

**SUMMARY OF
WORKSHOP ON UN SYSTEM PANDEMIC PLANNING AND PREPAREDNESS
Bangkok
Amari Watergate Hotel
20-21 April 2006**

1. The workshop was opened by Mr. Terje Skavdal, Head of Office, UNOCHA ROAP, who also spoke on behalf of Ms Elizabeth Fong, Manager of Regional Center in Bangkok, UNDP. (To see the speech, [click here.](#))
2. After the presentation on the agenda of the day by Dr Anne Ancia, Regional AHI Coordinator for Asia and Pacific, presentations on contingency planning were made from [Cambodia](#), [Indonesia](#), [China](#), and [New Zealand](#). (For workshop agenda, [click here.](#))
3. During the subsequent session, the following questions and comments were raised from the floor:
 - Challenges and difficulties in the development of contingency planning
 - Ensuring the availability of resources and capacity of the UN for planning, preparing and responding to AHI
 - Having good inter-agency coordination with and inter-ministerial coordination within governments
 - Sustainability of preparedness and planning
 - Convincing governments to raise public awareness
 - Reality that reporting could lead to livelihood shocks
 - Effective border management
 - Key elements and possible clues for improvement of contingency planning:
 - Effective linkage between country coordination and regional coordination
 - World Bank involvement
 - Ensuring the following five critical areas for cross-government coordination:
 - ◇ Communication
 - ◇ Pandemic Planning
 - ◇ Pharmaceuticals
 - ◇ Rural Development
 - ◇ Public-Private Partnership
 - Involvement of Ministry of Foreign Affairs to leverage international reputation, and Ministry of Finance for sustainable financing

- Exercise/simulation was required to educate staff and test plans
 - Creating matrix across UN internal, country, and country support as a checklist for ensuring effective planning and preparedness
4. Dr David Nabarro, Senior UN System Influenza Coordinator participated via videoconference. In his comments and concluding remarks, Dr. Nabarro emphasized the nature of pandemic planning and preparedness as an evolving process, and highlighted the evolution made by each country team. (To see the presentation, [click here](#))
 5. In the afternoon of day 1, Mr. Peter Scott-Bowden and Mr. Nigel Snoad of UNSIC presented on the [UN System Pandemic Planning and Preparedness Guidelines](#). This was followed by a group exercise in which the participants were split into eight groups, each representing a country team, and worked through i) hazard/risk analysis, ii) identification of contingencies/programs affected and support required, iii) prioritization of contingencies/programs.
 6. Key issues raised by this exercise were:
 - UN system entities are not used to performing risk-analysis based planning, which presents different challenges to the more common situation based planning.
 - Additional material supporting staff performing risk-analysis is required.
 7. Some of the challenges highlighted in the discussion included:
 - the acknowledgement that there are multiple actors within the UN and the challenges this brings when trying to coordinate various activities and harmonize initiatives
 - the difficulty of gaining consensus within UNCT in the context of the national pandemic response plans
 - the importance of the role of leadership in pandemic preparedness, and how agencies understand the concept of leadership internally within the UN and externally in terms of support to national government
 - within the context of Asia, there is a tradition and existence of utilization of military assets for disaster management, and there is a need to engage the military not only in operational choices but also in ethical issues pertinent to management and operations
 - need for clarity in terms of what can and cannot be done (i.e., the kind of support that we as the UN system can and cannot provide)

8. The presentation of the agenda of day 2 by Ms. Elham Seyedsayamdost (UNSCIC) was followed by presentations from FAO, OIE, WHO, UNICEF and WFP, discussing the role of the various UN agencies in pandemic preparedness. [FAO](#) discussed their response to Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza, focusing on Asia, and [OIE](#)'s presentation focused on this organization's response while analyzing the global AI situation. [WHO](#) discussed their recent containment guidelines, while [UNICEF](#) elaborated the importance of communications in pandemic preparedness. Challenges faced, in terms of humanitarian response in a pandemic, were discussed by [WFP](#).
9. During the subsequent Q&A sessions, comments were made from the floor, particularly on:
 - i) Communications and in particular, public information and how to deal with the media. (e.g. communication plays a key role in effective management, but not all country teams have communication officers, etc.)
 - ii) Military involvement in pandemic response
10. The afternoon session began with a presentation by UN Medical Services, UNESCAP, on the update of UN staff safety and security policy.
11. The afternoon continued with a moderated discussion on staff safety and continuity of operations. During the discussion, the following issues were raised:
 - Challenges providing adequate stockpiles of medical supplies and their distribution (e.g. some countries like Cambodia have antiviral stockpile for 100% coverage for staff, but others do not; Should the stockpile be distributed in advance to each staff or office, or should it be centralized? How should it be kept secure?)
 - The desire for flexibility on early departure (e.g. in which situation early departure would be applied) but challenges as pandemic planning guidelines recently changed policy against early departure.
 - The need for proper appraisal and education on risks of departure during a pandemic outbreak, even from an apparently unaffected country/region. Contrasting this to the risks of poor health services.
 - Need for articulation on elements of the staff contingency plan (e.g. definition and contents of terminology such as self-care, fever clinic and home-based care should be clarified.)
 - The importance of staff communications, both on risks, and also crisis communications.
12. The two-day workshop was concluded by remarks from Mr. Peter Scott-Bowden

and closed by Dr Anne Ancia.

Summary of outcomes and action points

Contingency planning:

- National pandemic planning and preparedness is a pre-condition for effective programmatic level UN system planning and preparedness
- UN system entities are not used to performing risk-analysis based planning, which presents different challenges to the more common situation based planning
- Further guidance and support on the following issues is required
 - Tamiflu storage and distribution to remote duty stations
 - Evacuation policy – when it is allowed/encouraged
 - Additional material supporting staff performing risk-analysis is required
 - A sample plan would enable countries to follow best-practice

Medical support

- Further guidance on the following issues is required
 - Home based care and treatment guidelines
 - Risk profile of staying in place during a pandemic vs. departing

Communications

- Importance of early warning, trust, and transparency: how to balance these?
- How to understand the public and engage them in planning ahead?

Feedback from the participants

Based on the plenary session at the end of the workshop and the written evaluation forms, the overall feedback from the participants was very positive. The workshop was considered to be a contributor to a more coordinated planning and preparedness process, and the participants found it useful in terms of information sharing and further refining their contingency plans. Several of the participants found the country presentations particularly useful, even though some commented that they missed a more participatory workshop format. The wish was expressed to have trained facilitators for scenario building exercises in future workshops. So far the main focus has been the UN System's preparedness, and some of the participants suggested that the next workshop could focus on preparedness of national authorities in Asia & the Pacific Region.

For further reading materials, [click here](#).