



Effective Implementation Delivers Improved Preparedness in Uzbekistan

There has been no outbreak of H5N1 or H1N1 in Uzbekistan. As in other countries that have not yet confronted the diseases, the emphasis has been on preparedness.

Context

Agriculture accounts for some 26.8% of GDP and employs around 44% of the labor force in Uzbekistan. Of the estimated 33 million poultry, around 75% are held in backyard settings. These are typically tended by women and children and have limited access to veterinary services, making them highly susceptible to HPAI. Industrial poultry, which tends to be managed in covered poultry houses, is less susceptible to contact with wild birds, however trade, particularly of chicks from Russia and Turkey constitutes an ongoing threat.

a Technical Working Group. By closing, the Project was able to complete procurement of all the goods and technical assistance as well as civil works envisaged under the Project. Flexibility in the face of the disease-free status of the country also allowed re-allocation of resources from activities aimed at response to those that strengthened preparedness.

Strengthening Surveillance

The AHI Facility grant has supported the refurbishment and upgrading of a number of facilities that play a critical role in the surveillance system. Seven oblast (regional) laboratories were upgraded as was the lab of the Republican Sanitary Epidemiological Station (RSES) - to Biosafety Level 2, the State Veterinary Department and the Intensive Care Unit for Contagious Diseases in the Institute of Virology. Equipment, computers and vehicles have also been provided to the State Veterinary Department.

The findings of the 2009 knowledge, attitudes and practices study found an unusually high level of awareness across a broad spectrum of the population.

Coordination: A Success Factor

The performance of the Project has benefitted considerably from effective central coordination between Government Departments and donors/international agencies. The Ministry of Health convened a Special Committee consisting of the main stakeholders. This was ably supported by technical agencies (including UNICEF, FAO and WHO) who formed



The Project has also supported various overseas study tours for the national communications, veterinary and health specialists - facilitating access to international best practices. Collaboration between the Institute of Zoology and RRA on wildlife surveillance was also successfully completed.

Adapting to Circumstance

Given that there have been no Avian Influenza outbreaks in the country, the Government of Uzbekistan reassigned funds previously allocated for compensation payments to procure additional laboratory equipment, including autoclaves, necropsy tables, cooling chambers, refrigerators, generators for electric supply in case of power failure, a refrigerator truck for transportation and delivery of vaccines, drugs and other biological materials that require the maintenance of a cold chain. The Government has given an assurance that required funds will be provided for the compensation of owners of infected poultry in case of an epidemic. The Compensation Fund Manual developed under the Project has been adopted by the Republican Emergency Anti-Epidemic Committee.

Building Awareness and Technical Capacity

Training activities have been extensive and broad-based with the public awareness and information component successfully reaching out to journalists, school children, health personnel, community leaders, natural resource managers and media representatives. Animal and Human Health training components have also had a broad reach.

In April 2008, UNICEF was contracted by the Government to carry out advocacy, public education and social mobilization activities to increase awareness of, and appropriate responses to, Avian Influenza. Particular attention was given to reaching out to women and children - reflecting the risks identified, and the importance of backyard poultry management.

A Knowledge, Attitude and Practices (KAP) survey in 2009 found a number of positive outcomes from this campaign:

- The level of awareness of bird flu had grown considerably when compared to the results of previous surveys.
- Activities aimed at teachers and school children, the dissemination of posters and TV spots had a significant impact on the awareness level of the population.
- Increased knowledge of bird flu prevention measures was observed for all non-target groups (veterinaries, health

Key Data

Grant Amount: \$2.96 million

Disbursement (to end March 2010):
\$2.94 million

Closing Date: March 2010



providers, makhalla leaders and teachers) with the farmers' group showing a slightly higher level of awareness when compared to other surveyed households.

- Risk groups have started to adhere to hygiene and sanitary rules and bio-security practices such as (i) isolated poultry keeping (in cages and poultry-yards) in households, (ii) the use of well and artesian water for poultry-yard cleaning, poultry watering and personal sanitization, which reduces the infection risk for poultry and people and (iii) the increased use of special work wear in poultry-yard cleaning.

Remaining Challenges

The legislation required to facilitate transportation of samples to international reference laboratories is yet to be fully adopted and Uzbekistan remains among the few countries in the region that does not have National Influenza Center certified by WHO. The Government are confident, however, that in case of an outbreak, approval for sending specimens abroad could be obtained within a very short period of time. To this end, four participants completed training in Turkey on the IATA procedures for shipment of contagious materials.

Positive outcomes

While it is impossible to accurately assess the level of preparedness without an outbreak, the findings of the KAP suggest an unusually high level of awareness across a broad spectrum of the population and evidence that this is positively affecting agricultural and personal practices.