

INFORMATION 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

SOUTHEAST ASIA: AVIAN INFLUENZA

27 July 2005

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 181 countries.

In Brief

This Bulletin (no. 01/2005) is being issued for information only, and reflects the status of the situation and information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.

For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:

- In Cambodia: Cambodian Red Cross Society (Men Neary Sopheak, Director of Communications); phone: +855.23.21.28.76; mobile: +855.12.81.08.54; fax: +855.23.21.28.75; email: sopheak.MenNeary@crc.org.kh
- In Thailand: Thai Red Cross Society (Lt. Gen. Amnat Barlee, Director of Relief and Community Health Bureau); phone: +662.256.4037; fax: +662.255.3064; email: abarlee@webmail.redcross.or.th
- In Viet Nam: Viet Nam Red Cross Society (Dr. Trinh Bang Hop, International Relations and Development Dept); phone: +84.48.22.43.20; fax: +84.49.42.42.85; email: vnrchq@netnam.org.vn
- In Bangkok: Bekele Geleta, Head of Regional Delegation; phone: +662.661.6933; fax: 662.661.6937; email: ifrc23@ifrc.org
- In Geneva: Asia and Pacific Department, Southeast Asia desk, Charles Evan or Sabine Feuglet; phone: +41.22.730.4320; fax: +41.22.733.0395; email: charles.evans@ifrc.org / sabine.feuglet@ifrc.org

All International Federation assistance seeks to adhere to the [Code of Conduct for the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement and Non-Governmental Organisations \(NGO's\) 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>

The Situation

Since December 2003, increasing incidences of avian influenza (H5N1 AIV), or bird flu, have killed at least 57 people and infected over 100 more. The deaths occurred in Viet Nam, Thailand, Cambodia and most recently, as part of what the World Health Organization (WHO) classifies as the "third wave" of the disease, Indonesia. Indonesia reported its first three human deaths in a Jakarta suburb during the third week of July. To date, outbreaks of the disease in bird populations have been confirmed in Viet Nam, Taiwan, Thailand, South Korea, Japan, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia, Pakistan, DPRK and China. Earlier in July, the Philippines identified the country's first case of bird flu on a duck farm in Bulacang province. An outbreak of avian influenza in wild geese in western China has raised concern over the further spread of the disease, while on 22 July 2005 a news report from Russia said that an H5 strain of avian influenza killed hundreds of poultry in Siberia although testing is still being done if it turns out to be H5N1 avian flu, it will mark the virus's first known extension into Russia and Central Asia. The virus was discovered in pigs in Indonesia in May on Java island while other domestic animals

such as cats are susceptible to contracting the H5N1 virus as well. Additionally, some farms in the United States have had to cull poultry due to the disease.

Governments around the world are responding to avian influenza by working with the WHO on contingency planning in the event that the disease evolves into a pandemic. Additionally, governments are stockpiling anti-viral medications although there has been some concern expressed over less developed countries which may not have the available financial resources to sufficiently stockpile medication. At the moment, according to WHO's risk assessment of a global pandemic, avian influenza remains at three out of a scale of six, the disease possesses two of the three pre-requisites that contribute to a pandemic. These two factors are: 1) that avian influenza (H5N1) is a new virus which the general population has little or no immunity to; and, 2) avian influenza (H5N1) is able to replicate in humans causing serious illness. The third factor contributing to a pandemic, which is not yet present in the current form of the virus, is that the disease is easily transmitted among humans. Avian influenza (H5N1) which has demonstrated a high case-fatality rate (62.5% to date), however, possesses a high risk for genetic re-assortment and the potential to mutate into a form which would be easily transmissible among humans. The virus is found in fowl droppings and is known to be transmitted to humans through the inhalation of dust particles that contain the virus and through direct contact with the eyes. The virus can also be transmitted by ingesting raw poultry products.

It is South East Asia's small farmers, those farmers who possess 100-200 chickens, who are feeling the most devastating economic effects of the disease as efforts to prevent the disease include the destruction of their flocks. There are an estimated 25 to 40 million village backyard poultry farmers in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Thailand and Viet Nam. Hundreds of millions of birds have been culled throughout the region and although the farmers have received some compensation for the culling of their birds, the compensation is not as much as the money they would have made from the sale of eggs and some of the chickens at the local markets. The small subsistence farmers who keep poultry for income and food, also live under very basic conditions and closely with their animals possessing the highest risk to contracting the disease.

Red Cross and Red Crescent action

Since the large-scale emergence of the disease two years ago, the International Federation's regional health delegate in South East Asia has been tracking the latest developments regarding the disease updating the region's national societies with the latest developments about the disease. Over the past six months, the Federation has supported Red Cross societies in Cambodia, Thailand and Viet Nam with project development in response to the disease.

With the large number of volunteers and access to remote and vulnerable communities, national societies throughout the region are well positioned to assist local authorities with undertaking prevention and control measures and assist low-income families affected by the disease. Five key areas where Red Cross/Red Crescent volunteers and staff can play an important role in preventing the further spread of avian influenza virus include:

- Public health education about the dangers of sick animals and signs and symptoms of human illness
- Public health education about hygiene and proper handling of birds and poultry
- Coordinate with local authorities and other organizations to assist with environmental protection
- Monitoring and reporting on outbreaks
- Support and assistance to households effected by the epidemic

Cambodian Red Cross

Four people have died in Cambodia so far due to the disease. In April, the ministry of health approached the Cambodian Red Cross Society (CRC) about developing a health, information and education programme for the prevention of avian influenza. The CRC with technical input from the Federation's regional health delegate is in the process of finalizing planned activities which includes the creation of health education and information activities targeting at risk communities such as those communities living in areas with large numbers of poultry.

Thai Red Cross

Thailand has reported 17 cases in humans and 12 deaths due to the disease. The ministry of health (MoH) is responding by conducting health education and information activities. Thai Red Cross medical clinics throughout the country support the MoH with the dissemination of information and are taking part in disease surveillance and case identification. Thai Red Cross clinics have received instructions on clinical presentations and procedures for addressing the needs of patients with avian influenza.

Viet Nam Red Cross

There have been 87 reported cases of avian influenza and 39 deaths due to the disease in Viet Nam since December 2003. Following the development by the national society and the Federation of a proposal in early 2005 which addresses measures to prevent the disease, the New Zealand Red Cross is supporting the Viet Nam Red Cross (VNRC) with prevention activities. Since February, the VNRC in cooperation with the MoH has developed public information materials based on materials created by the MoH. The national society has conducted training for two VNRC health staff from provincial branches in over 60 provinces. The trained VNRC provincial branch staff will be responsible for initiating health education activities throughout the country.

[Click here to return to the title page or contact information.](#)