

# 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

## ***BENIN: AVIAN FLU PREPAREDNESS***

6 April 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. 1/2006) is being issued for information only, and reflects the situation and the information available at this time. The Federation is not seeking funding or other assistance from donors for this operation at this time.**

Activities undertaken are aligned with the International Federation's 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.**

#### **For further information specifically related to this operation please contact:**

- **In Benin:** Tairou Abdou, President, Red Cross of Benin, Porto Novo; Email: [crb@croixrouge-beninoise.org](mailto:crb@croixrouge-beninoise.org); Phone +229.21.28.26; Fax +229.21.49.27 and Gabriel Achadé, Executive Secretary, Red Cross of Benin, Porto Novo; Mobile +229.91.22.54
- **In Benin:** Pierre Kana, Federation representative in Benin, Cotonou; Email: [pierre.kana@ifrc.org](mailto:pierre.kana@ifrc.org); Phone +229.97.13.44.63 and +229.21.32.16.88
- **In Senegal:** Alasan Senghore, Federation head of West and Central Africa regional delegation, Dakar; Email: [alasan.senghore@ifrc.org](mailto:alasan.senghore@ifrc.org); Phone +221.869.36.41; Fax +221.860.20.02 or Hanna Schmuck, Regional disaster management coordinator, West and Central Africa regional delegation, Dakar; Email: [hanna.schmuck@ifrc.org](mailto:hanna.schmuck@ifrc.org); Phone +221.869.36.41; Fax +221.860.20.02
- **In Geneva:** Madeleine Lundberg, Federation regional officer for West and Central Africa, Africa Dept.; Email: [madeleine.lundberg@ifrc.org](mailto:madeleine.lundberg@ifrc.org); Phone +41.22.730.43.35; Fax +41.22.733.03.95

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>

## **Benin: Avian Flu Preparedness: Information Bulletin no. 1**

### **The Situation**

The official announcement of an avian flu outbreak in Nigeria, made by the Nigeria authorities on 8 February 2006, prompted several African countries to take precautionary measures against the disease. According to news reports and information received, cases of the disease have been confirmed in Nigeria, Burkina Faso and Niger. The situation is of concern to the Benin authorities; in view of the proximity and permeability of the country's frontiers as well as shared cultures with neighbouring countries.

Benin covers an area of 114,763 square kilometres and borders Niger (in the north), Burkina Faso (in the north-west), Nigeria (in the east), Togo (in the west) and the Atlantic Ocean (in the south). It is divided into 12 administrative regions which are further subdivided into 77 communes; 546 districts and 3,828 villages.

Demographic data, from February 2002, indicates that Benin has a population of 6,752,569. The country relies heavily on the primary and tertiary sectors and is dependent on subsistence agriculture. Health, particularly community health, and assistance to people at community level remain precarious in the country despite efforts by the government to improve them over the past few years. The Red Cross of Benin<sup>1</sup>, therefore, plays an important role in this decisive phase of avian flu pre-alert and is prepared to assist in case of an outbreak of the disease in Benin.

### **Red Cross and Red Crescent action**

The Federation representative in Benin received documentation on avian flu from Geneva, and shared it with the Red Cross of Benin. Part of the documentation and information has been used during the preparation of the Benin's National Contingency Plan. The national society has also taken part in all coordination meetings on avian flu with the Federation.

As an auxiliary to the public authorities and in view of its expertise in social mobilization, Benin Red Cross and its key partners (the Federation and the ICRC) have been tasked by the government to contribute to the implementation of the contingency plan. According to the plan, the national society will play a key role in the sensitization campaign against avian flu. Training sessions for the regional supervisors on avian flu are under preparation.

### **Actions undertaken by the government and other partners**

When the outbreak of avian flu was announced in Nigeria and in Niger (which are neighbouring countries of Benin), the Government of Benin— under the leadership of the Ministry of Agriculture, Breeding and Fishing— set up an Inter-Ministerial Committee for Crisis Management (Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health and the Interior Ministry). International partners such as the World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the Federation joined the committee alongside local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The committee is in charge of drafting a contingency plan and organizing meetings with partners to share information and develop a common sensitization programme.

During a meeting held on 9 February 2006, the Government of Benin appealed to all potential partners to contribute to the efforts it is making in this pre-alert phase through quality community actions.

The immediate actions that have been taken are: prohibition of poultry import from Nigeria and Niger and closure of markets at the borders with the two countries; training of agents and actors of the poultry sector so that they can share information with and sensitize other actors as well as consumers; public awareness through radio programmes, television shows and information meetings with various targets.

### **The needs**

In line with the ARCHI 2010<sup>2</sup> approach, there is a need to set up a community-based surveillance system through the divisional Red Cross committees close to the borders with Nigeria and Niger. This will ensure that populations in high risk zones are well informed.

---

<sup>1</sup> Red Cross of Benin- refer to <http://www.ifrc.org/where/country/check.asp?countryid=209>

<sup>2</sup> ARCHI 2010- refer to <http://www.ifrc.org/what/health/archi/>

## **Benin: Avian Flu Preparedness: Information Bulletin no. 1**

Apart from the information and orientations transmitted through its branches, the Red Cross of Benin, with support of the Federation, will develop the following actions during this important phase:

- Assessment of the situation;
- Prevention activities;
- Information sharing and sensitization campaigns;
- Training of 24 trainers from the 12 regions of Benin, in collaboration with WHO, UNICEF, FAO and the Ministry of Agriculture;
- Training (by the trainers) of 240 volunteers on avian flu at regional level (20 volunteers per department), in collaboration with the regional departments of agriculture;
- Sensitization of communities using information, education and communication (IEC) materials as well as door-to-door visits.

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