

DREF Bulletin



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies
Fédération internationale des Sociétés de la Croix-Rouge et du Croissant-Rouge
Federación Internacional de Sociedades de la Cruz Roja y de la Media Luna Roja
الاتحاد الدولي لجمعيات الصليب الأحمر والهلال الأحمر

VIET NAM: AVIAN INFLUENZA

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The Federation's mission is to improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity. It is the world's largest humanitarian organization and its millions of volunteers are active in over 185 countries.

In Brief

Period covered by this Final Report: March to June 2006.

History of this Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF)-funded operation:

- CHF 250,000 allocated from the Federations DREF on March, 2006 to conduct public awareness activities and national society capacity building on avian influenza.
- This operation was expected to be implemented in three months, and activities specifically funded by DREF are completed. The overall avian influenza project has however since then been incorporated into the health and care component of the 2006-2007 Appeal.
- A process to repay the DREF allocation through both the 2006-2007 Appeal and the Global Avian Influenza Preparedness, Mitigation, and Response Appeal (MDR00018) is ongoing.

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Operational Summary

Viet Nam Red Cross (VNRC) played a leading and active role in preventing and minimizing the risk of an avian influenza (AI) pandemic in Viet Nam. With the financial support from the Federation's DREF (Disaster Relief Emergency Fund) and donations from partner societies such as German Red Cross and the Netherlands Red Cross, VNRC has carried out an effective and ongoing avian influenza prevention project. The initiative aimed to improve public awareness on the dangers of avian influenza and strengthen VNRC's capacity to respond to avian influenza outbreaks. The project has been incorporated into the health and care component of the 2006-2007 Appeal, and some additional funds may also be sought through the Global Avian Influenza Appeal (MDR00018). Donors can further support avian influenza initiatives in Viet Nam by contributing through the long-term health and care programme.

During the project period (March-June), the national society mainly focused on raising awareness of the potential for avian influenza, particularly in areas deemed the most vulnerable. The project also included educating communities on good hygiene habits and training of Red Cross staff and volunteers. Funds from the DREF (CHF 250,000) were mainly used to produce and distribute educational material to assist in the public awareness campaigns. Specifically, VNRC printed and distributed 39,640 guidance booklets to Red Cross staff and volunteers. Its volunteers distributed 1,502,400 leaflets to communities. In addition, VNRC organized three training of trainers (ToT) courses for 136 Red Cross staff from 48 Red Cross chapters and 33 training workshops for 1,650 Red Cross volunteers.

A significant part of the population benefited from VNRC's work and the support of partner societies and the Federation secretariat. These beneficiaries now have the knowledge to protect themselves and their communities from avian influenza. Red Cross staff and volunteers have been provided with knowledge and skills to educate their communities. In addition, VNRC's capacity in response to health emergencies has been improved. With this project, VNRC contributed to the reduction of risk; specifically no cases have been reported in Viet Nam since December 2005.

Background

Viet Nam remains a country extremely vulnerable to outbreaks of avian influenza. Early in 2006, several factors contributed to the risk of a pandemic: cold weather in the northern part of the country; cross-border trading of chickens; prevailing practices in backyard poultry husbandry; low awareness of the risk and bad hygiene among the population. In addition, it was the festive season when consumption of chicken was high. Chicken were smuggled without detection from border areas of China and Cambodia. High profit drove the smugglers to transport chicken illegally into Viet Nam despite tight surveillance by border guards. Illegally-imported chicken from China could sell at eight times as much as that in the domestic markets. In spite of regular market inspection, chickens were consumed in high volume due to the cultural custom of eating it at the Tet (Lunar New Year) holidays. Meanwhile, backyard poultry was dominant in rural areas. Almost every household has chickens and most people live in basic conditions close to their animals, exposing themselves to higher risk of contracting the disease. Interventions inevitably took time to reach some of the most isolated communities. With support from other international agencies such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the authorities carried out awareness and health education on avian influenza preventive measures at larger-scale farms.



"The Vietnam Red Cross volunteer visited my house and educated our family on avian influenza prevention and gave us soap. The leaflet from them is simple and easy to understand. My family is raising about 100 chickens. Before, I used to let chickens free in my house's backyard. Nowadays, I am enclosing them with a fence"
- said Mr. Chu Van Manh, in Group 13, Thanh Mai, Thanh Oai, Ha Tay province

With the assistance of the Federation delegation, Viet Nam Red Cross reprioritized its activities to take into account available funding. Given its extensive network of volunteers, the Vietnam Red Cross focused activities at district and community levels, even in remote and border areas. These activities were mainly on:

- Building capacity of VNRC staff and volunteers to deal with a potential avian influenza pandemic,
- Raising avian influenza public awareness and hygiene education at the community level,
- Producing and distributing leaflets together with soap in selected districts and communes, and
- Cooperating with neighbouring national societies in raising awareness at border areas.

The project has been successful via public education in preventing an outbreak. It helped communities increase their knowledge on how to protect themselves, their relatives and friends through good hygiene practices. Through this project, VNRC's profile in avian influenza prevention among the population, the Movement and the international community has been strengthened. The national society posted bulletins on various local newspapers and ran TV reports on Vietnam Television that boosted VNRC's image around Red Cross interventions in terms of avian influenza prevention. In addition, Red Cross staff and volunteers in Red Cross uniforms have been highly visible among communities. Given this success, continuation of the avian influenza project would ensure strengthened knowledge of preventive measures in more communities.

Vietnam: Avian Influenza; DREF Bulletin no. MDRVN001; Update no.1

The project was completed in June. A follow-up will be carried out in September to assess whether or not people's behaviour change is sustainable and whether lessons have been learnt. Longer-term avian influenza prevention activities continue to be carried out under the health and care programme of the Viet Nam Appeal 2006-2007.

Coordination

During the operation, there was close and effective coordination between VNRC, the Federation delegation and other stakeholders such as UNDP, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and NGOs, including CARE as well as different government agencies. During this period, the delegation initiated coordination meetings with the Vietnamese government, UN agencies as well as other organizations to update them on developments and to avoid overlapping of efforts. As a member of the government's National Steering Committee on Avian Influenza, VNRC is in a better position to cooperate with other ministries such as ministry of agriculture and rural development (MARD) and ministry of health (MOH) in tackling avian influenza issues including: sterilization of chicken hatches of households at communities, and provision of public education and promotion of dissemination materials at a larger scale. Some governmental and UN organizations in Vietnam invited VNRC representation in their avian influenza programmes.

Viet Nam Red Cross was also an active participant in international forums such as monthly global teleconferences chaired by the Federation to share its experience and lessons learnt with partner national societies. A VNRC health manager also made a presentation to share practical experience on the activities to minimize/prevent avian influenza in an international conference held by the Federation in Geneva in last May. This presentation was appreciated by the participants. The Red Cross Society of China invited VNRC to make presentations and share experience at several international meetings.

Analysis of the operation: achievements

The three following activities were undertaken to prevent an outbreak:

- Provision of training for the Red Cross staff and volunteers,
- Promotion of behaviour change among the population, and
- Development of joint awareness in border areas.

Provision of training the Red Cross staff and volunteers

Viet Nam Red Cross has developed and printed 39,460 avian influenza booklets for volunteers. These booklets have been used as curriculum for training-of-trainers courses.

The national society organized three ToT courses on avian influenza public education for 136 Red Cross staff from 48 Red Cross chapters. The purpose was to provide participants with knowledge on potential risk from avian influenza as well as measures to prevent and control it. The courses were organized in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. They were designed for leaders and key health staff from Red Cross chapters in 54 non-targeted provinces as well as 10 targeted locations. Afterwards, participants were able to train Red Cross volunteers in provinces so that these volunteers would educate their communities. There were 33 training courses delivered to 1,650 Red Cross volunteers.

Given that backyard poultry is popular in the rural areas where local people's awareness remained low, this approach to a large number of people in the communities was imperative to reduce the risk of a pandemic as well as other illness. Furthermore, knowledge on avian influenza of VNRC staff from the headquarters to its branches has been greatly improved. However, due to time constraints, Red Cross chapters could not have exchange activities to help staff and volunteers learn and share experience.

Promotion of behaviour change among the population

The national society printed 1,502,400 leaflets, which were distributed by volunteers to all provinces. As a result of the training, Red Cross staff and volunteers conducted 10,710 public awareness sessions for 2,311,324 people in ten targeted provinces. Red Cross staff and volunteers visited households and markets, explaining the benefits of applying good hygiene practices in daily life: for example the use of soap to clean hands after slaughtering poultry or boiling chicken and before eating. In addition, Red Cross staff and volunteers distributed anti-bacterial soaps together with leaflets to 78,364 households in 10 targeted provinces - Lang Son, Bac Giang, Ha Tay, Thai Binh, Ninh Binh, Nghe An, Quang Tri, Da Nang, Tien Giang and Soc Trang - where chickens are transported through or where backyard

Vietnam: Avian Influenza; DREF Bulletin no. MDRVN001; Update no.1

poultry is popular. The people who received leaflets responded that they are simple and easy to understand. However, this activity had a limitation because in some ethnic minority areas such as Lang Son (in the North) and Soc Trang (in the South), some groups could not read Kinh (the official Vietnamese) language. To overcome it, VNRC recruited volunteers from the ethnic group who were Kinh literate and trained them so that they could educate their communities.

Viet Nam Red Cross took different dissemination approaches to make information on avian influenza prevention available to every group of people in as many places as possible. The national society printed 1,153,400 A4 posters on avian influenza prevention and posted in households, kindergartens and market places. In addition, 23,200 A0 posters were printed and posted in public places. VNRC produced cassette tapes and CD ROMs containing information on avian influenza pandemic to distribute to districts and communes in all 64 provinces of Vietnam. The cassette tapes are used for broadcasting avian influenza information through loudspeakers to communities.

As the project implementation entered harvest time (May and June), farmers and volunteers who are farmers themselves were busy at the rice fields at day. Therefore, volunteers visited households in the evening. Broadcasting was made at night time too.

Development of joint awareness in border areas

The national society took the lead in cooperating with the neighbouring Red Cross partners such as the Red Cross Society of China, Cambodia Red Cross and Lao Red Cross to carry out dissemination campaigns on avian influenza in the provinces of Lang Son, Kien Giang and Lao Bao which have borders these respective countries. The campaigns were welcomed by 2,100 Red Cross members and volunteers, and various groups of people including youth and school children. These campaigns provided good opportunities for Red Cross staff and volunteers to attract the attention of people living in border provinces.

These partner national societies joined the campaigns to learn and agree upon common preventive measures. Such cooperation showed that Red Cross activities reached out to the remote and border areas where few humanitarian organizations have such an impact.

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The International Federation undertakes activities that are aligned with its Global Agenda, which sets out four broad goals to meet the Federation's mission to "improve the lives of vulnerable people by mobilizing the power of humanity".

Global Agenda Goals:

- *Reduce the numbers of deaths, injuries and impact from disasters.*
- *Reduce the number of deaths, illnesses and impact from diseases and public health emergencies.*
- *Increase local community, civil society and Red Cross Red Crescent capacity to address the most urgent situations of vulnerability.*
- *Reduce intolerance, discrimination and social exclusion and promote respect for diversity and human dignity.*

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organizations \(NGO's\) in Disaster Relief](#) and is committed to the [Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Disaster Response \(Sphere\)](#) in delivering assistance to the most vulnerable.

For longer-term programmes in this or other countries or regions, please refer to the Federation's Annual Appeal. For support to or for further information concerning Federation programmes or operations in this or other countries, or for national society profiles, please also access the Federation's website at <http://www.ifrc.org>