



EGYPT: AVIAN INFLUENZA

MDREG002
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 181 countries.

In Brief

CHF 40,000 (USD 30,606 OR EUR 25,642) HAS BEEN ALLOCATED FROM THE FEDERATION'S DISASTER RELIEF EMERGENCY FUND (DREF) TO INITIATE AN AVIAN FLU AWARENESS PROGRAM

UNEARMARKED FUNDS TO REPAY DREF ARE ENCOURAGED.

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The situation

On Friday 17 February, some foci of Avian Influenza were reported in three governorates of Egypt. Eight cases were confirmed by Egyptian officials in the Governorates of Cairo (4), Giza(2) and Minya (2). As of 22 February, further cases were reported in five additional governorates (Dakahleya, Kalyubeya, Beni Suef, Qina and Beheira). The national authorities are handling the issue. It is the second country in Middle East North Africa Region (after Iraq) to be affected by Avian Influenza.

The most important immediate intervention to contain outbreaks of Avian Influenza is to rapidly and appropriately destroy all infected or exposed birds with proper disposal of carcasses. This is the first line of defence for both the protection of human health and the reduction of further losses in the agricultural sector.

As an auxiliary to the Government, the Egyptian Red Crescent Society (ERCS) is supporting the Ministry of Health in its awareness and preparedness activities in an effort to prevent the spread of the disease. With the large

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nationwide network of youth/volunteers and through their access to vulnerable communities, ECRS is well positioned to assist local authorities with undertaking prevention and control measures. ECRS has gained effective experience in social mobilization from the previous large awareness campaigns conducted in coordination with the Egyptian Ministry of Health (Polio, Measles vaccination campaigns).

The Red Crescent volunteers and staff are playing an important role in preventing the further spread of Avian Influenza virus in five key areas:

1. Public health education about the dangers of sick birds and signs and symptoms of the illness in humans
2. Public health education on hygiene and proper handling of the birds and poultry
3. Coordination with local authorities and other organizations to assist in environmental protection
4. Monitoring and reporting on outbreaks
5. Support and assistance to households affected by the epidemic

Although it is difficult to predict the evolution of the disease, many of the key steps towards prevention are relatively basic and similar to common hygiene practices. Effective community-based education, informing a wide public about the modes of transmission and what high-risk practices should be avoided, as well as attention to personal hygiene can have a significant impact on controlling the disease. The ECRS is using all its structures to reach the communities and provide the necessary information.

No cases of human infection have been reported so far

Red Cross and Red Crescent action taken so far

A circular was issued to all ECRS branches highlighting the main elements of the plan: 24-hour availability, mobilization of volunteers giving priority to those with medical or paramedical background, arranging training courses and workshops, contacting the local health authorities and providing basic protective supplies and material if needed. ECRS branches are very active in the field, preparing their own plans for relevant activities in coordination with local authorities.

Instructions were also given for volunteers to assist the respective authorities, as advised by the health authorities, to convince citizens to get rid of poultry that they have at home or in backyards. In Nahda city (one of the large ECRS community centres) this approach is going relatively smoothly and city health coordinators closed 400 random poultry breeding sites. In Zeinhom, where the ECRS has a community centre/relocation of people from slums areas, a ban on having poultry at home was implemented.

A training course to 50 ECRS volunteers for the Greater Cairo area was held on February 17, with the support of Ministry of Health and EMRO. A second workshop on signs and symptoms awareness, preparedness activities and protection was conducted on February 18 and attended by 105 volunteers and youth members. On February 20, a training of trainers was attended by 80 volunteers from 12 branches as well as Branch Directors and volunteers from a scout organization aimed at disseminating the information at the governorate level.



ECRS is conducting awareness sessions targeting students and teachers in primary and preparatory schools in collaboration with educational departments in various governorates.

An awareness brochure about Avian Influenza has been developed and 50,000 flyers were printed for distribution to the communities and schools.

ECRS has already started the procurement of protective material (masks, gloves, plastic boots) from the local market to equip 200 volunteers.

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ERCS is also looking at the possibility of developing micro-projects to support poor families and vulnerable communities financially affected by the impact of Avian Influenza and loss of poultry.

Earlier this year, the International Federation's Regional Office for North Africa, based in Tunis, sent information material to the ERCS in Arabic and in English, including the International Federation's fact sheet, *Avian Influenza: Facts and Recommendations for National Societies*. On Saturday 11 February, a briefing workshop was organized in Cairo at the ERCS Headquarters by the Regional Office, with the support of the Secretariat Avian Flu Health Coordinator, Dr Adelheid Marshang together with a Senior Health Officer/Representative of the EMRO-WHO Office. Fifty National Society staff and volunteers attended the presentations and debates, discussing the use of the First Aid Network to best reach the communities. Awareness material (leaflet, brochures) was shared with ERCS as well as feedback from other National Societies, their experiences and plans. The Regional Office for North Africa keeps a daily contact with the ERCS Secretary General.

The needs

There is an urgent need to supply the ERCS volunteers with the necessary protective material and equipment as well as to hold training workshops and seminars for them. Twelve workshops are planned targeting 600 participants who can themselves continue the dissemination process in the country.

A preliminary budget was prepared and funding (CHF 40,000) is sought for this operation

Coordination

The Egyptian Red Crescent is in close contact with the Ministry of Health and the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Regional Office. A Cooperation agreement was signed in 2004 by the Federation with EMRO. ERCS is part of the National Task Force / inter-agency Coordination Committee and has been involved in the prevention, preparedness and response plan to determine the role of the ERCS.

Budget outline

Funding (CHF 40,000) is requested for the organization of 12 workshops, targeting 600 youth and volunteers, deployment of these volunteers (transport, indemnities, accommodation), production of educational material (leaflets, flyers, posters) and mainly for the procurement of protective material for the volunteers.

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