

# Avian Influenza in Azerbaijan

## ***International Health Regulations Enter into Force***

Welcome to the second edition of our monthly AI newsletter. The newsletter aims to harmonise donor work to maximise success **in all our AI/PI efforts In Azerbaijan**. It also provides **timely information to the Government on donor activities**. Our news includes details of the S. Caucasus AI conference in Tbilisi and a reminder of the **revised International Health Regulations (IHR) enforceable as of Friday, June 15**.

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The Regulations are an innovative set of rules and procedures **agreed by 193 countries (including Azerbaijan)**. They will help to make the world more secure from threats to global health. They were agreed by the World Health Assembly in 2005 and represent a major step forward in international public health security. The Regulations establish an agreed framework of commitments and responsibilities for states and the WHO to invest in limiting the international spread of epidemics and other public health emergencies while minimizing disruption to travel, trade and economies for more information see: [www.who.int/csr/ihr/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/csr/ihr/en/index.html).



**I am sure we will all strive together to ensure Azerbaijan complies and benefits.**

*Hanaa Singer, UNICEF Representative and AI Donor Coordinator, Azerbaijan.*

## Progress on Avian Influenza, but Situation Still Serious in Egypt, Indonesia and Nigeria



**FAO, Rome - "The response to the deadly H5N1 virus in poultry has significantly improved** over the past three years, but the virus remains entrenched in several countries and will continue to spread," FAO's Chief Veterinary Officer, Joseph Domenech, said on June 27.

"In the 15 or so countries in Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, where the H5N1 virus was introduced during the past six months, it was rapidly detected and eliminated or controlled. Most affected countries have been very open about new outbreaks. This shows that countries are taking the H5N1 threat seriously. They are better prepared today and have improved their response systems," Domenech said at a press conference in Rome.

But there is **no reason for complacency**. A potential human influenza pandemic can not be ruled out as long as the virus continues to exist in poultry. "The H5N1 virus is not stable and keeps changing constantly. On one occasion in China last year, a new virus strain appeared with different immunologic characteristics which made it necessary to modify the vaccines used in the region concerned, Domenech stresses.

*319 human cases and 192 deaths to AI worldwide, 25 July (WHO).*

## AI Global Up-coming Events.....

⇒ 20-23 August 2007, Montpellier, France Association of Institutions for Tropical Veterinary Medicine (AITVM) 12th International **Conference** Organised with the Centre International de Recherche en Agriculture pour le Développement (CIRAD) 2008.

⇒ **FAO /Regional Network project is holding training Early detection, prevention and control of Avian Influenza**, 23-28, July 2007 Special Virology Unit, Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale delle Venezie, Padue, Italy. (For more information: aylisli@yahoo.com).

⇒ 4th **WHO/EC/ECDC workshop on Pandemic Influenza Preparedness**, Luxembourg, 25-27 September 2007.

⇒ The **New Delhi International Ministerial Conference** on Avian Influenza will be held in India 4 to 6 December, 2007.



# Azerbaijani and Regional News....



**Senior Azerbaijani Government officials attended the South Caucasus Avian Influenza Communication Conference** (sponsored by WB, UNICEF, USAID, WHO and govt. of Georgia), **28<sup>th</sup>-29<sup>th</sup> June, Tbilisi.**

The following attended: **Ministry of Health:** Mr. Anar Kadirly, Head of PR Department, Mr. Hashim Hashimov, Sector for Sanitary and Epidemiological Surveillance, Leading Advisor, Mr. Faik Mammedzadeh, Republican Anti-plague Station, Deputy Director. **Ministry of Agriculture:** Mr. Kliment Asadov National Veterinary Services, Head of Sector for Epizootic Control of Especially Dangerous Diseases Mr. Elman Aslanov, Director of National Veterinary Laboratory, Emin Shahbazov, Head of State Veterinary Services by the Ministry of Agriculture. **Ministry of Ecology** Ms Sedaget Mammadova, Head of Environmental Protection Sector, Mr. Jeyhun Pashayev Team Leader of the Coordination Center of the Department of Protection of Biological Diversions and Development of Specially Protected Areas. **Ministry of Education** Mr. Elnur Alizadeh Department for Education and Military training, Leading advisor, Mr. Agababa Ibrahimov Head of Department of Extra Curricular Activities, **Ministry of Emergency Situations** Mr. Faig Tagizade Deputy Minister Mr. Ilham Abdullayev Chief of Department of Organization of Elimination of Emergency Situation Consequences.

Impressive participation was seen in the fight against AI. Officials from Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia attended, as well as international organisations and experts, to create a forum of over 75 AI/PI professionals. **Mr. Faig Tagi-zade**, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Emergency Situations chaired one of the sessions and several excellent presentations were given by the Azerbaijani government including:

**Dr Faik Mammedzadeh**, Republican Anti-plague Station, Deputy Director, Ministry of Health, spoke of the continuing measures- 'following the WHO recommendation the MoH, with the support of the USAID Primary Health Care Project developed, approved and introduced several new AI reporting forms (including notification, suspicious birds sampling, referral, case contacts, monitoring). **Mr. Emin Shahbazov**, Deputy Director, State Veterinary Services, Ministry of Agriculture, outlined the response of the Ministry of Agriculture to the outbreak: the capacities of laboratory services were strengthened, hunting and sale of wild birds banned, information provided to mass-media (TV, radio), 22 kinds of print materials developed, 500,000 copies distributed, and the establishment of an AI information 'Hotline'.

The conference concluded on the need to establish better ways to communicate AI activities, suggested ways for improvement included: a regional AI/PI website, joint regional pandemic planning and more meetings amongst professionals and stakeholders. **Many thanks to all the indefatigable organisers of the event!**

**-The editor would like to apologize to Emin Shahbazov for errors in last month's newsletter. The correction is:** *According to the deputy head of the State Veterinary Service under the Ministry of Agriculture, Emin Shahbazov, veterinarian and sanitary control has been intensified at border checkpoints, all the incoming vehicles to Azerbaijan are disinfected and monitoring is undertaken across the country twice a month in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources. Dead birds are tested for bird flu in accordance with the international standards at the laboratory of the State Veterinary Service. The problem of bird flu is currently under the supervision of Vet service. Nevertheless, a lot of work should be done to improve the logistics of the<sup>3</sup> service. Combating bird flu could be facilitated if donors could provide logistical support in this area.*

# Local NEWS FLASH.....

The **WHO: Human AI health plan takes shape**: Dr. Andreas Gilsdorf, WHO Regional epidemiologist, recently visited Baku again (he came during the outbreak in March 2006 to support the investigations). Andreas and the WHO country office, are now assisting the Ministry of Health in **finalising the Human Health Sector Plan for AI**. The plan aims to strengthen preparedness and response measures regarding human cases of AI. It also identifies the interactions with other sectors involved. A draft should be ready by autumn. A follow-up mission will develop a multi-sectoral AI Plan in cooperation with the World Bank. For more information contact: Dr Andreas Gilsdorf, MD, Email: [agi@euro.who.int](mailto:agi@euro.who.int).



Several **expert missions on AI preparedness**, jointly planned by WB and WHO, are scheduled for the summer:

-Dr Horst, Medical Expert (engineer), from Medica Gudat, advising on **rehabilitation of referral hospitals**, mission dates: 23 July– 12 August.

-Dr Angel, Expert on Institutional Support, from Kunchev, advising on Pandemic Influenza Preparedness, mission one: 7-21 August, mission two: 15-30 November 2007. Output will be a draft **national pandemic preparedness plan**.

-Also an international consultant-epidemiologist has been recruited, under the WB AIP and ADCP projects, to provide technical assistance and **training to State Veterinary staff on modern surveillance methods** (for brucellosis and Avian Influenza). The consultant, Mr. Ron Jackson, is based in the State Vet service until the end of the August. Mr Jackson will be travelling in the regions

⇒ **NEWS from FAO Regional Network for Central Asia: Ms Tamilla Aliyeva has been appointed** as the part-time, **national expert for Azerbaijan**. Dr Aliyeva is a veterinarian with a PhD in virology. **Dr Kiani is now resident in Ankara**, Turkey where he will continue his duties within the Regional Network for Central Asia, Assistance for Early Detection and Prevention of AI (email [Gholam.Kiani@fao.org](mailto:Gholam.Kiani@fao.org)).

## ⇒ **Ongoing AI research:**

1. UNICEF's **Impact Assessment of AI communication** research (conducted by ERA) has now begun the field work stage. Preliminary results will be available soon.
2. **WB's AI KAP** is finishing the field work and drafting preliminary findings.
3. **USAID's Primary Health Care Strengthening project health AI research is now complete, presentation at IMC on 1 August, 10:30 AM**. Details contact: [cunderwo@jhuccp.org](mailto:cunderwo@jhuccp.org)



**Over 90% recognized that AI is more dangerous than seasonal flu, yet only 56% could name one or more correct ways to prevent AI ....find out more.... (USAID, PHCS)**

# DONOR News.....

## Embassy of Japan:

### **Ceremony for Imishli Anti-Plague Station Grant**

On June 23, 2007 - Mr. Kohno Mitsuhiro , First Secretary of the Embassy of Japan, Dr. Viktor Gasimov, head of Sanitary and Epidemiology Sector (MOH), and Dr. Magsud Gasimov, Director of the Anti-Plague Station of the Republic of Azerbaijan and representatives from the Executive Committee of Imishli region were invited to attend a ceremony at the Anti-Plague Station for the Imishli region.

The aim of the **\$570,459 project**, funded by the Embassy of Japan, is to increase the preventative capacity of such laboratories against AI in the regions by providing essential equipment and rehabilitation of the existing lab. There are **five more labs in the pipeline** to be supported.

## Embassy of United States:

### **-Visit of U.S. Department of Agriculture Animal Health Attaché**

Dr. Robert Tanaka, Animal Health Attaché, APHIS, U.S. Department of Agriculture, visited Baku June 12-16th. Dr. Tanaka met with: **Dr. Viktor Gasimov**, Head of Centre for Hygiene and Epidemiology, Anti Plague Station Director **Dr. Maqsud Gasimov**, **Dr. Elchin Sultanov**, Chief of Azerbaijan Centre for Ornithology, **Dr. Bashirova**, Head of the International Department, **Ismail Hasanov** and **Emin Shahbazov**, the Chief and Deputy Chief of the State Veterinary Service. These meetings covered bird migration, AI cases, public awareness efforts, next steps for Azerbaijan, and potential cooperation with USDA (including Veterinary Service equipment needs).

**-New USAID AI specialist in Baku: Ms. Tara Milani**, arrived in Baku on June 23. Tara's remit is **50% regional AI specialist** and 50% Health Team Leader. She brings a wealth of AI experience from working with the outbreak in Egypt. (Email: tmilani@usaid.gov).

## DTRA NEWS.....

The Defense Threat Reduction Office's (DTRO) Biological Threat Reduction Program (BTRP), are undergoing a review from Washington, DC. We wish them well. Reported **major accomplishments in the program so far include:**

⇒Commenced biosecurity upgrades at the Republican Anti-Plague Station to secure **national pathogen repository**. This activity is scheduled for completion in 2007.

⇒Commenced biosafety **renovations and procurement of diagnostic equipment** for an interim diagnostic laboratory at the Republican Veterinary Laboratory.

⇒Conducted **training** in the following areas: biosafety, microbiology and laboratory diagnostics, regulatory reform, and vector surveillance and control.

⇒Completed renovation of a training room at the Republican Anti-Plague Station in November 2006. Reached agreement on the location and prioritisation of future Epidemiological Monitoring Stations.

⇒Reached agreement on the concept of a combined human and veterinary **Central Reference Laboratory** and that the Interim CRLs located at the Republican Anti-Plague Station and Republican Veterinary Laboratory will remain operational until construction and installation of the CRL is fully complete. Commenced site selection process for construction of combined **human/veterinary Central Reference Laboratory (CRL)** and reached agreement on location at the Ministry of Health's Tuberculosis Dispensary located at the 8th km sector of Baku.

⇒Reached agreement on the implementation of the **Electronic Integrated Disease Surveillance System** for use as a national electronic disease reporting system. For **further details** please contact: Jennifer Brewer, Chief of DTRO, at BrewerJ@state.gov.

# AI Task Force News.....

**AI Coordination meetings were held on 29<sup>th</sup> May and 16<sup>th</sup> July, UNICEF offices.**

**Participants at both meetings:** UNICEF (Chair), UN, WHO, UNDP, UNHCR, World Bank, Ministry Education, Ministry of Agriculture, USAID, DTRA, BP Exploration, UK, US & Swiss Embassy, WFP, PRAGMA, IMC, Johns Hopkins, Red Crescent.

**Point arising were:**

- ⇒ The need to focus more on Caspian wide AI regional planning was identified. It was agreed to discuss this further with the government and raise with the Cabinet of Ministers when possible.
- ⇒ The **Ministry of Education** expressed concerns regarding AI research work and will write down their suggestions and recommendations .
- ⇒ DTRA and Pragma agreed to **coordinate their training** efforts within the agricultural sector.
- ⇒ Creation & distribution of a brief '**AI Azerbaijan Directory**'.

**WB, AIP & USAID, others.**

**MOE & UNICEF**

**Rich Pilch & Bill Levine.**

**Dominique Freire/UNICEF Azer Melikov, WB AIP & UNICEF**

**Cab of Ministers & Min Emerg Sits. (MES)**

- ⇒ **WB AIP Communication Work plan** as presented, to be distribution to task force.
- ⇒ Further **elaboration on the coordination of the national disaster response planning** was deemed necessary by the team.

- ⇒ As per previous minutes, all agencies working with labs in Azerbaijan should submit their lists to the group to ensure effective collaboration.

**DTRA, WB AID**

- ⇒ By popular request it was agreed to hold the **next meeting in August**- agenda and date to be agreed.

Note from editor: We sincerely hope you will enjoy our second 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](mailto:domfreire@gmail.com) or mobile: 050 582 54 22.

## Focal Points for Avian Influenza in Azerbaijan

Organisation	Name	Title	Email	mobile	Office phone
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	Elnur Alizadeh	Lead Advisor Dept Edu &			512-00-61
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