



## USAID Avian Influenza Program

### **Avian Influenza Behavior Change and Communications Support Activity**

USAID has embarked on a behavior change and communications (BCC) program aiming to reduce and control the spread of avian influenza in key areas of Southeast Asia where avian influenza outbreaks have been reported, including Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Indonesia. This program is being implemented by the Academy for Educational Development as part of the U.S. Government's Emergency Response to Avian Influenza Plan of Action, a rapid-response constellation of activities aimed at controlling the spread of avian flu. Because the Emergency Plan outlines country-specific lines of action over a one-year period, USAID has been actively engaging and working with each host country's government officials, particularly those in the Ministries of Agriculture and Departments of Animal Health.

#### **Goals and Objectives**

The USAID Avian Influenza Program (AIP) has two main objectives:

- Increase awareness among key target audiences of high-risk behaviors for contracting avian influenza, practical preventive measures, and how to recognize and respond to cases of avian influenza in animals and humans. The key audiences include backyard farmers, consumers of poultry, and health care and veterinary staff.
- Establish alliances with private-sector companies to support planning and preparation for mitigating the impact of a potential avian influenza pandemic.

#### **Approach and Strategies**

USAID has been employing an integrated campaign approach — combining mass media communication – radio and television advertising, public relations, community-based communications, and interpersonal communication — to create an environment that informs our target audiences about avian influenza and introduces best practices for its prevention and containment.

Specific strategies include:

- Interpersonal communications, such as farmer education by extension agents and veterinary staff, patient counseling by clinic health workers, peer education (farmer-to-farmer; vendor-to-vendor), and informal discussion (vendor-to-consumer, neighbor-to-neighbor).
- Organizational and community outlets, such as workplace, schools, community and village level meetings, affinity groups (women's unions, farmer groups, health associations, and so forth).
- Mass media, including national TV, radio, and print, and international and web-based communication.
- Public relations/advocacy, such as high-level thought-leader conferences with international

experts on the subject, and press briefings to increase the media's understanding and access to correct information.

We are also identifying private sector organizations who are willing to partner with USAID to engage in preparedness planning and who possess valuable resources that can be harnessed to contain the spread of avian influenza.

All of these strategies are intended to not only get rapid-response prevention messages across, but also to develop capacity and strengthen infrastructure at the local, regional and national level to expand the possibility that these evidence-based behaviors are carried out over the long-term.

### **Activities to Date**

So far, communications activities have been targeted to family poultry farmers in remote and rural areas of Indonesia, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam. USAID has conducted research among backyard poultry farmers in these countries and found that while the level of awareness about avian influenza is high, knowledge of specific activities or ways to contain or prevent it is still low. Moreover, some of the best ways of preventing the spread of avian influenza, such as keeping chickens in cages in stead of letting them run free, require major changes in poultry management.

Since then, USAID has been working with regional partners such as the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Lao Journalists Association, Vétérinaires Sans Frontières (VSF), Ogilvy Worldwide, and Indochina Research Ltd. and local NGOs and host governments to reach small farmers and their families with persuasive messages, as well as using radio and television to spread the word about avian influenza.

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