice of future meetings and the monthly topics will be posted in advance on the website.