

Avian & Human Influenza and Humanitarian Action

Geneva, Palais des Nations, Room XXV

22-24 February 2006

Save the Children. Summary of Avian and Human Influenza Preparedness Actions

For the past several months Save the Children has been operating under the assumption that an influenza pandemic is not just a possibility, it is a certainty. The question is, "will it happen in the next three months, the next three years or the next 10 to 20 years?" When an influenza virus mutates into one that transmits efficiently from human to human, worldwide deaths will be in the millions. The difference between whether the death toll is in the handful of millions or the hundreds of millions will depend on what is done to prepare beforehand and just how much time we have.

Since October 2005, Save the Children has taken the following actions in preparation for a pandemic flu outbreak:

- Established a cross-functional working group of about 15 members representing all departments and both field and HQ staff. The role of the working group is to update staff on the evolving situation; provide guidance on prevention and preparedness; and make policy and operational recommendations to senior management to improve preparedness and mitigate impact.
- Established an intranet page with updated links to information and guidance for staff.
- Liaised with governmental and nongovernmental partners to ensure that our organizational plans benefit from the thinking on the issue in the community at large and fit within the context of other plans.
- Named AHI point persons in all office locations, who will be trained by end April to fulfill their role as first point of contact for influenza-related communications from headquarters. They will be responsible for: 1. Updating staff of essential information and developments on Pandemic Influenza; 2. Supporting the development of the Save the Children preparedness plan; 3. Adopting preventative and protective measures according to the Save the Children preparedness plan; and 4. Liaising regularly with internal and external partners.
- Identified a set of some 30 "Track1" high priority activities to be accomplished by mid-March in furtherance of organizational preparedness; begun to draft "Track 2" next priority actions.
- Conducted four pandemic influenza scenario sessions involving field and HQ staff, to kick-start thinking on the issue.
- Funded a short-term consultancy to finalize a draft business continuity plan over the coming several months.

20 February 2006