

INTER-AGENCY STANDING COMMITTEE
***Ad Hoc* PRINCIPALS' MEETING**
“Strengthening Humanitarian Response”

12 September 2005

10h00 – 13h00 (Rafael Salas Conference Room, 19th Floor), followed by
13h00-15h00 Principals only luncheon (Nafis Sadik Conference Room, 19th Floor)

Venue: UNFPA Headquarters, New York

Preventing, Preparing for and Responding to Pandemic Influenza:
WHO Speaking Points

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1 The next flu pandemic, due any time now, could well kill 50 million people and have economic consequences of more than a trillion dollars. In terms of impact this is in the same league as AIDS. But it will move faster.

2 The likely source of a pandemic flu virus is the virus that causes the current wave of avian flu – H5N1

3 The prevention of a pandemic involves the detection of farms where poultry are infected, and culling the birds. Vaccination can prevent them from being infected. Contact between humans and birds should be minimized. In affected communities, avian flu devastates the livelihoods of poor farmers. If they do not receive adequate compensation they will conceal instances of infection.

4 Intensive efforts to limit the spread of avian flu in some countries have succeeded in preventing human infection.

5 When human to human transmission does occur, it must be identified quickly (through surveillance), and the movement of affected communities should be minimized. Antiviral drugs and vaccination may help reduce the spread.

6 But we must be vigilant. Effective early warning of human flu virus transmission is vital if we are to respond promptly. This is only going to happen if communities are involved in both prevention and preparedness efforts. .

7 Some governments have started to prepare for an influenza pandemic in ways that bring in civil society (particularly the Red Cross movement) and private entities.

8 Training for health professionals, establishment of surge capacity and simulation of pandemic conditions are essential elements of preparedness. At national

level, health service managers and their NGO counterparts will need to designate the key health professionals who will provide medical care to flu-affected persons.

9 Communication – through the media and through specially trained field personnel from NGOs and Government - will be key to reducing public panic and enabling prompt action.

10 Governments, NGOs and other stakeholders need to anticipate flu cases among their staff, and consider how they can act to protect their workforces.

11 UN, development banks, other governments and private sector are gearing up to provide co-ordinated support: this is likely to include a funding partnership to be launched by member States during the General Assembly.

12 Because of the many uncertainties surrounding pandemic influenza, regular information collection and analysis, backed by scientific research, are essential to guide both global and local responses. In addition, dialogue with private entities over means to increase the availability of anti-viral medicines, vaccine and protective clothing and equipment, are essential.

13 IASC members have a key role to play in preparedness and response. WHO and FAO have developed guidance which will serve as the basis for training programmes.

14 The Resident Coordinator system convenes the UN system agencies: in the event of a pandemic, the humanitarian co-ordinator and the country IASC will have key roles to play.