

Avian Influenza in Azerbaijan

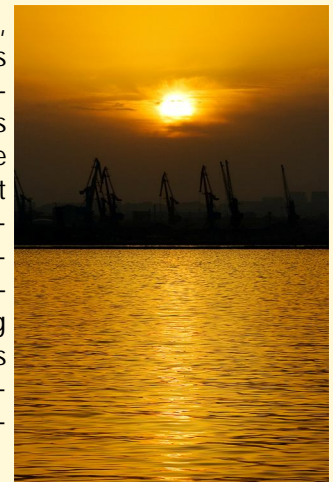
2007 was a productive and consolatory year for all those involved in AI activities. No one is perfect but a team can be...

As I look back over the year, I am sincerely grateful that we have not had a recurrence of dreaded Avian Influenza in Azerbaijan, which in the spring of 2005, stirred the country killing five citizens. Instead the time has been well-spent in the investment of prevention and outbreak control measures and the consolidation of vital strategic partnerships.

There has been a tremendous amount of work achieved by the government and all its partners, especially in terms of public communication outreach (PSAs, social mobilisation campaigns) reaching millions of people nationwide, every school in the country received teaching and learning materials on avian influenza, and specially trained teachers conducted lessons for all schoolchildren. AI monitoring and surveillance is now stronger than ever before, numerous emergency planning sessions and exercises have been convened ensuring a future outbreaks swift containment. Meaningful research has been undertaken: KAP studies, Impact Assessment, training (journalists, health and educational professionals), infrastructure bolstered by refurbishing and re-equipping of labs and surveillance units and the national emergency plan (combining animal, human and national scale plans) is now coming together.

Heartening, rather than seeing the numbers of our national AI Task Force members fall, as would be expected as the immediate AI threat reduced, our numbers have actually grown and enthusiasm coupled with renewed commitment to the fight against this threat is as firm as when the first victim, a 17 year old girl in Salyan, died on February 23rd in 2006.

I look forward to another year of health and prosperity for all Azerbaijan through continued donor harmonisation and government alignment, coupled with sturdy capacity building initiatives. Let me take this opportunity to wish all our friends and colleagues and their loved ones, a hale and hearty new year! With best wishes **Hanaa Singer , UNICEF Representative.**



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Global Issues

UN: H5N1 responses improving, but the threat persists....

Many countries have improved their responses to H5N1 avian influenza outbreaks in poultry in the past year, but the disease remains entrenched in six countries, according to a new report from the United Nations and the World Bank.

Amid the persisting threat that the H5N1 virus will spark a human flu pandemic, governments need to do more to coordinate their pandemic planning efforts, according to a UN news release about the report. "The pandemic threat has led most Governments to improve services to detect, contain and lessen the impact of dangerous pathogens," the UN statement says. "Many national pandemic plans, however, are not sufficiently operational and the coordination of pandemic planning between countries needs greater attention."

The report largely echoes a UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) statement issued in June that the H5N1 outbreaks had improved significantly in the preceding 3 years but that the virus remained entrenched in several countries and would continue to spread. The UN said nations that initially treated avian flu as an emergency are now developing "longer-term sustainable strategies for the healthy rearing and management of waterfowl, and investing in animal health, including better-run veterinary services."

Azerbaijani AI News.....

Azerbaijan Recommends Entrepreneurs Do Not Import Poultry from Russian Rostov Province

On 13 Dec Trend Capital reported that the State Veterinary Service recommended that:

entrepreneurs temporarily abstain from importing poultry from the Rostov province of the Russian Federation due to bird flu being discovered in the region." According to the Russian media, quarantine has been imposed on the largest poultry plants in the Rostov province in Gulay-Borisovski on 11 December.

Some 35,000 died as a result of infection from 7 to 12 December which the Russian Scientific-Research Institute of Animal Protection identified as the H5N1 infection. According to the Agricultural Minister of Rostov province Vacheslav Vasilenko, there are plans to destroy 450,000 chickens. "Some 50,000 chickens will be destroyed a day in order to prevent the virus from spreading," the Russian Vedemosti newspaper reported. Azerbaijan purchases sausage from Podmoscovye and Krasnodar regions, and poultry from Turkey, Brazil and the United States.



*AI cases:
340 human cases and 208 deaths to AI worldwide, 14 Dec. (WHO).*



AI Donor News



DTRA: held a 'table-top' Avian influenza outbreak stimulation on 28th Nov. reviewing: the notification chain upwards from the clinician, case definition, epidemiological investigation, collection of samples for lab analysis and emergency management efforts, etc. A report will be issued soon (For more info: BrewerJ@state.gov).

WHO/WB: With the technical support of WHO experts (incl. Dr. Andreas Gilsdorf) the AI human plan has been finalised and will be issued by the end of the year. In Dec 2007 Dr Angel Kunchev finalised the National Influenza Pandemic Plan. This awaits Government comment. Gudat Consult, is advising on the planning of an AI referral isolation ward, a tender for the construction provider for the facility is underway. (For more info: GarakhanovK@euro.who.int). With WHO support a Government delegation attended a meeting on AI virus share in Geneva.

WHO: A Health Security Mission visited Azerbaijan between 28 Nov-8 Dec. The mission conducted multi-sector assessment of the National DPR System in the health sector. The mission members met representatives of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Ecology, Ministry of Emergencies, UN agencies, International and local NGOs.



UNICEF: phase 2 of the social mobilisation campaign, to bolster UN-response to Influenza Pandemic Preparedness and Response by continuing to involve local communities in AI activities, is well underway. The campaign was conducted in 11 districts (along the bird migration route) to promote awareness in affected communities (with 160 social mobilisers trained as part of these efforts). The **UNICEF/Save the Children's** project, targeting school children, through puppet theatre performances in schools and TV talk show for kids has begun, 3 TV programmes have been aired and 3 school performances enjoyed. Such informational fun will continue until March 2008. Two **TV spots were broadcast reaching millions** of people nationwide (using both national and district TV stations). UNICEF's globally produced PSA with Jackie Chan on avian influenza was broadcast by regional/district TV channels. UNICEF sponsored posters for school children were distributed to every school in the country by the Ministry of Education (for more info: amollazade@unicef.org).

AED (USAID funded): a Washington-based non-governmental organisation, will be conducting behavior change communications activities on Avian Influenza globally. One of the target areas of these particular activities is Azerbaijan. (For more info: jsultanli@gmail.com).

Pragma (USAID funded): RECP will continue to address animal-related HPAI mitigation until the end of December. Dr. Jeffre Firman, RECP's AI specialist returned to Azerbaijan on November 17th. Working closely with the Vet Service, Dr. Firman provided Disposal and Site Remediation training to veterinarians and laboratory staff in the Central laboratory and in eight Zonal laboratories. (For info: WLevine@pragmaaz.com)

Donor News continued.....

WB AIP: report the following results for 2007: Veterinary labs, equipment, disposable PPE & mobile incinerators were delivered to the Republican Veterinary Laboratory. **Training-** Regional training on lab issues was organized by FAO in Italy (July 23-August 04) & regional training on field veterinary epidemiology was organized in Turkey (Nov. 14-23), FAO's National Consultant, Tamila Aliyeva, & a specialist from Guba Zonal Veterinary Lab, Asaf Omarov, actively participated. In October, 2007, 24 specialists from 12 Zonal Veterinary Laboratories (ZVL) participated in lab training organized in Khanlar and AIPP/ PMU conducted training on "Communications skills & bio-security" among 10 commercial poultry raisers. **Public Awareness & Communications-** Mario Bravo, Senior Communication Adviser at the WB in Washington, held meetings in Azerbaijan (8 Nov). The final version of the Communication Strategy & Work Plan has been submitted to the AI State Commission. Minutes of the meeting held on October 2007, state that the '*Communication Strategy & Action Plan*' should be endorsed by the Commission. So far of the relevant ministries & organizations represented in the Commission, 5 out of 13 have signed it. **Research:** focus group discussions among doctors/nurses, veterinarians, teachers, children & their mothers in seven districts of Azerbaijan will be undertaken. A synthesis report analyzing all the results of 3 KAB studies prepared by the UNICEF, USAID & AIPP has been prepared. **KAP results:** a Knowledge, Attitude & Behavior (KAB) of adults, adolescents & teachers was undertaken Khatt Research Company & the report is now available. Nearly half of the population answered that they have got sufficient or higher level of information. Most people (64, 6 %) received information about AF via television. TV is followed by posters, brochures, leaflets. Avian Flu Symptoms: About one-third of population revealed that they had no knowledge about symptoms at all. The most noted symptom was "high fever" (57 %). For (more info: amelikov@agroagency.gov.az).

Avian Influenza Task Force Meeting 14th December 2007 outcome:

Thank you to the Veterinary Service for hosting, to Dr Ismalyi Hasanov for charing the meeting. Many thanks also to WHO/ WB expert Dr. Krunchev for his comprehensive presentation from the National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan of the Republic of Azerbaijan & to Dr Tamilla Aliyeva for her excellent presentation of FAO project in Azerbaijan. Both presentations have been distributed to the task force members. The date of the next meeting was agreed for February 2008.



New year reading should include:

List of AI research studies Azerbaijan

1. 'Current Level of Awareness & Perception of Avian Influenza in Azerbaijan' (KAP) May-April, 2006, ERA Research, UNICEF.
2. 'Preferred Channels of Communication Used in Azerbaijan' August-July, 2006, (covers more than just AI areas) ERA research, UNICEF.
3. 'Quantitative & Qualitative Formative Research on Public Knowledge, Attitudes & Practices (KAP) On Teachers & School Children Regarding Avian Influenza' May, 2007, SIAR Research, UNICEF.
4. 'Health Knowledge, Attitudes & Practices (KAP) among Azerbaijani Adults: A social ecological analysis of qualitative data from Baku, Ismayili, & Sheki'. Carol Underwood et al May 2007 Center for Communication Programs Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University, USAID.
5. 'Impact Assessment: Avian Influenza Response in Azerbaijan, 2007. ERA Marketing, UNICEF.
6. Avian Influenza Project Knowledge, Attitude & Behaviour Survey (KAB) November 2007. Khatt Research, World Bank.

Note from editor: Happy Holidays and enjoy our fourth newsletter. I would be delighted to hear any ideas or suggestions and especially to have any contributions! Dominique Freire (consultant to UNICEF): domfreire@gmail.com or mobile: 050 582 54 22.

Focal Points for Avian Influenza in Azerbaijan

Organisation	Name	Title	Email	mobile phone	Office phone
Cabinet of Ministers	Yagub Eyyubov	<i>First Deputy Prime Minister of</i>		Classified	492 05 92
UN/UNICEF	Hanna Singer	<i>UNICEF Representative & AI</i>	hsinger@unicef.org		492 3013
HUMAN HEALTH					
Ministry of Health	Viktor Gasimov	<i>Head of San/Epi Surveillance Inspection</i>	vgasimov@mednet.az		498 75 29
Republican Anti-plague	Maqsud Gasimov	<i>Director</i>			431-2425, 431-6114
Ministry of Emergency	Faig Tagizade	<i>Deputy Minister</i>		Classified	512-00-61
Ministry of Education	Elnur Alizadeh	<i>Lead Advisor Dept Edu & Military Training</i>			512-00-62
WHO	Kamran Garakha-	<i>Head of WHO, Azerbaijan</i>	grakhnovk@euro.who.int		499 98 88
ANIMAL HEALTH					
Ministry of Agriculture/ Veterinary Dept.	Ismayil Hasanov	<i>Head of State Veterinary Department</i>	vet_depkn@yahoo.com		418-0812
Ministry of Agriculture/ Veterinary Dept.	Emin Shahbazov	<i>Hd of State Veterinary Service</i>	vet_depkn@yahoo.com		418-0813
Ministry of Ecology	Sadagat Mamedova	<i>Head Dept of Ecology & Envir Policy</i>	mamedova.s_48@mail.ru		439 11 11
WB AIP	Elvira Anadolu	<i>Health Specialist</i>	eanadolu@worldbank.org	050 20 39 355	492 19 41
WB AIP	Rufiz Chiragzade	<i>Operations Officer</i>	rchiragzade@worldbank.org		921941; 922807
WB AIP	Azer Melikov	<i>Communication Specialist</i>	amelikov@agroagency.gov.az	050 375 48 81	
FAO	Tamilla Aliyev	<i>National Expert</i>	tamilla_aliyeva@list.ru	055 790 9521	499 94 51/ 498 02 57
USAID	Tara Milani	<i>AI Specialist & Health Devel-</i>	Tmilani@usaid.gov	050 206 9621	012-498-1835
Pragma	Willam Levine	<i>Chief of Party</i>	WLevine@pragmaaz.com	050 225 63 10	492-88-81;492-34-88
COMMUNICATION					
UN/UNICEF	Ayna Mollazade	<i>UNICEF Communication</i>	amollazade@unicef.org	050 61 11 088	493 3013
	Dominique Freire	<i>UNICEF AI Consultant</i>	domfreire@gmail.com	050 58 25 422	494 3013
LABORATORY Support					
DTRA	Jennifer Brewer	<i>Project Manager</i>	BrewerJ@state.gov		498 03 35
Japanese	Kohno Mitsuhiro	<i>First Sectary</i>	mitsuhiro.kohno@mofa.go.jp	050 220 7962	490 78 18
Embassies					
US	Carolina Hidea	<i>Economic Officer</i>	HideaC@state.gov		498 03 35
UK	Declan Byrne	<i>Political Officer</i>	Declan.byrne@fco.gov.uk		4975188/89/90

FOR CORRECTIONS, ADDITIONS PLEASE EMAIL DOMINIQUE : domfreire@gmail.com. Thank you