

# 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

## INDIA: AVIAN INFLUENZA

23 February 2006

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 183 countries.

### In Brief

This Bulletin (no. 01/2006) 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.

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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

The first cases of the H5N1 bird influenza virus amongst poultry in India were confirmed on 18 February, 2006. Indian health authorities said tests confirmed the virus in some dead poultry in the village of Navapur in Nandurbar district in the western state of Maharashtra. The affected village is 400 kilometers north-east of the state capital, Mumbai.

Testing was conducted following the deaths of 50,000 birds last week in the district. To date there have been no reported human cases in India, however people in the vicinity are being tested.

The central government has dispatched teams containing virologists and animal husbandry experts and other officials to conduct further testing and carry out a cull of poultry in the affected area. The minister of health says it is expected half a million birds will be slaughtered in the initial cull. A three kilometer quarantine zone has been put in place around Navapur village and poultry within a 10 kilometer radius is being culled.

State health officials are meeting the owners of major poultry farms in the affected area to discuss further preventative measures. Farmers are being given compensation by the government for the birds being culled.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), India is the 10<sup>th</sup> country in Asia/southeast Asia to report avian flu. To date, the other Asian countries to have reported outbreaks (listed in order of reporting): the Republic of Korea, Viet Nam, Japan, Thailand, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Indonesia, China, and Malaysia. Of these, Japan and the Republic of Korea have controlled their outbreaks and are now considered free of the disease. Elsewhere in Asia, the virus has become endemic in several of the initially affected countries. Globally, as of 20 February 2006, WHO had reported 170 human cases of H5N1 with 92 deaths.

Indian poultry and egg exports are worth approximately US\$84.4 million (CHF 110.1 million), with the major markets in Europe, Japan and the Middle East. There is a large domestic market for poultry and both the internal and external markets are being hit hard by the outbreak.

The Indian government began taking preventative measures and issuing advisories last year. The states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Kerala, which make up the core of India's poultry industry, have been issued with a detailed set of guidelines.

A monitoring group, established by the director-general of health services in place and is overseeing the situation in India and neighboring countries. There is a broad regional strategy amongst members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) – Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Nepal, and Maldives. This is outlined in the 'New Delhi resolution' of 16 February 2004 ([http://www.whoindia.org/EN/Section3/Section217\\_414.htm](http://www.whoindia.org/EN/Section3/Section217_414.htm)).

## Red Cross and Red Crescent action

### India

The Maharashtra state branch is liaising with local authorities and will be attending an emergency meeting called by the chief minister of the state.

The Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) has two branches near the affected area, in Dhule and Surat (Gujarat) and they will be assisting authorities.

The IRCS has been developing an avian influenza plan for the past four months. It was recognized that India was particularly vulnerable due to its high population density and low literacy levels (particularly amongst rural populations).

The IRCS formed an avian flu taskforce of Movement partners on December 20, 2005 to analyze the situation in India and neighboring countries. This followed a meeting attended by Movement partners – the Federation, ICRC and partner national societies, as well as external stakeholders – the Indian ministry of health, WHO, department of animal husbandry and the national institute of disaster management.

Following the meeting, all state branches were sent details of a plan of action. Indian Red Cross headquarters has directed the states to indicate state branch capacities and to forward lists of volunteers for involvement in the plan. The national society secretary general has briefed state branches in a series of meetings on the avian flu plan.

Currently the IRCS is preparing a letter to be translated into local dialects by the state branches and disseminated to a million volunteers outlining their roles in the avian flu response. A review on existing information and education materials on avian flu is being undertaken.

The national society is working in close cooperation with the ministry of health and is targeting its efforts on public awareness and preventative measures.

The IRCS plan involves;

- Enhancing inter-sectoral coordination

- Strategies for effective communication
- Identification of interventions for preparedness and response phase and implementation at the appropriate time
- Conducting simulation exercises and drills
- Strengthen public health infrastructure, surveillance and lab diagnosis

The IRCS is the largest humanitarian organization in the country and its network of over 700 branches and volunteer base means it can play a significant role in assisting government efforts.

The avian influenza plan of action consists of;

- Orienting volunteers through Red Cross branches on avian influenza risks and appropriate behavior
- Increasing awareness of one million members and volunteers on frequently asked question and 'do's and don'ts'
- Identification of suspected human cases by volunteers and appropriate referrals to hospital/dispensaries
- Training of human as well as animal health workers on steps to prevent avian flu.
- Alerting concerned communities and authorities
- Non-pharmaceutical interventions such as like hand washing, use of masks, care of suspected human cases.
- Dissemination of avian influenza information
- Preparation for provision of psycho-social relief and counseling for families of infected persons should there be human cases.
- Assist in the implementation of government actions relating to dealing with the outbreak.

### **South Asia region**

The South Asia regional delegation has been liaising with and coordinating with national societies in the region on avian influenza since 2005. National societies have been given technical support by the regional delegation and have been encouraged to participate in national avian influenza taskforces and identify areas where they can contribute.

The South Asia regional delegation distributed an avian influenza fact sheet to all national societies in the region in the final quarter of 2005 (please click here for the attached [avian influenza fact sheet](#)). The regional delegation has been participating in regular global teleconferences with the Geneva Secretariat and regional delegations in the Asia Pacific region. These have been particularly valuable in keeping up-to-date with the actions being taken in South East Asia, which has been dealing with avian influenza since 2004. The national societies of India, Nepal and Afghanistan participated in the December and January global teleconferences.

Regional health meetings of health staff from all national societies in South Asia held in October 2005 and February 2006 discussed avian influenza preparation and response strategies. These meetings agreed on the following broad approaches;

- The necessity to coordinate with other involved organizations, particularly ministries of health.
- The necessity for preparedness planning in national societies.
- Incorporation of avian influenza in first aid trainings.
- Increasing volunteer awareness on avian influenza.

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