

## **Avian & Human Influenza and Humanitarian Action**

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### UNICEF AI/HI strategy for 2006-2008

UNICEF is working, as part of a coordinated UN system, to address the pandemic threat. In the pandemic alert phase 3, the primary role for UNICEF in the UN strategy is communication and social mobilisation for behaviour change to support governments in achieving the priority behavioural objectives determined by the lead technical agencies: WHO and FAO.

For the pandemic preparedness, UNICEF is working on the appropriate emergency response with a child focus within the family context, fostering community resilience to mitigate the impact on the lives of children. This work will be aligned with the country specific National Response Plans for the Avian and Human Influenza and with the UN-contingency plan. UNICEF is also collaborating with WHO in developing a feasible vaccination strategy as a control measure in the case of a pandemic. In addition, UN country teams may define additional roles for UNICEF in supporting the national responses.

UNICEF has been working closely with the office of the UN System Influenza Coordinator (UNSIC) in developing the contingency planning guidance. More detailed scenarios are needed for countries to respond to a pandemic.

UNICEF prepared a strategic plan for the Beijing pledging conference in January. The plan has four strategic result areas:

1. Programme Action to Prevent a Human Influenza Pandemic
2. Programme Preparedness to Contain and Respond to a Human Pandemic
3. Programme/operations Continuity (business continuity)
4. Staff Safety and Security

To date, work has been focussed on the immediate priority - to control the H5N1 outbreak in birds. When there is a bird outbreak, it is important to prevent people, especially children, from becoming infected. After recent outbreak of the Avian flu in Nigeria on 13 Feb 06, UNICEF has alerted all its offices to focus on the communication for behavioural change for the prevention and at the same time to start preparing for a possible human pandemic, including a containment response to delay or stop the spread of the disease.

For the third area, there is a large amount of work that is need to ensure that programme and operations and functions can continue in a pandemic. The most challenging aspect of this is that neither the time nor the conditions of a pandemic can be predicted. The suggested work is to:

- Identify principles and priority order for maintaining existing programmes under various pandemic scenarios, and identify which operations and information resources are required to ensure these programmes continue;
- Identify the weak links that are most susceptible to disruption in the event of pandemic, including staff security and well being, information technology and telecommunications, supply and logistics, finance and administration;
- Develop alternatives to ensure continuation of operations under various pandemic scenarios (e.g. using advanced telecommunications and data technologies to work from home or other remote locations);

As noted above, it is important to have realistic scenarios of pandemic development and progression to meet the challenges in a coordinated and efficient way in scope of the various partnerships.