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A Multi-tiered Approach in China Aims to Scale Successful Grassroots Pilots

China reported over 127 thousand cases of novel influenza A/H1N1 infections, including 796 deaths by March 2010, across 31 provinces. By the end of 2009, ninety cases of human infections of H5N1 were also reported, including 27 deaths, with infections coming overwhelmingly due to poultry exposure.

request of the Ministry of Finance. Key recommendations from the Study included the need to develop stronger overarching coordination and communications mechanisms for AH1 and pandemic influenza, better integration of the national plan across sectors and strengthening of the animal surveillance system, notably at the grass roots level.

The Challenge

A multi-tiered response was adopted with pilots at the provincial and county level aimed at developing a framework of improvements that can be applied to the overall HPAI response in the country.

The frequency of H5N1 and H1N1 outbreaks, the physical size and population of China (1.3 billion), the significance of its poultry industry, and role in the international trade of poultry and poultry products underscores the critical importance of an effective response to Human Influenza Pandemic and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI). China's role in the global response to HPAI is also significant. The challenges in building capacity for HPAI prevention and pandemic preparedness to improve rapid response are significant.

The Government responded swiftly and effectively to address the crisis. The surveillance system for influenza like illness was expanded, reporting of H5N1/H1N1 was expanded (from zero to daily reporting), screening and active contact tracing was activated, hospitals and their back-ups for severe infections were designated, and treatment of all confirmed H1N1 cases was made available at no cost.

Responding to the Crisis

An independent assessment of the country framework for Avian Influenza Control and Human Pandemic Preparedness and Response was undertaken jointly by the World Bank, WHO, FAO and CIDA in 2005 at the



Based on the recommendations of the 2006 Study, a multi-tiered response to avian influenza was adopted. Pilot efforts have been focused at the Provincial and County level with the aim of strengthening grass-roots level planning and response, improving the policy environment and developing a framework of improvements that can be applied to the overall HPAI response in the country.

Pilots were concentrated in two Provinces, Liaoning (40.7 million people) and Anhui (64.2 million people). The selection of these provinces was based on the contrasting poultry rearing methods used: small scale/back yard poultry in Anhui and intensive compartments (>500 poultry) in Liaoning. Preparedness plans have also been prepared in 2 provinces and 5 counties. These pilots succeeded in developing integrated local levels plans, building the capacities of key agencies and identifying areas for further policy improvements.

Strengthening Capacity to Respond Rapidly

Capacity building has been the main focus. Over 130 thousand human health staff and 4920 animal health staff have been trained, exceeding the targets established by the Project. Joint training of human and animal health workers was carried out at the grass-roots level, the first time this has occurred in China. Workers were trained in disease reporting, outbreak investigation and response among other topics. The joint exercises have improved collaboration and communications between the sectors.

Sector pandemic preparedness plans have been produced in health, agriculture, transport, education, public security, finance, civil affairs, etc. Desktop exercises and drills have been conducted to improve the practicality of the plans. The final products, the plans, have not only been endorsed by the local Governments, but are highly valued by the Ministry of Health.

This process has led to increased awareness of the importance of international expertise and knowledge exchange. A number of study tours, international workshops and operational research studies have been supported by the Facility and partner agencies, including WHO and FAO. A case study has also been requested by the Ministry to distill the good practices emerging from the bottom-up approach for pandemic preparedness.



Communications efforts have focused on development of the risk communication strategy and the Information, Education and Communication (IEC) toolkit, which has been distributed to all project counties. Additionally, the main Ministries have assigned spokespersons and produced Standard Operating Procedures that can guide communications with the public in case of a public health emergency.

Improving the Policy

Environment

The China AHI Project Phase I has helped to develop the national policy on AI free poultry compartmentalization and to revise national guidelines on poultry rearing, animal health inspection and bio-security standards.

Going Forward

The follow-on grant will focus on reform of the AI surveillance strategy and the building of epidemiological expertise for animal diseases. The Government of China is also planning to adjust the prevention and control strategy from rapid containment to impact mitigation to respond to the evolution of the epidemiological situation of the disease in the country.