



Stories from the field



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FAO helps Cambodia control bird flu, saving lives and food

Cambodia

Since 2004, when the first case of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) was confirmed in Cambodia, the infectious disease has caused the deaths of 16 people and forced the culling of 60 000 birds. The 33 separate recorded outbreaks have hit small farmers hard, with livelihoods and food security suffering.

Today, Cambodia's ability to detect, respond to and contain HPAI outbreaks, has dramatically improved as a result of FAO projects funded by the World Bank and United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The projects target local and national government officials, the private sector and villagers, including farm managers, middlemen and poultry vendors.

The projects focused on six main activities: strengthening capacity in disease surveillance, improving laboratory diagnostic capacities, reinforcing the capacity of authorities to contain HPAI

outbreaks, promoting on-farm biosecurity in poultry production, improving public awareness and information on HPAI, and promoting a supportive and protective legislative environment to fight HPAI.

These initiatives provided training, equipment and public information strategies. At the local level, over 8 000 village animal health workers were trained in surveillance, recognition and reporting techniques, while about 6 000 village chiefs were trained how to communicate key prevention messages to their communities.

Among government officials, provincial and district level staff from the Department of Animal Health and Production were given courses on how to recognize and report disease incidents. For the private sector, 17 fora were organized for poultry vendors, middlemen and butchers to explain what biosecurity measures to

apply, and 21 community fora were held for poultry producers to explain on-farm biosecurity measures.

The projects have provided all village animal health workers with personal protection equipment kits, which include a mask, goggles, shovel, sprayer, gloves, plastic bags and boots. To increase public awareness, posters, hats, public service announcements, a karaoke video and a documentary film were produced.

Although the projects have been successful, a number of issues need to be resolved to sustain that success over the longer term. The training and campaigns have not reached everyone, and so there is still a lack of knowledge in some communities about HPAI and what precautions and responses should be taken. Many backyard poultry producers leave their poultry exposed to wild birds which may carry the virus. Live poultry markets lack adequate biosecurity measures and reporting of suspected AI outbreaks is still slow. Another major impediment is the lack of financial compensation for farmers who lose their poultry to culling when outbreaks are identified.

***Project:** *Technical assistance in support of the animal health component of the AHI influenza control and preparedness emergency project (OSRO/CMB/901/WBK)*

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Project: *Immediate technical assistance to strengthen emergency preparedness for highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) (OSRO/RAS/604/USA + babies 01 – 06)*

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