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PRESS RELEASE

USAID has launched its Stamp Out Pandemic and Avian Influenza (STOP AI) Project in Central Asia

On September 15, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) launched its new STOP AI program for Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan. "This project will help Central Asia's governments and poultry producers protect their citizens and economies from the serious consequences that can result from even a limited outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza," said William Frej, USAID Regional Mission Director for Central Asia during the official opening ceremony in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

Central Asian countries import large amounts of poultry from China, Iran, Russia, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, all of whom have reported outbreaks of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza. Additionally, March 2006 avian Influenza outbreaks in poultry in Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan also point at the threat that the infection poses to the health, food supply, and incomes in the region.

The USAID STOP AI project will provide export assistance and resources for planning, surveillance, control, and prevention of Avian Influenza, as well as in preparedness to possible outbreaks, and recovery of the affected sectors after the outbreaks. The project will also promote human safety measures for those working with infected birds and during the outbreaks in general.

The STOP AI project was launched with a five-day training for 25 veterinarians and health specialists from all five Central Asia's countries. Participants learned about the internationally-recommended procedures for Avian Influenza diagnostics and decontamination, including collection of samples, testing, as well as storage and transportation of the samples. USAID provided $23,000-worth of protection and diagnostic equipment to facilitate the training. The project plans that upon their return home, training participants will teach these procedures to their colleagues in each country.

The STOP AI project is one of the many assistance projects in Central Asia, provided by USAID on behalf of the American people. Since 1992 the American people through USAID have provided over $1.5 billion in assistance programs that support economic growth, democratic institutions, health care, and education systems in the region.

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