



in focus



Thida speaks out at the community forum

Engaging with communities in Cambodia

FAO in Cambodia are working with government partners at the community level to prevent Avian Influenza (AI). Community awareness and participation are a vital component of AI prevention activities, the benefits of which could be seen at a recent Community Forum in Kampong Cham province, attended by more than 1,200 people from six villages.

“Although there has been no outbreak of AI in Cambodia since April 2007, the risk of another outbreak is ever-present,” said FAO Cambodia’s Etienne Careme. “So it’s important to improve the country’s capacity to detect outbreaks of the disease – at markets, in large flocks and in backyard farms”.

But in countries such as Cambodia, with their high proportion of unregulated backyard farms, the threat of AI can only be reduced if communities are actively involved and able to confront risks through changes in behaviour which are built on local and culturally relevant practices.

“Awareness is the first step to prevention, but only behavioural change can make these plans effective” (Etienne Careme, FAO-ECTAD Operations Officer)

The community forums are part of a broader initiative to encourage participation from communities at risk from AI. FAO work with the government to provide technical and communication skills training to veterinary officials, village chiefs and village animal health workers (VAHWs). The training enables VAHWs to support veterinary services by conducting surveillance in their village, implementing prevention measures and being ready to undertake control activities should an outbreak occur. Village chiefs and VAHWs also play a role in public awareness and community mobilisation. In order to reduce the risk to animals (and potentially humans), it is vital that trusted community members work closely with their communities, providing credible and trustworthy information, seeking feedback and active participation from community members and utilising local wisdom, experience and solutions.

The forums provide VAHWs with an opportunity to utilise their communication skills: joined by representatives from national government and local authorities, veterinary experts, village chiefs and FAO staff, VAHWs meet community members and help them to find out more about AI through discussions, interviews, questions & answers, films, songs and interactive sessions on animal-to-animal and animal-to human transmission.

Participants also have the opportunity to meet each other and exchange stories, experiences and advice. Women and young people are very active: explaining AI prevention to the audience, asking questions, telling others about what they had learned, and suggesting their own ideas for preventing AI. The mood of the meeting was summed up by Thida “This meeting has given me the chance to speak. We must know about - and tell others - how to keep our poultry and to protect ourselves and our families. This meeting is a good way of doing that and has given me the confidence to go back to my own village and speak out more about what we can do to protect ourselves”.

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US Marines Medical Mission in Leak Pi Village, Kampong Cham, May 2008

FAO set up an information and awareness raising booth at the mission, a regular event in which Marines provide health treatment in districts of Cambodia. The booth drew over 1,500 visitors over 3 days, displaying posters on AI prevention, screening TV/radio spots and FAO-MAFF films on the response to AI in Cambodia, organising discussion, quizzes, karaoke and participatory education sessions, using a storyline illustrating bird-to-bird transmission of HPAI depicted on screen/posters.

Srey Mom, aged 13, visiting with her sick mother, said "I have learned that AI can be transmitted from outside the village by transportation of infected birds, so a new chicken should be kept separate in a cage for at least 14 days. When I get back home I will tell my family and neighbours how to protect our chickens".

Local Village Animal Health Workers (VAHWs) were very active at the event, mingling with the crowds and explaining to them about AI, distributing posters, leaflets, T-shirts, caps and encouraging discussion on AI and animal health issues. Ma Phirun, 31, a VAHW from Prea Theat village, said "I talk to people about how to protect their animals, I go round to people's homes, I put posters up. People in my village learned from the posters and told me about sick chickens, which I then reported to the village chief or District vet".

"It is important to organise community meetings and discussions to share information on AI in my village and others that I visit. This will help others to know the risk from AI and encourage everyone to have their say"

(Ma Phirun, 31, a VAHW from Prea Theat village)

Thol Kim Srun, aged 56, from Kong Chey village described the feelings of many: "I have seen a lot of chickens dying in my village and my neighbours just ate the dead birds. The information I have got today is useful and easy to follow. I'm going to take it around my village and explain to my neighbours about AI. Village chiefs and VAHWs are helpful but there are also things we can do ourselves".

The missions, as with community forums, have become an effective way of involving communities in creating awareness of AI and how to prevent it. Participants gain insight and knowledge into protecting themselves and their communities and many are now offering to become advocates for change in their own communities, by working with village chiefs and VAHWs, disseminating information, organising meetings and mobilising their communities to take action to protect themselves.



Karaoke at the medical mission



VAHW sharing information on AI

events

What's coming up in the region?

30 June: Closing date for Media Fellowship Project applications in Viet Nam.
July: Training workshops on Outbreak Investigation, Dili, Timor-Leste
14-16 July: South Sulawesi Priority Areas Planning Workshop (Education and communication activities were ranked number 1 during this workshop)
21-23 July: Communication strategy workshop, Vientiane, Lao PDR
4 Aug: Resumption of training of Village Animal Health Workers and Village Chiefs by FAO and DAHP/MAFF

13 Aug: Start of a series of market forums in major live bird markets by FAO and DAHP/MAFF, Cambodia
18-24 Aug: Delegation from Egypt to visit PDSR programme in Indonesia
24-29 Aug: Delegation from Turkey to visit PDSR programme in Indonesia
26-28 Aug: Communication planning workshop in Indonesia (TBC)
3-4 Sep: WB Inception Workshop, Myanmar
9-11 Sep: Workshop on strategic and legislative aspects of prevention and control of EID, Bangkok, Thailand

Communities speak out in Indonesia

Focus Group Discussions on IEC activities in Makassar, South Sulawesi; Balikpapan, East Kalimantan; and Yogyakarta, Central Java, Apr-May

The focus group discussions are part of a series which began in March 2008 in various locations in Indonesia. They are based on the need to enhance education and awareness on HPAI to people from different cultural backgrounds, to improve biosecurity for people dealing with poultry in various cultural backgrounds and to create and revise the form and concept of IEC materials on HPAI awareness to reflect the diversity of peoples in Indonesia. Participants are male and female, small commercial and backyard farmers, small-scale live chicken traders/collectors, chicken meat traders and people involved in cockfighting.

The objectives of the focus groups discussions were:

- To understand poultry production practices exercised by people from different cultural backgrounds and professions.
- To explore the depth and nuances of opinions regarding HPAI.
- To understand different perspectives on HPAI from different cultural backgrounds and professions.
- To understand what factors influence people's opinion and behaviour on HPAI.
- To understand the most appropriate forms of IEC materials and activity on HPAI.



Focus group discussions in Indonesia

Enhancing surveillance and response

FAO Regional Workshop on Surveillance and Response Capacities, Bangkok, Thailand, May

A regional workshop was held to review national preparedness and response capacities, current surveillance strategies, guidelines for surveillance, and to update as appropriate. Staff from RAP-ECTAD, National ECTAD offices and national government counterparts participated in the workshop to review:

- National progress on field surveillance using the FAO Minimum Requirements for Effective Surveillance in the Guiding Principles for HPAI Surveillance and Diagnostic Networks in Asia (2004) as a guide.
- Existing national preparedness and rapid response capacities.
- Current strategies for strengthening national capacities for AI surveillance and response.
- Regional guidelines for surveillance, outbreak investigation, preparedness and response based on FAO's 'Preparing for Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza': and develop a set of recommendations and a gap analysis.

The workshop report is currently being finalised and will be available shortly. It will provide details of regional progress on national surveillance and response capacities; current national strategies for strengthening capacities; and recommendations for further actions.

Combatting AI in Korea DPR

Workshop on Capacity Building for the Prevention and Control of Avian Influenza in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Pyongyang, 28-29 May

The European Commission provided funds to support the Government of DPRK in the implementation of its National Strategy on prevention of AI by focusing on intersectoral efforts between the agricultural and health sectors.

Participants comprised FAO and WHO staff in DPRK and representatives from the Ministries of Agriculture (MOA) and Health (MOH) of the DPRK.

The workshop:

- Reviewed current AI control and prevention measures of the MOA and MOH in DPRK since the outbreak in 2005.
- Reviewed and finalised the list of activities under this EC assistance.
- Finalised the implementation plan, in particular in joint activities by the MOA and MOH

The purpose of the workshop was to develop an updated implementation plan (with assigned persons); and a schedule of assignments for international consultants and backstopping missions

Awareness raising on AI in Lao PDR

Implementation of community awareness activities with training of communications trainers in 600 villages in the 17 provinces, May - August.

AI community awareness activities began in 2007 and were implemented in 844 villages. The evaluation of activities showed an increase in the understanding and knowledge of AI as a direct result. Activities take place at village level and are implemented by livestock officers from provincial and district level, with the involvement of the village chief, village veterinary worker, village health volunteers and other volunteers from the Lao Women's Union, together with the support of the National Animal Health Centre.

Each meeting lasts approximately three hours and covers AI transmission, prevention, bio-security measures, treatment and vaccination for common poultry diseases, hygiene, food safety, previous HPAI outbreaks and implemented control measures in country, and measures to prevent AI in humans. Trainers use a variety of tools which actively engage and involve villagers, such as demonstrations, discussions, television spots, songs, quizzes and puppet theatre, and present villagers with such items as soap, t-shirts, calendars and posters.



Participants discussing AI prevention

The objectives of such community activities are:

- To raise awareness of AI among villagers and backyard poultry owners
- Help villagers to understand appropriate measures to prevent the disease in their poultry and to avoid the transmission among poultry and from poultry to humans
- To provide information on previous outbreaks and implemented control measures within their country, as well as compensation.
- To encourage villagers in reporting and in practicing prevention measures

Taking outbreak preparedness to the grassroots in Lao PDR

Namo district, Lao PDR, June

A major thrust in combating AI is to help those at risk to be able to respond quickly and effectively if an outbreak occurs. Poultry farmers and their communities, as well as local, district and provincial animal health workers are those on the frontline. FAO is working to ensure that they are ready and prepared to respond rapidly.

FAO's experiences elsewhere in Asia, Africa and Central and Eastern Europe show that simulation exercises are among the most effective ways to approach HPAI preparedness. The methodology is simple: arrange a mock outbreak and ask those who would be involved in combating a real outbreak to act out how they would respond.

The exercise took place in Namong district, in the North-western province of Oudomxay, and was organised by FAO together with the National Animal Health Centre (NAHC) within the framework of a German government-funded FAO project to build grassroots AI response capacity. An earlier simulation exercise took place in 2007, in the province of Louangphrabang, also in the North-west and was funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID).

The recent four-day exercise involved more than 60 participants from all districts of Oudomxay and the neighbouring province of Phongsaly, drawn from a wide spectrum of provincial and district offices including agriculture and forestry, health, police, and

“The exercise requires intense coordination between the different authorities, sectors and specialised staff and gives them concrete preparation in case of an AI outbreak”

(Dr Ricarda Mondry, Chief Technical Advisor, FAO AI programme in Lao PDR)

information and culture, and from the Lao Women's Union, NAHC and, most importantly, village authorities and village veterinary workers. It included disease investigation and surveillance, culling, disposal and decontamination, movement control, communication and management and logistics.



Surveillance team in action

Research in Cambodia

Cambodia livelihood study, June 2008

The Center for Development Oriented Research (CENTDOR) completed a livelihood study in 12 villages in Siem Reap, commissioned by FAO and with funding from Germany. The results of the study will aid in developing key policy messages that will enable development of gender-sensitive, effective and enforceable HPAI strategies and assist in mitigating negative effects of emergency and longer term control measures on people's livelihoods. The study complements a similar research conducted in 2007 by CEDAC (Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture) in 36 villages in Kampong Cham, Kampong Speu, Takeo and Kampot. The latter study provided important information concerning the south of the country, while Siem Reap which is representative of the northern part of Cambodia, with its different ecological and production conditions.

ToT workshop, Phnom Penh, 23-27 June

FAO and DAHP jointly organised a training of trainers workshop which took place at the Royal University of Agriculture. 184 district veterinary officers from all over Cambodia and four trainers of DAHP participated in the nine classes conducted by FAO's trainers. The workshop enhanced their training methodologies and skills in training VAHWs in the techniques of surveillance, the recognition and systematic recording and reporting of suspected cases, and communication of prevention measures to their communities.

Media projects in Indonesia and Viet Nam

Multi-media fellowship/partnership projects have been launched, involving media practitioners from print, film, photography, radio and online media. A total of 10 practitioners from each country will participate in the project, which will be run in close cooperation with the agriculture ministries of the respective countries. The fellowship/partnership schemes, which are designed to promote the best in community-based HPAI journalism through audio-visual media practitioners working with FAO country teams, are an innovative break with traditional journalists' training schemes.

New AI Initiatives in Timor-Leste

Workshop in Dili, Timor-Leste, May - July

An Inception Workshop for the Avian Influenza programme in Timor-Leste was held. The programme comprises: a 'Biosecurity Strengthening Project (BSP) for East Timor' and a 'Communication and Public Awareness Activities to Support the Prevention and Control of AI in Timor-Leste' project.

Participants included representatives and staff of the National Directorate of Livestock, Inspectorate of Quarantine and Bio-security within the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and representatives of USAID and AusAID. HE Valentino Varela, Secretary of State Livestock and Biosecurity gave the opening address and opened the workshop.

During the workshop, detailed workplans and M&E plans were developed, thereby ensuring effective use of the available human resources in country and complementation of activities implemented within both projects through an AI country programme approach.

An additional training workshop for veterinarians was completed in July.

International conference in Viet Nam

Sustainable vaccination strategy a must to control bird flu in Viet Nam, Hanoi, June

The conference, co-organised by the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, FAO, USDA and USAID, heard reports by international experts, including a model outlining the risk and progress of the virus, epidemiology research on viruses on different kinds of poultry, and campaigns to raise public awareness about the disease and its prevention.

During the conference, FAO representative in Viet Nam, Andrew Speedy hailed Viet Nam's achievements in fighting against AI and stressed the importance of research in deciding measures to effectively curtail the epidemic.

Dr. Jeff Gilbert, FAO's AI team leader recommended that Viet Nam continue to vaccinate for the next three to five years or longer. "What we'd like to see is the scale of the vaccination decreasing" stated Dr. Gilbert. "If vaccinations were withdrawn, the spread of disease would come back...What we need is surveillance and to improve surveillance", Dr. Gilbert added.

staff changes

Dr. Abebe Wossene Wolde joined FAO-ECTAD in May 2008 as Team Leader of AI Programme in Timor-Leste.

Dr. Tony Williams has taken up a new position as Chief Technical Adviser (CTA) in FAO Nepal in May 2008. Dr. Williams was previously CTA for in Lao PDR.

Mr. Etienne Careme was appointed Operations Officer in Cambodia in April 2008. Mr. Careme has previously worked in FAO Head Quarters and in Afghanistan.

Dr. Lotfi Allal joined FAO Cambodia in March 2008 as the Chief Technical Advisor.

Ms Surangani Abeyesekera has joined FAO Indonesia as Communication Officer