

The logo features the word "Appeal" in a white, serif font, followed by a white chevron symbol pointing to the right. The text and symbol are set against a solid orange background that is part of a larger graphic element.

The International 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.

Appeal number MAA00018

14 February 2007

Avian influenza preparedness, mitigation, and response

Special focus on Europe and Central Asia

In brief

Update no. 1; Period covered: 20 April 2006 to 9 February 2007

Appeal target: CHF 17.4 million (USD 13.4 million or EUR 11 million); Appeal coverage: 18.3 per cent; Appeal History: launched on 20 April 2006 for 12 months. The appeal period was extended to the end of 2007; Disaster Relief Emergency Funds (DREF) allocated: CHF 691,000 (USD 531,000 or EUR 438,000).

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Summary:

Avian influenza outbreaks spread throughout Europe and Central Asia alarmingly during 2006, marking the start of the spread of the disease outside Asia. Turkey and Azerbaijan reported a total of 20 human cases of avian influenza, out of which nine were fatal. The rapid and widespread increase of reported outbreaks in poultry and wild birds sent alarming signals throughout the continent on the need to treat the problem seriously and ensure holistic approaches to combat the further spread. In total, since 2003, the H5N1 strain is known to have infected 272 people and killed 166 in eleven countries across Asia, Europe, Middle East and Africa (source dated 6 February 2007: www.who.int).

Avian influenza affected a number of countries in Europe posing a threat to human health. In western and central Europe the outbreaks among animals were contained rather quickly. In eastern and southern Europe, to date, the threat persists, especially in eastern Turkey. The recent outbreaks in Hungary and United Kingdom served as a strong reminder of the need for European countries to continue taking this threat very seriously.

The International Federation's Red Cross and Red Crescent members in Europe and Central Asia are using their networks and existing experience, knowledge and outreach capacity to set-up and conduct a range of community level activities aimed at preventing the transmission of avian influenza from animal to human.

This programme update presents a summary of the work which the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies in Europe and Central Asia have embarked upon. Most are involved in contingency planning with their governments and awareness raising activities with the public. Close cooperation, technical support and



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leadership to its membership are provided through the Federation Secretariat in Geneva and the Federation offices in sub-regions and countries.

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The Situation

After the initial outbreaks in several European countries during the second half of 2005, in 2006 and already in 2007 most of the countries affected have reported H5N1¹ either in poultry or in migratory birds found in their territories. Several countries have reported one or more avian influenza (AI) outbreak in poultry, including Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Romania, Russia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom. At the same time, most of the countries also reported cases of H5N1 in wild birds.

In Europe, Turkey and Azerbaijan were the most severely affected countries. In Turkey 12 human cases occurred, of which four were fatal and in Azerbaijan eight human cases were reported, of which five were fatal. The situation in these countries and the rest of the region indicates the strong need to focus on AI surveillance of animals and humans, and prevention through health education campaigns.

At the end of January 2007, an outbreak of H5N1 was confirmed on a poultry farm in Csongrad county, in southern Hungary. Officials culled the farm's flock and established a 3 km protection zone and 10 km surveillance zone around the farm, as required by European Union (EU) rules.

At the beginning of February 2007, British authorities discovered that a strain of the H5 virus was responsible for the deaths of 2,600 turkeys at a farm in Holton, Suffolk. Around 160,000 birds have been culled to prevent the spread of the disease.

Although in Europe the overall magnitude of the problem seemed to be considerably lower compared to South-East Asia, governments in Europe took the outbreaks seriously and have responded with measures aimed at either containing the outbreaks or preparing to respond to a potential human pandemic.

The role of the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies has varied across the continent. It is clearly recognised that they play a significant role as part of civil society mobilization efforts to combat AI and prepare for a pandemic response. Each country has an Influenza Task Force in place, coordinating all avian and human influenza prevention and preparedness activities. In most cases, the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies are part of the coordination mechanisms.

In parts of Europe and Central Asia where the Federation has regional and country delegations, the Health and Care coordinators have been assisting National Societies with technical advice on their role in problems related to avian and human influenza, using specific guidance material developed by the Secretariat, including *Avian and Human Influenza Facts and Recommendations*, specific checklists with guidance for AI prevention and preparedness, Human Pandemic Influenza preparedness in line with World Health Organisation (WHO) and Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) recommendations and other guiding documents.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

¹ Influenza virus subtype

Turkey/Caucasus

Turkey and Caucasus has been the most severely affected region by AI outbreaks amongst animals and humans. In Turkey and Azerbaijan twenty cases have been identified among humans, of which nine were fatal. (WHO, 6 February 2007). Keeping poultry in small-scale, backyard type farms favours the spread of the disease and makes control efforts more challenging. In this context, there is a particular role for the Red Cross and Red Crescent societies, as a complement to national control measures.

The Regional Delegation for Turkey and Southern Caucasus, together with its country delegations, has actively supported the National Societies in providing technical advice, as well as developing proposals to the AI global appeal. The Regional Delegation has had close cooperation with national and international organisations, and shared best practices with the National Societies, as well as linking them with the Secretariat.

The following activities of the National Societies were supported by the Federation:

- **Increasing awareness among the general population** through leaflets, posters, booklets, TV and radio spots.
- **Increasing awareness among small-scale poultry farmers** in the rural areas about the AI transmission risk and its prevention, as well as providing hygiene promotion.
- **Increasing awareness of key staff** such as RC/RC staff and volunteers, health care workers, school teachers and school children, workers at customs and car wash stations and catering establishments.
- **Providing hygiene equipments.**

In the four countries (Turkey, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia), approximately 140,000 leaflets including the languages that are spoken by minorities, 5,000 posters and 2,000 booklets were distributed. A total of 500 volunteers and 50 custom officers have been trained on AI and its prevention methods. AI prevention campaign has reached approximately 12,000 small scale farmers and their families by radio and TV spots. Small numbers of hygiene equipment have been distributed to workers in catering establishments and car wash stations.

The Regional Delegation in Ankara integrated AI preparedness and prevention into its Regional Disaster Management programme and mainstreamed this topic into the latest Regional Disaster Response Team (RDRT) training which was held between 15-24 September 2006, contributing to capacity building of National Societies in the region in response to outbreaks and disasters.

A regional AI Contingency Plan was developed, clarifying roles and responsibilities of the four National Societies in case of a possible epidemic in the region. At present, the Regional Delegation assists the National Societies in adjusting their country Contingency Plans.

In 2007, the Ankara Regional Delegation will focus more on increasing the capacities and knowledge of the National Societies of the Caucasus region to respond to this epidemic with the completion of contingency plans and improving the partnership with the Ministry of Health.

Armenia

Armenia was not directly affected by an outbreak. However, as a country bordering Azerbaijan and Turkey which did experience outbreaks among birds and had human cases of the disease, the government of Armenia began protective measures to minimize the risk of H5N1 virus being introduced and spreading within the country. The Ministry of Agriculture and state veterinary department are responsible for disease monitoring.

An executive AI task force consisting of the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture and representatives from international organizations was set up and meets on a bi-weekly basis. A National AI preparedness plan was drafted with a list of measures to detect, prevent and control the bird flu virus in poultry and humans, as well as the measures for culling of dead poultry, treatment of human cases and safe burial of the deceased.

The Armenian Red Cross is part of the mass outreach education programmes conducted among the general public. An information leaflet on AI has been distributed in all parts of Armenia, including rural areas. A telephone hotline number has been established by the national committee to exchange information with the general public on the AI situation in the country. The Armenian RC participated in disseminating the information on the hotline. Baseline knowledge, attitude, practice (KAP) survey was carried out by the Armenian RC with the general public in the border regions of Armenia - Lori, Tavush, Syunik, Shirak - on AI.

Training of trainers has been conducted for Armenian RC headquarters health staff and project branch volunteers so that they can conduct private talks and seminars in regions deemed to be at higher risk. Four training sessions were conducted by HQ health trainers for Armenian RC Yerevan HQ, Lori and Shirak regional branch staff and volunteers and four information seminars conducted for farmers, housewives and primary health care workers.

Azerbaijan

During the World Health Day, Azerbaijan Red Crescent conducted an information campaign in central streets and metro stations of Baku city, Central Store and on the Fountain Square. Red Crescent volunteers distributed 1,000 booklets on the bird flu risks, focusing on health and hygiene advice. They also carried out a survey to establish the level of general population's knowledge on AI. The survey revealed that people do not have a comprehensive understanding of the problem. As an example, they would prefer not to eat poultry for fear of being infected. By invitation from the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Azerbaijan RC held a training seminar for 12 teachers of the secondary schools from Baku, who was tasked to provide health information to children, given that some of the infected persons were young school children in the rural areas.

Azerbaijan RC conducted field visits to Salyan, Lankaran and Fizuli and together with UNICEF held a three-day training session on bird flu related issues, targeting 36 volunteers. In addition, two seminars were organised in one of the schools in Baku with 100 students, to disseminate information on preventing transmission of the disease. At the end of these seminars all the participants received information material issued by the Red Crescent on AI for further dissemination to the population. The society maintains close contacts with the UN system, as well as different NGOs and continues monitoring the news on the present situation in Azerbaijan.

Throughout 2007 the Federation will support the dialogue between the Azerbaijan RC and the Ministry of Health on increasing the role of the society in community-based response to AI, as well as preparedness for a potential pandemic.

Georgia

The Georgian Red Cross health and care coordinator attended a meeting of the inter-sectoral group at the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs (MoLHSA) and presented the Georgian RC plans for AI. The Georgian RC logistics department is currently procuring gloves that will be used at car washing stations and is translating leaflets on guidance of controlling AI from Georgian into Russian, Azeri, Armenian, Osetian, Abkhazian languages. The content of the leaflet comes from the National Centre on Disease Control and is approved by WHO. The leaflet will have the logos of the Federation, Georgian RC, WHO, and MoLHSA.

The Georgian RC, with support from the Federation, is implementing dissemination and awareness raising activities within the health education programme, reaching a total of 73,000 people. The government/authorities acknowledge the work that the National Society is doing.

Turkey

To address the poultry outbreaks Turkish Red Crescent has worked closely with the Ministry of Health, WHO and UNICEF in order to prevent the further cases. The National Committee is coordinating the national response to the AI outbreaks, led by the Ministry of Health. The Turkish RC has distributed posters on AI prevention, developed by the national committee, to 40 medical centres and 30 blood centres run by the National Society.

Belarus, Russian Federation, Ukraine and Moldova (BRUM)

During 2005 and 2006 AI outbreaks were recorded in 14 regions of the Russian Federation (southern areas, Siberia), as well as in Crimea of Ukraine. All four regional governments undertook efforts to prevent further outbreaks. To complement this, the Russian Red Cross and the Ukrainian Red Cross, supported by the Federation, conducted information campaigns in six regions of Russia and all regions of Ukraine, aimed at preventing further AI spread. A total of 85,000 leaflets were distributed.

Given that small poultry farming (backyard farming) is common across the region, the Federation has designed its strategy for assisting the National Societies in preventing AI from spreading, with the following interventions:

- A programme with small farms to increase awareness about AI and provide basic knowledge on preventing contamination and spread of infection. **Target Group:** local small-scale farmers.
- Education of school children on the threat of AI and the basics of prevention through simple hygiene measures, with an additional objective of motivating children to transfer the knowledge in their households. **Target Group:** schoolchildren aged 6-8 years old.
- Education of the health workers and National Societies' volunteers on care for human AI cases, with knowledge emphasis on risks related to contacts with infected patients, as well as the protection measures that need to be observed during treatment. **Target Groups:** healthcare workers and RC/RC volunteers.
- Provide support to the NSs to design and produce the contingency plans in the event of a human pandemic. This is being done as part of the overall DM strategic planning.

These activities are supported by the Federation regional structure in Moscow, Minsk and Kiev with technical know-how, facilitating information and experience sharing between the National Societies, as well as participation in coordination with other partners.

Russian Federation

The first information about a mass outbreak of H5N1 in poultry in Russia was reported in July 2005 in Suzdalka village of Dovolensky district. Recent statistics report outbreaks in 69 settlements of eight subjects of the Russian Federation (Altaisky krai, Astrakhanskaya, Kurganskaya, Novosibirskaya, Omskaya, Tambovskaya, Tulsckaya and Chelyabinskaya regions).

As part of a public awareness campaign for the prevention of bird flu among the communities, the Russian RC translated the information pamphlets and distributed them to the branches affected by outbreaks.

Ukraine

On 2 December, 2005, Ukraine reported the first occurrence of H5N1 in poultry, infected through contact with migrant birds. The most recent case of the bird flu virus in wildlife was registered in Poltava region on 4 September 2006. The response to AI outbreak is coordinated by the Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine, while emergency action is performed jointly by the Ministries of Emergencies, Agriculture and Health.

The villages of Izobilne and Emelyanovka in Niznogirsk region were quarantined in December 2005 and the withdrawal and destruction of domestic birds began. In these villages, Ukrainian Red Cross mobile medical team conducted household visits to 53 selected households to carry out health screenings. Ukrainian RC assisted the Ministry of Emergency Measures by donating rubber gloves and warm gloves to workers who were engaged in collecting domestic birds.

Ukrainian RC also carried out an informational campaign among the general population, distributing leaflets (across all regions, 60,000 information cards) and holding consultations regarding the prevention of AI.

Central Asia

The Regional Delegation in Almaty supports the Central Asia National Societies (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan) with advice and guidance on AI prevention as well as on preparedness in case of a pandemic outbreak. This includes developing a preparedness plan, training staff and volunteers in prevention of AI, design and distribution of health prevention information to communities in high-risk areas, as part of the educational module for Community Based First Aid (CBFA) programme, as well as advising on, and provision of protective equipment for staff and volunteers to work in affected areas.

Kazakhstan

As a result of the geographic position of Kazakhstan, its lakes are an important refuge and producer of waterfowl in Asia. Analysis of bird migration routes shows that the country lies on four main seasonal migration routes: from Pakistani, Indian, south-European and north-African wintering places. The threat of AI increases in spring when birds from affected countries come back to their nesting areas.

In 2005 seven outbreaks of H5N1 in wild birds and backyard poultry were registered in Pavlodar, Akmola, Karaganda and North-Kazakhstan provinces.

To ensure that public health actions and preparedness measures are in place, Kazakhstan has adopted a *Programme on measures to prevent AI spread* for 2007-2008. The programme was developed by the Ministry of Agriculture that is also responsible for its implementation. The goal of the programme is to ensure a stable epizootic and epidemiological situation with AI in the country. The programme includes measures to prevent the importation and spread of bird flu on the territory of the country, epizootic and epidemiological monitoring of the disease, interaction of state bodies while preventing and containing outbreaks of bird flu and public awareness.

In 2006 Kazakhstan Red Crescent printed 20,000 brochures on AI prevention for adults and 10,000 brochures for children based on materials from the Ministry of Emergencies. In provinces of northern, western and central Kazakhstan, 30 Red Crescent branch staff and volunteers have been trained to disseminate AI prevention messages in communities through the existing CBFA programme. The RC has been further educating rural communities involved in community-based disaster preparedness projects on how to protect themselves from AI. Kazakhstan RC is closely coordinating its AI prevention activities with ministries of health and emergencies.

Kyrgyzstan

There have been no AI outbreaks in Kyrgyzstan to date. Kyrgyzstan is involved in a project on AI prevention funded by the World Bank. Donors have provided USD 6 million and the government is to allocate USD 300,000 for health prevention in humans and animals, an information campaign and a monitoring programme. The project will last until 2010, with state departments of veterinary and sanitary-epidemiological control implementers of the project.

Turkmenistan

No AI cases were reported in Turkmenistan to date. Local epidemiological services provide weekly updates to the central anti-epidemic service under the Ministry of Health and medical industry on the situation concerning the disease. The extraordinary anti-epidemic commission headed by the Minister for Healthcare and medical industry coordinates AI prevention activities in the country. Turkmenistan Red Crescent has not been involved in AI prevention so far, but is planning to issue and disseminate information materials on AI under the CBFA programme in 2007.

Uzbekistan

There have been no AI outbreaks in Uzbekistan to date. The government of Uzbekistan is tracking and monitoring bird migration routes and stops in the territory of the country. Uzbekistan Red Crescent has been informing communities about AI prevention as part of its health education activities. In 2006 some branches also printed and distributed information materials and posters on AI.

Western and Central Europe/Balkans

The governments of most countries of western and central Europe and the Balkans have created a coordination body for dealing with animal-related disease outbreaks, including the response to outbreaks of AI. The task forces include the respective Ministries of Health, Ministries of Agriculture, and other relevant structures. Their responsibility is to coordinate comprehensive national AI and pandemic preparedness plans incorporating health and veterinary precautionary and response mechanisms. The Red Cross societies are in most cases either part of the coordinating body or have a role in influenza prevention, pandemic response and outbreak preparedness.

The Federation Regional Delegation in Budapest is assisting the Red Cross societies in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia/Kosovo and Hungary in developing and strengthening their AI programming. So far, this support included:

- Information sharing and technical guidance on the role of the National Societies in AI prevention and containment;
- Advocating with the Red Cross societies the importance of their community-based role in prevention of AI;
- Supporting the societies in advocacy with their respective governments for their positioning and involvement in AI preparedness and response;
- Raising awareness of the RC/NS leaders and key staff members on preparedness for the human pandemic response;
- Supporting all NSs in the region to integrate AI into existing Disaster Management or Health and Care yearly programming;
- Including AI issues in regional capacity building for disaster response (Regional Disaster Response Team training).

Bulgaria

Prevention through information activities is the cornerstone of the current Bulgarian Red Cross AI preparedness plan. An AI brochure has been produced for distribution to RC branches in coordination with local authorities. The brochure was prepared according to recommendations received from the Federation Secretariat, WHO and the Ministry of Health. Bulgarian RC is not considering recruiting and training RC volunteers and has not, as yet, made provision for stockpiling influenza antiviral for staff and volunteers.

Croatia

In 2005, Croatia conducted a successful early response after a population of wild birds infected with AI virus was detected. Croatia now focuses mainly on pandemic preparedness. There is a board of experts within the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) which controls all relevant epidemiological data about AI and produces plans of activities according to the situation.

Croatian Red Cross is a partner of the National Crisis Team. The country plan foresees a role for the Croatian RC in supporting activities of MoHSW, National Institute for Public Health. The activities mostly include information campaigns, including using the Croatian RC newsletter to disseminate information on AI to the public. All materials received from the Federation Secretariat will be translated and a promotional brochure/leaflet will be produced and sent to all local RC branches and the general public. All staff/volunteers will be insured through the national governmental plan of action in case of an outbreak of epidemic.

Finland

The Finnish Red Cross plan to respond to AI outbreaks is part of the Finnish National Preparedness Plan for an Influenza Epidemic. Although the authorities carry the primary responsibility for national emergency communication, the Red Cross manages its own communication according to its emergency communication plan. If necessary, the Finnish RC is prepared to undertake several activities, including establishing a national telephone

helpline to provide information, providing health advice and giving psycho-social support. Assistance may also be offered locally, e.g. through local health centres operating a helpline.

It is anticipated that in the event of a pandemic, Red Cross volunteers will provide home care services (food distribution, shopping, chopping firewood, transportation) for older people living alone in co-operation with local social welfare authorities. In accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Ministry of Interior and the Finnish RC on first aid and contingency actions, the decision on the need for a health centre working together with the Finnish RC first aid groups will be taken locally.

If needed, the Finnish RC is able to offer a maximum of two 160-bed Emergency Response Unit (ERU) referral hospitals to support the authorities, or participate in equipping localities reserved for large-scale population influxes.

Preparedness and contingency planning is part of the overall planning of branch activities. Finnish RC branches are preparing for possible challenges by building capacities and reviewing resources in co-operation with neighbouring branches. Additional resources can be found through co-operation with other organizations, such as members of the Voluntary Rescue Service. They have expertise in areas such as the transportation of food to older people, as well as assisting in organizing meal services.

Serbia

Serbian Red Cross is a partner of the government body that is working on AI preparedness and response. All information received by Ministry of Health is distributed to Red Cross branches and to the local authorities. Discussions were organised with presentations on influenza symptoms, preventive measures and self-protection. Special education was organised in the collective centres, homes for older people, together with media promotion and distribution of leaflets from Institute for Health Protection. Serbian RC works in close coordination with the health and social institutions and is ready to organize 24 hour working shifts in order to provide effective and protective information to the general public, pharmacies and people who live alone. Recommendations were given to the local institutions and provided to the displaced Roma population. Local RC branches that have homecare programmes or collective centres on their territory were obliged to organize education on AI for health professionals as volunteers of the Serbian RC and voluntary blood donors. Local RC branches that have public kitchen programmes took special care in monitoring hygiene and organizing health education for beneficiaries.

Sweden

No new cases of AI have been reported in Sweden. The preparedness planning at the national level includes nine different governmental bodies and has formed a working committee with defined responsibilities. The Swedish Red Cross headquarters have informed the national working committee that Swedish RC is interested in being part of the planning work countrywide, as they are already participating in collecting and sharing information and are monitoring the AI situation.

At the regional level, the Swedish RC has one information centre, a meeting point called "Kupan" in Stockholm, which provides information to the public there. They also print information material in different languages.

United Kingdom

The British Red Cross has developed a paper setting out the key issues which it needs to consider in its response to a potential flu pandemic. The paper covers mainly pandemic preparedness issues for staff and volunteers, the impact on fund raising, income and activities. The British RC is constantly reviewing information related to influenza to update plans where appropriate. Detailed action plans will be developed at division and area level as an integral part of the British RC service continuity process.

British RC is in discussion with the central government, whose focus has been on engaging the local health agencies and, to an extent, the business community. The Department of Health has recognized the need to develop its engagement with the voluntary sector and is keen to work with the British RC and has invited it to participate

in national planning groups. There is a potential role for the British RC as the lead voluntary sector emergency response organisation in the UK, and Chair of the Voluntary Sector Civil Protection Forum, to facilitate thinking, possibly about the consequences of a flu pandemic for the voluntary sector.

A draft communications plan for British RC has been developed but requires further work. External messages are required both in terms of the Red Cross role and the work that it could or could not undertake. Sharing information within the Movement and between the different National Societies is taking place.

Many priority services will be continued during a pandemic, including Emergency Response, although some, primarily those of a public nature (first aid at public events, day care/resource centres, public training) would have to be discontinued. Some new programmes would be started to provide services in response to a pandemic. These would include delivery of antiviral, vaccination clinics, a shopping service, a helpline and the re-launch of the multi-lingual phrase book

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How we work

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.

The Federation's Global Agenda

The International Federation's activities are aligned with under a 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.

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