

## INFORMATION SHEET

### AVIAN INFLUENZA

UNICEF Nigeria, September 2007

#### BACKGROUND

On 8 February 2006, the Government of Nigeria confirmed the presence of the highly pathogenic Avian Influenza (AI) on a commercial farm in Kaduna State and immediately took emergency measures to control the outbreak at source, such as stamping out of the affected area, imposed restrictions on movement of birds within the country, halted importation of poultry products and started surveillance from 170 nation-wide surveillance points across the country. However the implementation of these measures has proven difficult.

As at 01 September 2007, from a single case reported in Kaduna in February 2006, Avian Influenza has swept across Nigeria affecting over 92 Local Government Areas (LGAs) in 26 States (out of a total of 36 States) including the Federal Capital Territory. The above statistic represents laboratory based confirmatory results only.

The AI situation in the country became even more worrisome when on 31 January 2007, the Federal Government of Nigeria announced the first human case of Avian Influenza fatality in the country involving a 22 year old lady in Lagos state. Test conducted by Nigerian scientist and Virologists on the lady was confirmed positive by WHO reference laboratory on 3 February 2007.

UNICEF views the threat of Avian Influenza to the children and their families in Nigeria as grave considering the limited access to water and sanitation facilities, especially in rural areas, inadequate hygiene education, the large non-commercial or 'backyard' poultry population (some 60%-70% of 140 Million poultry) and the preponderance of human interaction with wild birds for trading and as pets. UNICEF concerns are further heightened by the challenge of Nigeria's weak health system, which is already trying to cope with a high burden of diseases, including malaria, HIV/AIDS, pneumonia and polio.

The impact of AI is felt by affected communities and families in Nigeria. An AI socio-economic impact study conducted by UNDP in July 2006, concluded that there had been significant socio-economic impact of AI on rural village poultry and on backyard and medium scale

farmers who constitute the bulk of poultry producers in the country. The initial reaction caused by the announcement of AI outbreak led to a drop in the consumption of poultry products resulting in a sharp decline in sales. Other related industries and economic activities such as feed milling, poultry drugs and vaccine sales, grain marketing and the retailing of poultry products were also adversely affected.

Like in other parts of Africa, the loss of the family poultry means the dissipation of a sure means of nutrition and family income which is crucial for the education of children and attending to other basic child survival issues. Poultry is also a friend and pet of children. Most children spend a lot of time playing with and caring for domestic poultry. This increases the risk for children to be exposed to AI.

A National Steering Committee, a Public Enlightenment Committee and a National Technical Committee have been meeting regularly since February 2006 to provide policy guidelines, technical support, coordinate message and material development as well as facilitating information sharing at all levels.

As at September 2007, in addition to these national structures, all States had established a Public Enlightenment Committee as well as an AI Technical Committee. More than 20 Public enlightenment Committees at State level were also implementing Media Plans.

#### UNICEF support to AI Activities in Nigeria

Under the UN System support to the Government of Nigeria for the control and prevention of AI in Nigeria, UNICEF primary responsibility is in the area of communication.

An AI communication strategy was developed in the very early days of the first outbreak with the Government and other development partners. This document has been fully endorsed by the Federal Ministry of Information and Communications (FMIC), the National AI Public Enlightenment Committee (PEC) and the UN Country Team.

The strategy aims to inform the public of the presence of Avian Influenza among birds and poultry in Nigeria and to encourage every Nigerian

to report outbreaks and adopt healthy behaviour such as improved hygiene practices in order to minimize the risk of human transmission.

UNICEF's AI communication activities in 2006 in Nigeria were funded from its regular resources (US\$ 500,000) and from a Japanese Government donation of US\$ 1.7 million. The Japanese Government has donated an additional US\$ 700,000.00 to support AI communication activities in 2007.

The key features of the **UNICEF Avian Influenza communication strategy** in Nigeria are crafted around four key components:

- ✓ Behaviour change communication: Promoting community ownership and education through community dialogue and establishment of local public enlightenment committees. This includes strengthening interpersonal communication skills and AI knowledge of community resource persons such as teachers, religious leaders, women's groups, agriculture and health extension workers so they can sensitize people and discuss AI prevention measures in their sphere of influence.
- ✓ Social mobilisation and advocacy: AI communication is also targeting traditional and religious leaders, as well as Civil Society Organizations such as the National Union of Transporters, the Parents-teachers association, Market Associations, etc.
- ✓ Mass media campaign: encouraging the media to air regularly jingles and spots on AI, integrating AI key messages about poultry management, healthy behaviour and improved hygiene practices into existing programmes, developing interactive broadcast programme on AI to allow discussion and questions from the audience; provide information to journalist to increase reporting on AI.
- ✓ Capacity building: Empowering key stakeholders, networks and allies with knowledge, skills and tools to enable them disseminate AI information and conduct public enlightenment sessions within their spheres of influence.

IN 2006, a first assessment showed that there was general awareness in the public on Avian Influenza but still a low perception of risk and insufficient knowledge of the risks and the ways of prevention. To address this situation, a Risk Communication strategy was developed in July 2007 during a workshop conducted by the UNICEF regional AI Communication Adviser.

### Results achieved by UNICEF

- ✓ Advocacy and orientation of State Information Commissioners and over 50 Media Executives in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Information and

Communications. Also immediate communication activities following the outbreak included frequent airing of key messages for AI prevention on national and State radio and TV and their publishing in three daily newspapers during one month.

- ✓ Development of a Training of Trainers manual and its use to train over 200 counterparts and partners from States in all geopolitical zones on Avian Influenza communication. The training cascaded to the Local Government level where service providers are acquiring interpersonal communication skills to facilitate community dialogues and help communicate AI messages better with families.
- ✓ Production and distribution nationwide of handbills and simple frequently asked questions (FAQ) on AI in the four main languages (English, Hausa, Igbo and Yoruba) through state information ministries.
- ✓ Printing and distribution in all geographical zones of over 350,000 pictorial posters and school posters.
- ✓ Over 225 journalists, radio producers and broadcast managers have acquired the knowledge and the skills to report on Avian Flu through training workshops held with the Federal Ministry of Information, the Broadcasting Organisation of Nigeria and the Nigeria Guild of Editors. It has resulted in continuous coverage of AI issues in the media as well as sensitization programme particularly in the State media.
- ✓ Over 100 copies of A Guide to Journalist's Reporting on AI distributed to the media.
- ✓ Printing and distribution nationwide of 5000 copies of a media kit on AI
- ✓ Training of 55 radio producers in partnership with BBC World Service Trust in interactive programmes on Avian Influenza and the production of four jingles in four main languages focusing on the prevention of Avian Influenza for children. The trainings were held in Kaduna and in Benin City in January-February 2007.
- ✓ Training of 15 journalist in partnership with AED (Academy for Educational Development, US)
- ✓ Launch of AI mass awareness campaigns nationwide using multi-media channels, monitoring feedback and reporting.
- ✓ Training of trainers on community surveillance: assessing knowledge attitude and practices so that communication messages will address the real concern of people.

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