

**Inter-agency information sharing/coordination  
Meeting on avian influenza  
Hosted by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies  
Southeast Asia Regional Delegation, Bangkok**

**August 2, 2007 (Thurs), 2-5 PM  
Imperial Queen's Park Hotel, Sukhumvit Soi 22, Bangkok  
Room Imperial China 11, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor**

**Minutes (Draft)**

**Key theme: Influenza Pandemic preparedness planning: simulation exercise methodology**

**Opening:**

**Chair:** Annu Lehtinen, Regional Avian and Human Influenza Coordinator, United Nations System Influenza Coordination (UNSIC), Asia-Pacific Regional Hub

**Participants:**

UNSIC  
CARE USA  
European Commission  
Nestle  
UN - FAO  
SCCC  
UN Resident Coordinator's Office  
French Red Cross  
UNICEF  
Oxfam  
UN - OCHA  
IFRC  
UNSIC - ADB

**Debriefing on July 5 simulation exercise**

By Andrew Durieux, Director of Coverage Co., Ltd.  
*For a full copy of the presentation, see attachments.*

Note: Andrew was the main facilitator for July 5 exercise. Only a handful people in the room were present at the July meeting, so the feedback was limited. Since there were more than 50 people participated in the exercise, it was decided to encourage others to feedback to the IFRC about the July simulation exercise by e-mail.

**Feedback from those who have participated in the exercise:**

- What one word describes the predominant impact the simulation had on you?
  - Desperate
  - Unprepared
  - Stressful
- What were the main personal or professional surprises during the simulation?
  - Some actions of President and Vice President
- What will be some supportive factors in managing a pandemic?
  - Trust within senior management team
- What will be some hindering factors in managing a pandemic?
  - Disconnect between staff and strategic management team. Lack of communication among different teams. For example, one group started to evacuate staff from Cambodia while other group was sending a relief team there.
  - Clear line of command (it will be more and more serious if people are under pressure.)

- What are some priority actions that were highlighted by the simulation that need to be taken now to enhance your organisations' overall pandemic preparedness?
  - Make this kind of exercise in the organisation.

### **How did we cope...**

- How do you think you managed the event? - Not well.
- Any critical mistakes? – Always make some, but nothing too serious in this case.
- Any good things? - Fun.
- How did the pressure feel? - Real.
- What would you do different next time?
  - Should include consideration of legal issues in a pandemic response.
- Notification:
  - Not really tested for
  - Bird flu will get rapid media attention
  - Some communication was a bit late (for ex., comm. to a boss in Brazil head office)
- Activation:
  - Pretty good given "new" organisation.
  - Maybe neglected "business as usual" thinking
- Organisation:
  - Moved to a crisis mode too soon.
  - 2 tier system for crisis management.
- Communication:
  - Explored briefly
  - Most people were well informed.
  - One example of mis-communication from VP.
  - Unclear situations to outlying branches
  - Clear problem speaking to media – who had authority and planned the message.
- Contact lists:
  - Did not have time.
- Record Keeping:
  - Don't think any one took any notes or wrote any instructions.
  - Miss IT did send some e-mails so we have some records.
  - Observers took good notes of the day.
- Rotation/Back-ups:
  - Didn't need to test because of nature of event.
  - When earthquake hit, we would have had major problem with enough staff.
- Legal issues
  - Staff issue
- Planning:
  - Didn't really make any clear plan for how we were going to address

### **Suggestions from the facilitator:**

- Use simple matrixes for contingency planning with facilities, staff, communications, IT services, put action points that needs to be take in the first 6 hrs, 12 hrs, 24 hrs. and 48 hrs.

### **Conclusions:**

- The scenario provided us with some good experience and ideas to use in a real situation.
- The scenario didn't allow for the possibility that the pandemic may have been stopped quickly.
- We didn't have any real links with authorities that we could use and test.
- None has any experiences with scenario so we can't be expected to handle it perfectly first time.

## **Experience Sharing: "Influenza Pandemic Simulation: A Participatory Tool to Promote Preparedness and Response Planning**

By Mary Henderson, Avian and Human Influenza Focal Point, UNICEF Regional Office

*For full copy of the presentation, see attachments.*

The presentation features UNICEF's good experience in the South Asia and East Asia and the Pacific regions in testing the pandemic preparedness of their country teams, by conducting pandemic simulation exercises in selected countries over the past months.

The key points in the presentation were:

1) Overview of simulation exercises:

Why do simulations?

Types of simulation exercises:

- Exercises done for a purpose of sensitization and awareness raising
- Exercise to refine pandemic plans
- Drills for test standard operating procedures and systems

2) UNICEF approach to simulations:

- Objectives
- Basic elements of the scenario
- Country specific context factors that need to be taken into consideration for adapting the scenario
- Steps in simulation exercise
- Benefits of this method
- Feedback from participants so far
- UNICEF plans for further simulation exercises and pandemic preparedness work

Conclusions:

- The best preparedness is to realistically think through potential scenarios and to be prepared for a range of possibilities both personally and professionally.
- Ideally pandemic preparedness planning will be tested at several levels – within NGOs and UN agencies, at the UN Country Team level, in the private sector and within Government – to ensure that internal and external systems and coordination mechanisms are in place.
- The experience of developing the UNICEF pandemic simulation methodology, enabled by the generous contribution of the Government of Japan, is seen as critical to strengthening our preparedness to contribute to the efforts of the UN system and our NGO partners to support national governments in responding to an influenza pandemic emergency.
- With some adaptation, the simulation methodology can be applicable for other organizations and UNICEF is willing to involve other partners in the above process.

### **Q & A**

Q: What would be the key role of UNICEF during a pandemic?

A: It depends on the nature of UNICEF support required in each country. For example, in some countries, UNICEF might support procurement of supplies and emergency logistics., while in other countries, if there is high capacity of the government to respond to emergencies, UNICEF programmatic or logistical support might not be required. However, throughout the region, UNICEF's main role is to support the government on risk communication and reaching the most vulnerable communities with vital information on how they can protect and care for themselves before and during a pandemic. UNICEF will also be concerned with monitoring and mitigating the impact of containment measures on children when schools will be closed, health services will be stretched, separation from caregivers may be an issue, supply chains may be interrupted and movement will be restricted.

Suggestion from the group: UN should work on clear idea of pandemic impact and outline clearly responsibility of each of UN agencies in supporting governments in a pandemic.

Q: What is the priority / main focus area in the simulation?

A: There are three main focusing areas: Staff health and safety, business continuity and support to government in their response to a pandemic. The UNICEF focuses on these specific areas, however, other related issues can be addressed depending on the specific country context.

Q: How inclusive are simulation exercises by UNICEF?

A: UNICEF makes efforts to include several partner organizations in the exercises, and we hope to expand the external participation further.

Q: Should we try to include all kinds of organisations together in one exercise in order to see how we all cope with a pandemic together. This will be excellent exercise and help us to learn how can we work as one team?

A: The UN has been working on inter-agency contingency planning and there has been an intention to integrate pandemic planning into overall emergency preparedness with other partners.

Comment: The simulation should have clear objectives set before an exercise. Each organisation has different objectives. It can be a challenge to have one simulation exercise without harmonized objectives of all agencies. Another suggestion: It will be easier and less costly if we choose the 3rd model (drill) to break down the complex planning like this into manageable pieces.

Q: How does the UN realise the efficient mechanism for pandemic preparedness if the exercises were done only in small scale with little involvement of other organisations?

A: The exercises that we in UNICEF are conducting are designed to test the planning within UNICEF and to ensure that our internal provisions and mechanisms as well as our coordination arrangements with the UNCT are complete and operational. We believe that identifying gaps and ensuring the quality of our internal planning will strengthen our contribution to the efforts of the UN system and the broader community of humanitarian actors to support national responses to a pandemic.

Q: How often has the UNICEF planned to have simulation exercise again?

A: As it consumes much time from participants/participating countries, we don't envision running the full pandemic simulation twice in one country within a short space of time. The next simulation exercise – which might be more of a systems drill after a country office has already run the full exercise - will depend on requests from UNICEF country offices for this type of support. We hope to be running a few more of these exercises this year and early next year, but there will also be a movement toward running exercises for the full UNCT with other partners.

Suggestion from Andrew: it is better not do simulation exercises more than twice a year, because of time and resource commitments. The best approach is to have one generic plan that works in all different scenarios and update it frequently.

### **Avian and Human Influenza Inter-Agency Coordination and Information Sharing Meetings in Bangkok: Review of past meeting topic**

By Amgaa Oyungerel, Health in Emergencies Delegate, International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

*For full copy of the presentation, see attachments.*

As background information for planning for the remaining months of 2007, Amgaa presented the topics of the past meetings and the list of organizations that have presented so far in this forum.

### **Discussion: The Plans for Sep – Dec 07**

6 September Thursday: country focus: Laos, Cambodia, Thailand or Bangladesh would be preferred

4 October Thursday: non-health issues of pandemic preparedness

### **Suggested topics for 4 Oct, 1 Nov, 6 Dec?**

- AHI inter-agency coordination:

- links with OCHA emergency preparedness and coordination groups
- How the UN agencies will work together in response to a pandemic (explain roles based on one country as an example). Thailand can be one example.
- Media and communication:
  - How to increase newsworthiness of AHI issue?
  - Public Risk Communication in Pandemic: some good work has been done by UNICEF and WHO in this area.
- Discussion on common preparedness plans that will fit to all organisations, not only NGOs.
- Links with CDC and WHO

### **Briefings: Update on organizations AHI activities (open floor)**

#### **IFRC**

- The IFRC received a significant amount of funding from donors for pandemic preparedness work. This initiative will run for the next 3 years and its focus areas will be:
  - Helping countries to establish a community based network of first line responders;
  - Mapping of roles and responsibilities, resources, capacities for pandemic response
  - Capacity building/training modules on pandemic preparedness;
  - Mapping of relief needs during a pandemic;
  - Scenario exercises, drills for pandemic planning;
  - Facilitating inter-agency coordination on pandemic preparedness among international and national organizations at national and community level.
- The selection of priority countries are underway, however, the majority of countries will be in Asia and Africa.

#### **UNICEF:**

- The regional communication team has worked with WHO to develop a framework of interventions that will be important prior to the emergence of a novel influenza virus and when a pandemic has emerged. A couple samples of TV spots that were based on this framework were shown to the group – the spots addressed social distancing and home care of flu.

#### **AOB**

- Amгаа Oyungerel from a meeting host IFRC is moving to work for the IFRC in Beijing from September 07. Molly Schmidt, IFRC regional health officer will take on secretarial and organizational responsibilities related to hosting these meetings from mid-August.
- Thanks from Amгаа to everybody who have contributed to this meeting in the past 1.5 years and have been a great help with organizing these meetings.