Jan-Feb 2010

ECTAD-RAPNews

Emergency Centre For Transboundary Animal Diseases • FAO Regional Office For Asia And The Pacific

ECTAD-RAP Annual Regional Meeting, 2010

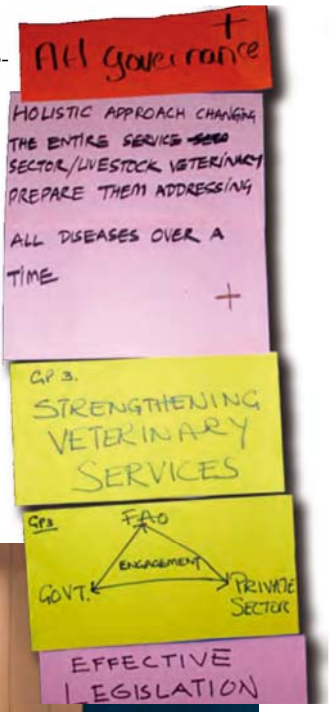
Looking into the future

Three days of thinking and discussions into FAO's role in what lies ahead in preventing EIDs

IT WAS AN AMBITIOUS MEETING by any standards. The fourth Annual ECTAD-RAP meeting held in Bangkok from February 23 to 25 this year was attended by 64 participants representing the headquarters, the regional office and 11 country teams. Over the three days of the meeting, they hoped to address issues on a wide canvas, starting with a closer look at the endemicity of H5N1 and Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in five Asian countries on the first day, and then moving farther on day two to reflect on the role of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nation's (FAO) in the transition from HPAI to Emerging Infectious Diseases (EIDs) as laid out in the *One World One Health* approach.

There was awareness in the room that new and important patterns of funding for detection and control were emerging as the mode of emergency response to HPAI gave way to a more deliberate reflection about long-term preventive approaches, along with the need to maintain emergency response capability against H1N1 and HPAI. Discussions around the *One World One Health* approach were driving new ways of viewing zoonotic diseases and underlining the need for inter-sectoral and inter-disciplinary cooperation.

It was equally clear that the important thinking that would happen over the meeting would provide some of the basis for discussions and directions proposed at the upcoming International Ministerial Conference on Avian and Pandemic Influenza (IMCAPI) in Hanoi, Viet Nam in the month of April.



(Right) Subhash Morzaria, Regional Manager of ECTAD-RAP, addresses the team that attended the two-day Annual Regional ECTAD-RAP Meeting, 2010, held in Bangkok; (Below) A section of participants' graffiti at the meeting

Eunice Shankland, facilitator, kept a flexible agenda that stayed sensitive to each day's proceedings and mood. "Despite a challenging first day, concrete, positive outcomes and recommendations did emerge by the end of the meeting," she says.

In preparation for the meeting's deliberations, two teams had put together background materials and information for the group discussions. The team led by Jim McGrane, Country Manager for Indonesia, included Santanu Bandyopadhyay, Mat Yamage and Venkatsubbarao Mandava, in support of the first day's theme.

Jan Slingenbergh's team, including Scott Newman, Subhash Morzaria and Carolyn Benigno, focused on the implications and opportunities of the transition from HPAI H5N1 to EIDs.

Fluid facilitation

The workshop was fluidly facilitated by Eunice Shankland, who kept a flexible agenda that stayed sensitive to each day's proceedings and outcomes. "The first day was marked by a strong pessimism about the work, its impact and the future," she notes. "This was unexpected but we realized that it would be important to make room for a venting and processing of these feelings, and so we did. This did truncate the available discussion time and affected the depth of analysis, but despite this setback, concrete, positive outcomes and recommendations did finally emerge from the meeting."

Although not all of the expected outputs were achieved, one of the key results of this meeting was the position paper from FAO for endemic countries which will be made available for IMCAPI. The document would be used in mobilizing resources for the endemic countries.

Position paper

FAO's position paper on endemic countries will cover five areas: A review of the current situation in each of the endemic countries; identification of lessons learned from each country including best practices; identification of specific challenges; going forward, realistic plans for controlling avian influenza, based on challenges and lessons learned; and a time-bound and practical plan for what can be achieved in the next three to five years in the endemic countries, or solutions for these endemic countries, both technical and non-technical.

A tripartite document would be jointly crafted by FAO, WHO and OIE to describe the roles of these three UN agencies in increased intersectoral collaboration. Field Epidemiology Training Programme for Veterinarians (FETPV) is a good example of a successful intersectoral collaboration between the medical group and the veterinarians, and the Crisis Management Center or CMC exemplifies a successful joint collaboration among FAO, OIE and WHO. Another example is the collaboration between UNICEF, FAO and WHO in Myanmar in communication and advocacy activities.

In Indonesia, the government is expanding the official program on AI to include other zoonotic diseases. This new platform will be institutionalized under the Ministry of Agriculture with the Vice-Minister as its executive officer. The platform will also collaborate with other sectors, such as forestry and environment.

This is yet another example of a country adopting the *One Health* approach and institutionalizing it within the government system and demonstrating strong political support for the platform.

Eric Brun, with the Indonesia ECTAD team, facilitates a session at the ECTAD-RAP Annual Regional meeting

OUR DONORS

USAID FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE
Ausaid
Japan
ADB
Germany
FAO FIAT PANIS
UNDP
Sweden

Taking stock, looking forward

A cross-section of UN agencies from 18 countries, among others, reflect on the shape of things to come in the fight against HPAI and H1N1

UN SYstem Workshop on Avian and Pandemic Influenza

January 27-29 ***Bangkok, Thailand,***

Over 80 participants from 18 country teams and regional offices of a cross-section of UN agencies attended the *UN System Workshop on Avian and Pandemic Influenza* held in Bangkok from January 27 to 29 this year. Participants included FAO, the Office for the Coordination of Human Affairs, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UN-ESCAP), the United Nation Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations System Influenza Coordination (UNSIC), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organisation (WHO), among others. The workshop, organized by UNSIC, was held to update the UN agencies of the current situation and activities on H5N1 and H1N1 and also to examine the UN system support for the implementation and coordination of country level actions to reduce risks of avian and pandemic influenza.

FAO was represented by ECTAD-RAP and ECTAD country teams from Cambodia, Indonesia, Nepal, Thailand and Viet Nam.

A key issue discussed was how to use the comparative advantage of the UN system and its partners in taking forward multi-disciplinary approach to handling problems. There was also broad agreement that the H5N1 focus ought not to be diluted since the disease is still entrenched in at least four Asian countries, namely Bangladesh, China, Indonesia and Viet Nam. There was also consensus for strengthening animal and human health capacity to ensure whole-of-society preparedness against potential emerging diseases. Although communication was considered an important cross-cutting issue at all levels, there was concern and questions about whether it needed more research and more rigorous approach.

IDENTIFY Meeting

January 19-21 ***Rome, Italy***

FAO headquarters will receive USD 3.5 million to implement the IDENTIFY component of the Emerging Pandemic Threat (EPT) programme of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The five components of EPT are PREDICT, RESPOND, IDENTIFY, PREVENT and PREPARE. EPT funds will be invested in four hotspots regions (the Indo-Gangetic Plains, the Greater Mekong Subregion, Congo in Africa and the Amazon in South America).

IDENTIFY will support laboratory activities to help the PREDICT component to look for pathogens. The project is a collaboration between WHO, OIE and FAO.

Animal-Human-Environmental Interface Workshop

February 8-12 ***Bangkok, Thailand***

The workshop, co-organized by FAO, Thailand's Department of Livestock Development (DLD), and the United States Center of Disease Control (CDC) Thai program was attended by 45 trainees from the two-year regional FETPV programme (from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar and Thailand), animal health staff from Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia and Thailand), and some observers.

High among the workshop's recommendations was the need for a systematic approach to capacity development, information sharing and research around the inclusion of the wildlife component in disease control.

Another recommendation was to strengthen the collaboration at the interface between animal, human and environmental health, acknowledging that socio-economics and communication are cross-cutting aspects that must be included in disease prevention and control planning.

George Acty, Regional Coordinator for Wildlife Avian Influenza, sharing an update on FAO's ongoing wild bird surveillance studies, said that more than 5, 000 samples had already been collected from birds in China, Korea, Mongolia and Thailand, and that tagged birds were being tracked by satellite.

Participants of the Animal-Human-Environmental Interface Workshop held in Bangkok, Thailand, from February 8 to 12

(Above left and right) Scenes from the subregional training on surveillance and diagnosis of animal influenzas held at Ipoh, Malaysia. Right) Participants at Thailand's subregional training in surveillance and diagnosis.

Technical and Policy Level Committees Meeting,

January 28-29 ***Pokhara, Nepal,***

It was the third such meeting to discuss technical and policy issues. At this one, ECTAD-RAP was represented by Dr. Subhash Morzaria, Dr. David Castellan, Bryce Fieldhouse and Dr. Mary Elizabeth Miranda. The 25 or so other delegates from Nepal, India and Bangladesh included the Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Nepal, the Secretary of the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries of Bangladesh, and the Commissioner of the Department of Animal Husbandry, Dairying and Fisheries of the Ministry of Agriculture of India.

There were status updates by Dr. Mohinder Oberoi, Project Coordinator and ECTAD Subregional Manager for South Asia, and a presentation by Dr. Castellan on some findings and lessons learned about HPAI outbreaks in the Indian states of Assam, Sikkim and West Bengal.

Dr. Lal Krishna, Animal Husbandry Commissioner and Chief Veterinary Officer of the Ministry of Agriculture, India, said that India's experience with HPAI indicated that there had probably been two separate introductions of the virus to India between 2008 and 2010. Significantly, these isolates are not related to the ones found in western and eastern India in 2006 and 2007.

Dr. Morzaria expressed ECTAD-RAP's satisfaction that countries of the region are in dialogue, and also that the Government of India had finally agreed to go forward with the USAID-funded AI project worth USD 3 million. The Inception Workshop is set for May 2010.

Surveillance and diagnosis of animal influenza

Three trainings on field surveillance and laboratory diagnosis, including the molecular characterization of AI viruses, have already been conducted as part of the Regional Laboratory Networking Project and Regional TCP on H1N1. The goals of these workshops are to harmonize the diagnosis and characterization of protocols and promote the implementation of these protocols in countries.

One subregional training was conducted at the Veterinary Research Institute (VRI) in Ipoh, Malaysia (recognized as an ASEAN reference laboratory) with participants from eight ASEAN countries. In-country training for Malaysians was also organized at VRI. In-country training for Thai participants was organized in collaboration with Australian Animal health Laboratory of Australia and NIAH, Thailand.

The subregional training on field surveillance of animal influenza was conducted in collaboration with Thailand's Department of Livestock Development and attended by participants from eight ASEAN countries at the Siam City Hotel in February this year.

Lab and surveillance training

Since February 19 this year, laboratory trainings have been organized in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, the Philippines and Viet Nam as part of the activities of the regional TCP project on H1N1. Surveillance training was successfully organized in Thailand, which has received full support form the government. The objective of these trainings was to strengthen capacities within participating countries to respond or to carry out surveillance for H1N1 and other animal influenza viruses.