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AVIAN AND PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

Program Update: Pandemic Planning and Preparedness

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) recognizes the significant threat the H5N1 avian influenza virus poses to public health and development, as it has the potential to trigger a catastrophic human influenza pandemic. Opportunities for the virus to mutate into a pandemic-capable form increase with human exposure to infected birds, and the virus is currently circulating in regions with high human and poultry population densities. The impact of a pandemic, particularly in unprepared countries, could result in a devastating humanitarian crisis requiring support for medical emergencies, economic disasters, and maintenance of social order.

In response to this threat, USAID has developed an aggressive package of interventions through its Humanitarian Pandemic Preparedness Initiative (H2P) to mitigate humanitarian needs and excess mortality in 25 countries that are considered the most vulnerable to the effects of a pandemic. This effort includes financial and technical assistance toward objectives outlined in the 2007 Declaration on Humanitarian Cooperation in Pandemic Preparedness and Response, which was signed by the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent (IFRC) Societies, United Nations (UN) agencies, and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Through H2P, USAID collaborates with the IFRC, UN agencies, private-sector partners, and national governments to develop comprehensive national- and community-level plans for effective humanitarian response in the event of a pandemic. H2P activities include:

- Outlining human resources in each of the 25 identified countries that would be available in response to the needs of affected communities and households
- Adapting and disseminating guidelines for non-pharmaceutical interventions to reduce morbidity and mortality resulting from pandemic influenza as well as other diseases that would continue to occur during a pandemic, including bacterial pneumonia, malaria, HIV/AIDS, and non-communicable chronic diseases
- Building capacity for a fully deployable, local pandemic response by training members of national and local governments, civil society, national IFRC societies, UN agencies, and NGOs to serve as first responders
- Strengthening national- and community-level pandemic plans through simulation exercises designed to test their effectiveness
- Identifying needs for relief commodities and resources available to facilitate in-country distribution

H2P activities build upon USAID's ongoing pandemic prevention efforts and commitment to strengthening pandemic preparedness across the globe. USAID support to help preempt the emergence and spread of the H5N1 virus and a potential pandemic, which includes distribution of key non-medical commodities, has reached nearly 100 countries. USAID has obligated \$468 million for these efforts to date, with another \$75 million targeted for additional pandemic prevention and readiness activities. Evidence suggests these interventions are working. The number of countries reporting H5N1 avian influenza outbreaks in poultry has decreased since 2006, and the total number of reported human cases also dropped, suggesting a reduction of opportunities for the emergence of a pandemic virus.

For more on USAID's avian and pandemic influenza program, please visit http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/global_health/home/News/news_items/avian_influenza.html.



ZANDRA-ANDRE/USAID

Children play in a rural Nigerian village during a field visit by health experts following outbreaks of highly pathogenic H5N1 avian influenza in poultry in 2006. USAID's pandemic planning efforts are geared toward ensuring communities in areas most vulnerable to the effects of an influenza pandemic have access to food, water, and uninterrupted provision of care for other diseases, including HIV/AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis.