

**RECOMMENDATIONS FOR A COORDINATED UN SYSTEM
RESPONSE TO AVIAN AND PANDEMIC INFLUENZA
IN ASIA-PACIFIC FOR 2010**

February 2010

FINAL VERSION



**PRODUCED JOINTLY BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM
ASIA-PACIFIC REGION**

**(FAO, ICAO, ILO, IOM, UNDP, UNESCAP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF,
OCHA/PIC, OIE, UN Resident Coordinators' Offices, WFP, WHO
and the UN System Influenza Coordination (UNSIC))**

1.1 BACKGROUND

The 7th UN system workshop on avian and pandemic influenza took place in Bangkok, Thailand from 27-29 January 2010. The 3-day workshop was organized by the United Nations System Influenza Coordination (UNSIIC) Asia-Pacific regional hub, jointly with the regional offices of FAO, ICAO, ILO, IOM, UNICEF, UNOCHA/PIC, WFP and WHO.

The workshop brought together over eighty Asia-Pacific UN focal points on avian and pandemic influenza to examine the UN system support for the implementation and coordination of country-level actions to reduce risks of avian and pandemic influenza.

The event saw the participation by representatives from a cross-section of UN entities including FAO, ICAO, ILO, IOM, OCHA, OIE, UN Resident Coordinators' Offices, UNDP, UNESCAP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNSIC, WFP and WHO - representing 18 UN country teams and 15 regional offices.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

A number of key concepts emerged from the UN system workshop covering areas which were identified as impacting the work of the UN family in the Asia-Pacific region. It was agreed that these concepts should be taken into account as work on API progresses. The recommendations detailed below summarize the priority areas where it was felt the most impact could be made. These overarching concepts include:

- Utilizing and targeting the comparative advantages of UN system agencies and partners in taking forward multi-disciplinary work in an efficient manner.
- Using the current focus on the H1N1 pandemic to encourage the future strengthening of animal and human health capacity preparedness, including laboratory diagnosis, surveillance and epidemiology in emerging infectious diseases. At the same time, ensuring that the focus on H5N1 is not diluted, particularly considering that it is still entrenched in a number of countries within the Asia-Pacific region.
- Reviewing efforts of the past few years, particularly in response to H5N1, to identify and consolidate best practices, and mainstreaming project successes into routine programmes.
- Ensuring that whole-of-society preparedness efforts are not sidelined as efforts are undertaken to address emerging infectious diseases with pandemic potential.
- Ensuring that vulnerable populations are addressed in all aspects of interventions.
- Developing common communication tools for pandemic influenza, emerging infectious diseases and other cross-cutting areas of work.
- Recognizing that the operationalisation of the recommendations at the country level should be done in consideration of country-specific contexts, needs and the availability of resources.
- Reinforcing the message that substantial progress to advance efforts on pandemic preparedness is contingent on engaging donor investments in long term commitments to advance preparedness and improving response capacity at the country level. This is particularly crucial in high-risk countries with a significant threat of avian influenza.

- Addressing the importance of establishing a comprehensive framework, with clear mandates and roles, to institutionalise overall UN system coordination on animal and pandemic influenza and other high risk emerging infectious diseases beyond the crisis response.
- Recognizing the importance of communication as a cross-cutting issue at all levels.

1.3 KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

The following key recommendations were identified as the priority areas where it was felt by workshop participants that the most impact could be made in preparedness and response to avian and pandemic influenza.

1.3.1 Strengthening Communication and Advocacy

- Develop a comprehensive, country-level communication framework that extends beyond influenza to address other emerging infectious diseases. (*UNICEF; Timeframe: ongoing*)
- Incorporate an assessment of communication and community perceptions of health and disease, using participatory and community consultative methods, into all communications strategy design process. (*UNICEF; Timeframe: ongoing*)
- Conduct regular community-based reviews of communication strategies and re-craft strategies as necessary. (*UNICEF; Timeframe: ongoing*)
- Work with governments to form country-level government-led intersectoral communication strategy coordinating bodies. (*UNICEF; Timeframe: ongoing*)
- Convene at least one regional communication coordination workshop per year. (*Asian Regional Risk Communication Initiative; Timeframe: 1st half 2010*)

1.3.2 Strengthening Capacity Development

- Work with governments to strengthen skills, capacities and systems to improve health communications (including media relations) from community to national levels. (*All; Timeframe: ongoing*)
- Develop and strengthen UN and government expertise in whole-of-society approaches and business/operational continuity planning. (*ILO, IOM, Resident Coordinator Offices, UNOCHA; Timeframe: ongoing*)
- Include human resource development planning within strategic national veterinary service plans. (*FAO, OIE; Timeframe: ongoing*)
- Train scientific staff to provide technical information in simple language. (*All; Timeframe: ongoing*)
- Extend targeted core capacities required to implement the 2005 International Health Regulations and, where feasible, extend those capacities stipulated in the Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases (APSED) to sub-national levels by working across relevant UN agencies and with partners. (*WHO; Timeframe: ongoing*)
- Encourage countries to undertake Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) evaluation, further conduct gap analyses, develop strategic plans for veterinary

service to address the gaps and encourage the sharing of results between countries. *(FAO, OIE; Timeframe: ongoing)*

1.3.3 Strengthening Coordination

- Improve information sharing, collaboration and coordination across the UN system and with partners at country, regional and headquarter level. *(All; Timeframe: ongoing)*
- Review the interface between emerging infectious diseases (EIDs) and the cluster system with a view to mainstreaming EIDs as a biological hazard - in contingency planning, standard operating procedures and disaster risk reduction in country planning protocols and guidelines. *(PIC, UNCTs, UNSIC; Timeframe 2010)*
- Institutionalise animal and human health collaboration in areas including laboratory, diagnosis, surveillance, response, epidemiology and communication to promote longer-term sustainability and cross-sectoral collaboration. *(WHO, FAO, OIE; Timeframe: ongoing)*
- Establish indicators to measure expected outcomes in the UN Consolidated Action Plan for Animal and Human Influenza (UNCAPAHI) log frame. *(UNSIIC; Timeframe: 1st half 2010)*
- Clarify operational continuity and common services through the review of the Concept of Operations for the UN System in an Influenza Pandemic (CONOPS) framework. *(PIC; Timeframe: 2010)*

1.3.4 Strengthening Integration/Multidisciplinary Approaches

- Integrate pandemic preparedness into a multi-hazard approach. *(PIC, UNCTs; Timeframe: ongoing)*
- Apply the joint WHO/FAO/OIE guidelines on inter-sectoral collaboration at the country level. *(FAO, OIE, WHO; Timeframe: 1st half 2010)*

1.3.5 Strengthening Sustainability

- Ensure accountability is maintained within the UN system for coordinating and resourcing country level multi-sectoral approaches, should there be any changes in existing UN structures or systems *(PIC; Timeframe: 2010)*
- Work with donors to promote harmonized and aligned support, including procurement practices that support long-term maintenance of equipment. *(All; Timeframe: ongoing)*
- Move from a project approach to a programme approach, including identifying ways to institutionalize programme coordination through embedding in country level UN strategic frameworks such as the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). *(UNCTs; Timeframe: ongoing)*
- Mobilize funding that prioritizes ongoing and longer term provision of human, equipment and financial resources. This includes continued implementation of preparedness and response efforts, with identification of the need for and allocation of resources based on sectoral needs assessments. *(All; Timeframe: ongoing)*

1.3.6 Strengthening Technical Support

- Develop pandemic vaccination campaigns that address the benefits and risks of vaccination.
- Refine strategic and operational pandemic plans to include clear triggers or thresholds for action tailored to the severity of the pandemic. *(All; Timeframe: ongoing)*
- Continue consultations on the Asia-Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases (APSED) beyond strategy discussions, with specific consideration of progress to date when proposing expanded scope and content. *(WHO; Timeframe: 1st half 2010)*
- Convene further technical meetings to discuss the specific interventions to manage the endemicity in HPAI-entrenched countries.
- Expand monitoring based on risk assessment for animal influenzas, targeting high risk animal populations rather than blanket surveillance. *(FAO, OIE; Timeframe: ongoing)*
- Harmonize protocols on laboratory diagnosis and surveillance of animal influenza, including the finalization of existing draft guiding principles for Surveillance and Laboratory Diagnosis for Asia. *(FAO, OIE; Timeframe: 1st quarter 2010)*
- Promote the formation of mechanisms for public-private partnerships to achieve disease prevention and control objectives. *(All; Timeframe: ongoing)*
- Promote cross-border collaboration in disease prevention, control and mitigation, including conducting cross-border value-chain studies and fostering appropriate interventions along the value chain. *(FAO, OIE; Timeframe: ongoing)*

1.3.7 Strengthening Knowledge Base

- Conduct research to determine the risks of animal-human/human-animal transmission to determine the implications for disease interventions, policies and procedures. *(FAO, OIE, WHO; Timeframe: ongoing)*
- Review the existing studies to inform programme and policy development, including studies related to economics, livelihoods and value-chains. *(All; Timeframe: ongoing)*
- Develop a regional communication research agenda. *(Asian Regional Risk Communication Initiative; Timeframe: 1st half 2010)*
- Encourage the collection and dissemination of best practices for animal husbandry, incorporating risk analysis. *(FAO, OIE; Timeframe: 2010)*
- Identify and disseminate country-level good practices, prioritizing multi-sectoral collaboration. *(All; Timeframe: ongoing)*

1.4 NEXT STEPS OF ACTION FOR TAKING THE RECOMMENDATIONS FORWARD

The steps detailed below were identified by workshop participants as the primary actions needed in order to take the recommendations forward in 2010.

1.4.1 At country level

- Overall broad sharing of the workshop recommendations, seeking ways to further strengthen coordinated action.
- Debriefing to the UN Resident Coordinator and UNCT senior management.
- Convening a meeting of the UN Country Team focal points, reviewing recommendations within the country context, discussing ways to take the recommendations forward and identifying an action plan and respective lead agencies, or integrating recommendations into existing workplans.
- Sharing of planning priorities and recommendations stemming from the workshop with national counterparts as well as partners and stakeholders, as appropriate, for heightened engagement and joint planning.
- Integrating recommendations and avian influenza and pandemic preparedness into UNDAF and other joint planning documents as they come up for review/drafting – while also taking into consideration the Millennium Development Goals.
- Reviewing and revising UN Pandemic Preparedness Plan and Business Continuity Plans. Also, strengthening linkages to programmatic aspects of UN system support to national government and seeking to integrate workshop recommendations with whole-of-society approaches. Conducting table-top exercises or simulations.
- Reviewing communication plans to take into account workshop recommendations.
- Feeding reflections on recommendations and country-level priorities, as well as lessons learned on work done to date, to UN regional offices and headquarters for consideration and integration into broader policy/programme development.

1.4.2 At Regional Level

- Overall broad sharing of the workshop recommendations, seeking ways to further strengthen coordinated action.
- Convening a meeting of the focal points from regional UN offices to review the recommendations and identify options for enhanced coordinated regional UN system support for country-level action in the context of the workshop discussions and recommendations.
- Utilization of the Asia Regional Risk Communication Initiative to take forward a coordinate inter-agency approach to communication, to organize a regional forum on communication and to develop a common regional framework for communications, advised by the workshop discussions and recommendations.
- The sharing and integration of workshop discussions and recommendations into the following activities:
 - Review of the APSED-related workshop recommendations (WHO).

- Inter-agency regional exercises on operational continuity/whole-of-society considering the workshop discussions and recommendations (WFP, March 2010).
- Integration of workshop recommendations into a planned regional workshop (ILO, March 2010).
- Sharing the recommendations at the expert meeting (OIE, June 2010).
- Convening of a follow-up meeting in one year's time to review progress on the workshop recommendations.

1.4.3 At Headquarter Level

- Sharing the outcomes of the workshop, including the workshop recommendations, with the Deputy Secretary General's Steering Committee on Influenza (convening on 3 February 2010) as well as with the UN System Technical Working Group.
 - Feeding the workshop discussions, outcomes and recommendations into ongoing and upcoming processes including:
 - Agency-specific planning processes
 - Revision of UNCAPAHI
 - Revision of CONOPS
 - Drafting of the 5th UNSIC-World Bank Global Progress Report
 - UNSIC strategic and transitional planning
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