

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

October 2, 2008 (Thurs), 2 - 5 PM
Imperial Queen's Park Hotel, Sukhumvit Soi 22, Bangkok

Theme: The Gender Aspects of the AI Crisis in Southeast Asia

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: Annu Lehtinen, UNSIC, Regional Avian and Human Influenza
Coordinator**

14:00-14:30 hrs

Welcome address

The Chair welcomed the participants to October month's inter-agency AHI forum. The agenda for the day's meeting was divided into two parts: a video presentation on "cock fighting" by IPS Asia Pacific followed by experience sharing on gender aspects of AI crisis in Southeast Asia.

- The agenda was approved by participants.
- Roundtable introductions: There were 20 participants from:

Organizations Present:

1. IPS Asia Pacific
2. CARE Vietnam
3. UNICEF
4. UNSIC
5. World Vision
6. The Rockefeller Foundation
7. AED
8. OIE
9. FAO
10. EC
11. Keenan Institute Asia
12. ADPC
13. IFRC
14. WHO Thailand
15. Nestle
16. LSHTM
17. TNS
18. Macro International

14:30-14:45

Video experience sharing: Johanna Son, Director, IPS Asia-Pacific, Imaging Our Mekong programme, Reporting on Avian Flu: “Cockfighting”

This was the 4th film shown in this forum. This film was done for a Lao National TV, focusing on the linkages between Avian flu and cock fighting. The production unit were journalists from the Mekong Countries.

IPS Asia Pacific distributed the four films to all present as an early release.

14:45-15:15 hrs

Experience sharing: Anne Harmer, Health Officer, European Commission, “Study on the Gender aspects of the AI crisis in Southeast Asia”

Gender aspects of the Avian Influenza crisis in Southeast Asia: Thailand, Vietnam and Laos

Objectives of the study

- Consultants were invited to analyse and compare the gender dimensions of AI in three Southeast Asian countries: Thailand, Vietnam and Laos
- Draw lessons and conclusions that can serve as planning reference in mainstreaming gender in planning AI actions and strategies.

Lessons learnt from Thailand

- Thailand has experienced 5 waves of HPAI outbreaks between January 2004 and February 2008.
- In 3/4 commercial farms interviewed men were found to be the farm managers.
- Many women are employed in layer and broiler farms, responsible for collecting and selling eggs, cleaning poultry sheds and premises
- Men, almost exclusively, are involved in activities related to breeding birds for cockfighting including selling, transporting and gaming activities
- Market sellers (mainly women) purchase dressed poultry or poultry parts from wholesale companies, or live birds, and slaughter and prepare the birds themselves
- Women primarily perform tasks related to feeding and caring of the small-scale backyard poultry, and preparing them for cooking
- In family-owned poultry enterprises women are responsible for keeping income and, usually, play an equal role in decision making on use of income
- Government veterinarians, livestock authorities and staff, and village livestock volunteers are predominantly male
- Village health volunteers are mostly women
- Most farmers and government authorities interviewed considered there to be no gender implications in the AI epidemic and crisis.
- Women may face more risks due to directly involved in less bio-secure backyard poultry keeping but men have better access to information and training on animal health care including AI, and can protect themselves better
- Men involved with raising & transporting fighting cocks were considered to be at high risk
- No specific strategy or defined component on gender in AI initiatives of UN agencies and NGOs interviewed
- Only AusAID’s ASEAN Plus Three Emerging Infectious Diseases (EID) Programme has a gender component

Lessons learnt from Vietnam

- Vietnam remains one of the worst affected in terms of AI human infections and deaths - to date 106 cases are confirmed, of which 52 were fatal
- The government aggressively reacted through nation-wide poultry vaccinations, massive culling, and prohibiting raising of free-range poultry
- Women are mainly responsible for managing small-scale backyard poultry keeping, and to a lesser extent, medium-scale poultry enterprise involved in poultry marketing and often employed on large-scale farms as labourers
- Men are usually managers of large-scale poultry farms and dominate veterinary fieldwork and livestock extension services. Most members of the Farmers Union and Village Committees are men.
- In general, only men attend training in AI control and prevention
- AI awareness has generally improved but women's knowledge on AI prevention and control is limited
- Women are a high risk group as directly involved in poultry production
- Govt policy of enhancing bio-security measures for more profitable poultry enterprises may disadvantage poorer backyard poultry keepers
- Key government agencies in AI control and preparedness do not recognise gender as an important determinant in AI prevention and control
- Vietnamese Women's Union is strong driving force in community-based AI campaigns, and in bringing AI messages to women.

Lessons learnt from Lao PDR

Women are responsible for care, slaughtering and cooking of poultry, market sellers of poultry/poultry products

- Large-scale commercial production is either a family enterprise or a male business but decisions related to poultry production are often shared between husband and wife.
- Men have better educated in training courses on poultry production and AI prevention and control
- Lao Women's Union has been actively involved in trainings and communication campaigns on AI but ethnic minorities women seldom understand or speak Lao.
- Evaluations revealed however that these courses have had little or no impact - the contents not understood, and women said not to be interested or to have time to look at AI messages
- However, Govt authorities think that because women play a major role in poultry production they are at higher risk of AI infection and that this risk is increased due to women's low levels of education
- Gender is not a key focus area in any AI action or programme
- There are some initiatives to hold women-only meetings for AI campaigns in remote ethnic communities, and to increase female recruitment among village vet workers
- Significant gap in AI knowledge between women and men.
- Women face particular constraints: low education, less time and mobility, excluded from agricultural training and services, etc
- Recognition of key roles women play in small-scale backyard poultry production, and their disadvantages in accessing information and training on AI, have not translated into the design of specific measures to address women's barriers in AI communication campaigns.
- AI trainings and communication campaigns rarely take gender into account
- Dual roles of women as health care providers and poultry raisers increases their vulnerability to AI infection

Possible reasons for gender omission

- Planners and implementers of AI actions lack understanding and knowledge on gender, and are not able to analyze the differential impact of the AI crisis on women and men: their different needs, interests and constraints

- Agencies and programmers dealing with AI do not have a defined strategy/component that address gender issues
- Lack of gender-segregated information and data on AI
- Low participation of women and women-focused agencies in planning and implementation of AI actions

Recommendations

- Women are important stakeholders in the AI crisis. So, women should be recognized as major players in the agricultural economy and in ensuring public health. Therefore positive actions should be taken to ensure women's involvement in preventive measures
- Competence development on gender should be aimed at policy-makers, planners, programme/project managers and officers
- Institutional mechanisms established to support gender mainstreaming including developing gender action plans and allocation of budgets
- Social and gender focal points established in AI programmes and in responsible government agencies with clear mandates and resources to support gender mainstreaming

Suggested measures to address gender issues

- Targeted AI campaigns for women can make a difference in reaching those at greatest risk – children and backyard poultry keepers
- Improving women's knowledge about AI can strengthen their poultry management, protect livelihoods and sources of income, ensure the food security of the family, and enhance women's capacity to protect their families against AI
- Mass organizations, farmers unions, youth unions should be encouraged to actively recruit female members (especially targeting male-dominated bodies)
- Capacity of women's mass organizations and women's NGOs encouraged to carry out AI campaigns particularly in rural and remote areas
- Local women trained to become agents for AI campaigns
Ensure that AI campaign messages are women-friendly: easy to understand, with balanced gender portrayals, culturally-appropriate, and delivered at a place and time that allows women optimum participation

15:30-16:00 hrs

Experience sharing: Nguyen Thi Tuyet Mai, Health Trainer, CARE Vietnam, "Gender Mainstreaming in Community Mobilization for AI reduction"

Problems: Gender bias Vietnam Institute of Social Science –
(CARE: Survey on gender situation in Ba Thuoc. Thanh hoa province, Hanoi, Oct 2007)

Gender bias norm: Family norm

- Equal access to some natural resources for both men and women, but men have more access to and control over management of financial and other important resources
- Men keep a key role while women have limited voice in decision making process for investment in production, purchase of assets, financial resources management
- Women are essentially involved in raising poultry, play role in children care givers and in preventing children to be exposed to AI risks
- Men have more access to information on mass media, technical trainings and are more apply agriculture techniques than women
- Women tend to learn from their peers in poultry raising

Risk behaviors for men: Transportation of sick poultry, transportation of sick poultry slaughtered, chicken fighting and eating duck blood pudding and undercooked chicken meat

Risk behaviors for women: daily contacting directly with poultry without PPE

- Selling chicken products
- Feeding poultry
- Cleaning chicken cages or poultry raising area
- Preparing poultry products (meat, egg, blood..)
- Slaughtering poultry at home

Goal: Communities in high risk provinces of Vietnam reduce their vulnerability to AI outbreaks

Objectives: community mobilization for AI risk reduction

1. To increase awareness among key target groups of AI signs and symptoms, route of transmission and priority preventive practices
2. To increase the adoption of priority preventive practices among key target groups
3. To ensure that both male and female in project sites have equal opportunity to access, control and benefit from program activities

Programming principles

1. Strong cross – sectoral collaboration and capacity building at the community level
2. Implementing through partnership
3. Strong community mobilization and empowerment
4. Focus on gender

Activities

- Step 1: Provincial Workshop
- Step 2: Commune AI Campaign Planning
- Step 3: Commune AI Campaign AI Campaign Implementation
- Step 4: Monitoring and supporting
- Step 5: Report back and next phase planning

Gender mainstreaming in community mobilization for AI risk reduction – Lessons Learnt

1. A gender analysis should be conducted in project site to design an effective gender mainstreaming strategy aiming to achieve gender equality in relation to program objective
2. Gender training needs to be provided to project partners and local authorities who, with necessary knowledge and skills, can facilitate gender sensitive activities in local area.
3. Dissemination and education on gender equality need to be integrated in community activities for poultry households.
4. Women play an important role in handling poultry and as children care takers thus being at high risk at AI infection and influential element in preventing AI. An advocacy strategy to address gender issues in AI need to be built at national and local level. Key themes would be to promulgate policies for women's improved access to bio-security technical trainings and information to reduce the risk of AI infection and protect their livelihoods as well as to increase women's right in decision making in the household.

16:00-16:30 hrs

Any other business:

- Future directions of the forum were the key discussion point.
- IFRC's catalytic role in organizing the forum was appreciated and acknowledged by the floor.
- Cecilia Anshelm, Head of Regional Health Unit, IFRC extended thanks to all partners for entrusting IFRC to organize these forums and stressed that this could not have been possible in isolation. The forum has played a significant role because of the support and cooperation of all partners. ADB as the funding agency helped sustain the 29 sessions covering variety of themes and topics that contributed a lot to the knowledge sharing, establishment of partnerships and collaborations. IFRC is getting involved in pandemic

- preparedness in the region through USAID grant and hence, continuation of these meetings would be very useful in implementing its programs.
- Nestle Thailand has offered to support organizing these meetings for 2009. ADPC will be hosting the meetings for the year 2009, starting November 2008.
 - Interests were received from ADPC, FAO, AED, IFRC, LSHTM, Nestle and UNSIC, OIE to form a core steering group.
 - Mr. Boon Tiong Tay from ADPC presented the outcomes of the core group meeting on 18 Sep 2008 that chalked out the work details on the way forward.
 - The objectives of the forum will remain the same ie coordination & sharing and enhancing knowledge between individuals and organizations. The approach will be more focused, to address topics dominant in the region, contributing to regional and global framework. More structured sharing of resources, materials to prevent reinventing the wheel. The forum will allow organizations to share good practices to also ensure complementing and strengthening each other's activities.
 - Core group will provide guidance to ADPC. Nestle will be supporting the event from Jan 2009 for one year.
 - The schedule & venue will remain the same.
 - The TOR of the core group includes meeting once a month before the forum and will ensure that the forum's objectives are met. Guidance on the topics & themes are expected. Core group will help identify gaps & priorities, increase the participation.
 - Annual review of minutes will be undertaken to list priorities, gaps, issues discussed.
 - Role of the chair is critical bringing important relevance to the discussion.
 - Organizations can link their website/relevant web pages to the AHI Asia website.

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.