

Southeast Asia Regional Inter-agency Information sharing/coordination Meeting on Avian & Human Influenza

Organized by The AHI-NGO-RC/RC Asia Partnership



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

September 4, 2008 (Thurs), 2 - 5 PM

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

Theme: Pandemic Preparedness Planning: "multi-sectoral community participation"

The minutes, presentations, handouts, and information about future and past meetings can be found on the website of the **AHI-NGO-RC/RC Asia Partnership on Strengthening Community Based Approaches to Management of Avian and Human Influenza in Asia**, comprised Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), CARE, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and funded by the Canadian government via the Asian Development Bank (ADB): <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>

Chair: Nichola Hungerford, **World Organization for Animal Health (OIE)**,
Communications Officer, Thailand

14:05-14:20 hrs.

Welcome Address

The Chair welcomed participants to this month's inter-agency AHI forum.

The agenda for the day's meeting is divided into two parts: the first will include a showing of the video on "Life changes at the China boarder with Vietnam" by IPS Asia Pacific. The second part will focus on experience sharing on AHI pandemic preparedness by IOM and OCHA

- The agenda was approved by participants
- Roundtable introductions: there were 36 participants from:

Organizations Present:

1. IPS Asia Pacific
2. AED
3. IOM
4. UNSIC
5. AusAID
6. Thai Red Cross
7. WFP
8. OIE
9. FAO
10. Rockefeller Foundation
11. Keenan Institute Asia
12. ADPC
13. IFRC
14. WHO Thailand
15. OCHA
16. Nestle
17. Embassy of Japan
18. LSHTM
19. TNS
20. Macro International

14:20-14:45

Video Experience Sharing: Johanna Son, Director, IPS Asia-Pacific, Imaging Our Mekong programme, Reporting on Avian Flu: 'Life Changes' at the China border with Vietnam

Video brief:

Agricultural production accounts for a large percentage of the Vietnamese economy and, within agriculture, poultry production and trade are extremely important. Many villages at the border between Vietnam and China comprise small and large-scale chicken farms.

Since Avian Influenza epidemics first occurred in Vietnam four years ago, many chickens have died or been destroyed and farmers who rely on poultry production and trade have suffered negative economic impacts. This situation has forced poultry producers to rethink their income sources, and in some cases implement life changes that reduce their economic vulnerability. Some farmers have continued raising chickens, albeit on a smaller scale, while others have developed alternative livelihoods, for instance producing wine, raising pigs, or starting strawberry farms.

Chicken producers who have been trained can implement measures to reduce the risks of Avian Influenza in their operations. For instance, poultry farms can be located at an adequate distance from residential areas; AI control guidelines can be followed. Trained producers also know how to prevent AI, identify any strange symptoms and inform the authorities in order to control any potential outbreaks. Government officers regularly visit poultry producers. During these visits, they inspect the production units, contribute advice and guidance on safe chicken raising, and provide vaccines to reduce the ongoing threat of chicken disease.

As a consequence of the risk reduction measures and alternative livelihoods described in this video, people along the Vietnam-China border are now better prepared to cope with Avian Influenza. They have learned to adapt to the presence of the disease in Vietnam, overcome difficulties, better protect themselves and their livelihoods, and not let Avian Influenza control their lives.

14:45-15: 15 hrs.

Experience Sharing: **Nigoon Jitthai, Migrant Health Program Manager, International Organization for Migration (IOM)**, presented on Pandemic Preparedness Planning: “Multi-sectoral community participation including migrants”

- IOM is a leading inter-governmental organization in the field of migration, working closely with governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental partners. IOM's mandate is to help ensure the orderly and humane management of migration, to promote international cooperation on migration issues, to assist in the search for practical solutions to migration problems and to provide humanitarian assistance to migrants in need, including refugees and internally displaced people.
- Since Avian Influenza struck Thailand 5 years ago, the Thai National Strategic Plan has emphasised the importance of developing a pandemic preparedness plan (PPP) and conducting simulation exercises in order to test this plan and assess national preparedness for a possible pandemic.
- Over 2,000,000 migrants – the majority from Burma/Myanmar – are thought to live in Thailand. These migrants are vulnerable due to low levels of knowledge and awareness of health issues, poor hygiene and sanitation, limited access to health & social services and generally poor living conditions. Moreover, migrant communities could potentially contribute to the control/spread of a pandemic.
- Mobile and migrant populations in Thailand are not included in the government's National Strategic Plan for controlling AHI. However, national systems for responding to

- AHI and pandemic preparedness plans may not be effective if they do not include a strategy to work with non-health sectors & vulnerable groups including migrants.
- With financial support provided by the European Union and the people of Japan and in close collaboration with Chiang Rai Public Health Office, IOM has implemented a pandemic preparedness planning project in Chiang Rai. This project has been based on multi-sectoral partnerships, including local Public Health officials, livestock officers, authorities, NGOs and representatives of the communities (including migrant communities). IOM's project aims to complement and strengthen the Thai government's National Strategic Plan by:
 - Strengthening awareness of the roles & responsibilities of relevant local authorities and organizations
 - Establishing & strengthening networks of relevant stakeholders & information sharing systems
 - Assisting GO in developing and strengthening contingency & preparedness plans that include mobile & migrant populations
 - Testing, revising & further developing the plans through various types of exercises, and
 - Replicating/adapting the process piloted in Chiang Rai to other priority provinces.
 - IOM's pandemic preparedness planning project comprises four steps:
 - Improve AHI & PPP knowledge & awareness among stakeholders through training workshops (4 workshops were conducted)
 - Develop a contingency plan for each organization/sector, taking into account the linkages between organisations/sectors
 - Identify gaps through simulation exercises (a functional exercise and a drill exercise were held as part of this project)
 - Revise the contingency plans in light of the to lessons identified through the drill exercise
 - The overall lessons identified are that a plan needs to be tested and revised on the basis of exercises and that mobile and migrant populations need to be included within the National Strategic Plan for AHI response.
 - Achievements of the pandemic simulation exercise, which was managed by IOM in cooperation with the Ministry of Public Health in Chiang Rai, on 22 July 2008:
 - Good collaboration with the community and all relevant partners, including the military
 - The teams gained more understanding of different types of situations through simulations and their use of the PPP.
 - Obtained constructive feedback and recommendations for improving the PPP and future simulations.
 - Experiences can be used/shared with other provinces.
 - Lessons identified through the pandemic simulation exercise:
 - Leadership from relevant authorities is important – good quality leadership needs to be assured; it is therefore important to look at the failings/weaknesses/strengths etc. of leadership and leaders
 - There is an urgent need to raise awareness and improve the understanding that different sectors have of a 'pandemic' and its possible consequences
 - Exercises such as this simulation in Chiang Rai can be effective advocacy tools – raising awareness of the importance of developing preparedness to cope with a pandemic and of including migrant and other vulnerable groups in pandemic planning processes

- Early identification of resource persons is essential for effective planning.
- Migrants are very capable and can contribute productively to pandemic preparedness planning and to response in emergency situations, especially when appropriate support is provided.
- Simulation activities and exercises in general need to be well managed and guided by a set of objectives, which allow for proper evaluation and for the latter to feed into the revision of the plan being tested
- Next steps:
 - Further develop the complete set of contingency plan(s),
 - Expand networks,
 - Print & distribute the contingency plans to members and interested parties,
 - Undertake an expert review of the contingency plans to ensure their quality, while taking into consideration the local context,
 - Present the contingency plans to the Provincial AHI Committee for endorsement, and
 - Continue to test & update contingency plans through simulation exercises.
- Key achievement: Local Authorities in Chiang Rai were sensitized to the importance of including migrants in efforts to raise awareness of AHI and develop pandemic preparedness plans. IOM has been requested to coordinate and expand the network, which has been strengthened through these activities, and to maintain the momentum of the project.

15:30-16: 00 hrs.

Experience Sharing: **Ingo Neu, Senior Planning Officer, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)**, presenting on Pandemic Preparedness Planning: Examples of a multi-sectoral pandemic preparedness approach

“Whole of Society” Multi-sector Preparedness

- In 2007, ASEAN’s expert group on communicable diseases, ACDM and National coordinating committee representatives participated in the ASEAN Regional Mapping Exercise for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, in Vientiane. This was followed by the Regional Workshop on Multi-Sectoral Coordination in Pandemic Preparedness and Response in Bangkok. The workshop concluded by pointing out weaknesses in preparedness of the non-health sectors, as well as identifying gaps and their associated recommendations. The decision was made to include the non-health sectors in the next workshop and to conduct capacity building activities within a multi-sectoral approach and under the ASEAN Coordinating Structure. The overall purpose of the activity is to review the National Pandemic Preparedness Plans.
- The ASEAN Work Plan for Multi-sector Pandemic Preparedness Planning comprises two goals:
 - **Goal 1** is to narrow the gaps among ASEAN Member States in national pandemic preparedness and response by;
 - Creating multi-sector pandemic preparedness & response indicators to be used as minimum requirements in the region and monitor progress of national pandemic preparedness & response planning
 - Assessing the level of preparedness and, based on the country situation, recommend activities to strengthen capacities and institutions

- Strengthening respective national capacities by conducting advocacy for pandemic preparedness in the non-health sectors
- Strengthening national capacity in multi-sectoral operational continuity and contingency planning for pandemic situations
- Strengthening on-the-ground command and response systems for pandemics through the use of Incident Command System (ICS)
- **Goal 2** is to operationalize and utilize existing regional initiatives and mechanisms to strengthen regional capacity in responding to pandemics by
 - Developing an ASEAN Regional Pandemic Preparedness and Cross-border and Resource Sharing Response Plan
 - Exploring the establishment of an ASEAN Pandemic Preparedness Quick Response Team (QRT) (to align with the AADMER and WHO mechanisms)
- Example of Multi-sector Pandemic Preparedness Planning in Singapore: the plans include critical issues relating to non-health domains – for example, banking, food, water, electricity, waste management and sanitation, etc. – which need to be dealt with
- Pandemic Preparedness Planning in Singapore has been undertaken in the different ‘domains’: Safety and Security, Public Utilities (Energy, water, etc.), Economy & Finance, Health, Housing & Social Support, Transportation, Public Communications, Education and Food Security
- In addition, Community Preparedness has also been addressed:
 - Households should stockpile at least 2 weeks of food items e.g. canned food
 - Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) should be developed for closed communities (e.g. retirement homes, boarding schools)
 - Potential for transmission should be reduced by adopting infection controls and social distancing measures e.g. visitor and outing restrictions
 - Provide alternative delivery arrangements for homes for essential services, which must continue during a pandemic e.g. food, medical care
 - Establish and conduct exercises to test BCPs of homes
- Education sector Preparedness was enhanced:
 - School closure should be driven by several factors e.g. virulence of the virus, concerns of parents, etc.
 - Reporting of impacts including absenteeism at work and disruptions to school curriculum
 - Develop BCP plans of schools that include home-based learning, reducing curriculum during pandemic, PPE
 - Schools should conduct regular temperature checking exercises, check travel plans of students at every term break, etc.

Any Other Business

16:00-16:30 hrs.

- The next AHI inter-agency forum will be held in October and will be the last meeting under the current arrangement, whereby IFRC has hosted the meetings during the past three years.
- Discussions have been ongoing throughout and between the last few meetings, to determine how to arrange the meetings in the future. The support and commitment of the regular participants in the meetings has indicated the importance of continuing to hold these meetings, both for their information sharing/coordination role as well as for the networking and partnership-building that they allow for.

- One of the suggestions had been to host the meetings on a rotational basis – although this would possibly make organisation more difficult; another suggestion was that, since there is as of yet no guaranteed funding to organize the future meetings, the meetings could be held at the respective office premises of the host(s), in order to minimize the costs incurred.
 - Nestle Thailand has been conducting internal discussions to determine the possibility of funding the meetings for the next year.
 - ADPC – since the organisation has been managing the AHI-NGO-RC/RC-Asia Partnership for the last year – has offered to host the meetings for the next year and outlined a description of the roles and responsibilities involved; the suggestion was that the meeting be held once every two months at the new ADPC office.
 - ADPC, AED, FAO, IFRC, OIE, LSHTM, Nestle and UNSIC expressed their interest in being part of a Core Group, which would meet to look into how to organize and strengthen the forum in the future; the Core group would act as an ongoing steering committee for the forum, providing guidance and decision-making as needed.
 - The Core group will meet shortly and report back to the participants at the next AHI inter-agency information sharing/coordination forum.
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- The next meeting will be held on 2 October 2008. The agenda will be circulated asap.
 - The Chair thanked ADPC for offering to host the meetings for the next year, the presenters for sharing their experience, the participants, as well as IFRC for organizing the meeting.

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.