

PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

WHAT IS PANDEMIC INFLUENZA?

An influenza pandemic occurs when a new form of the influenza virus starts spreading. Because it is a new virus, people have no resistance to it and it therefore spreads easily from person to person worldwide. People are also more likely to become sick in a short period of time. Previous influenza pandemics have led to widespread disease and death.

WHY SHOULD YOU PAY ATTENTION TO PANDEMIC INFLUENZA?

Pandemic influenza could start anywhere and spread quickly around the world, causing millions of deaths and severe illness. Although the worst-case scenarios predict that an estimated 2-3% of the world's population (or 160 million people) would die in a severe pandemic, the results will not be as severe if you take steps now to prepare for it.

WHO and FAO, along with donor nations, are working on scientific and technological innovations to help reduce the threat and minimize the effects of an influenza pandemic.

Because of the work being done, all countries and governments are being encouraged to participate in planning and preparation activities to prevent a pandemic.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO BEGIN PREPARING?

Being prepared means taking steps to reduce the spread of the virus, minimize hospitalizations and deaths, maintain essential services such as food supply, water, fuel and electricity, and reduce panic. Here are key activities to consider:

1: Review and update the national pandemic preparedness plan.

Work within a multi-sectoral task force that includes the public sector, private sector, and civil society to plan how to prepare for and respond to a pandemic.

2: Help districts, local governments, NGOs and communities to plan.

National-level organizations can provide assistance, support, and encouragement to district and local governments, NGOs, and communities in preparing their response plans.

3: Effectively communicate to the public about how to plan and prepare for a pandemic.

Public awareness and social mobilization to engage communities and their citizens can be achieved through effective community-based communication and public information campaigns.

FIVE REASONS WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO PREPARE FOR AN INFLUENZA PANDEMIC NOW

1. There will be little time to prepare once an influenza pandemic occurs. Experts have predicted that the time for final planning and preparations will be a few weeks – at most.
2. Being prepared for a pandemic will help to reduce public panic and anxiety when an outbreak occurs.
3. If more people are prepared for a pandemic, health workers will be better able to assist greater numbers of people, especially those who need the most help, such as the elderly and people who are already ill with diseases such as HIV, TB, malaria, and chronic illnesses.
4. Being prepared will reduce the potential economic and social ramifications of the pandemic, and potentially save billions of dollars.
5. Preparing for a pandemic will help to prepare your country for other disease outbreaks, natural disasters, or other crises.

This set of informational materials provides guidance to help you start planning for a pandemic. With a bit of effort now, you can be prepared when a pandemic influenza outbreak strikes.

HUMANITARIAN PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS INITIATIVE (H2P)

WHAT IS THE HUMANITARIAN PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS INITIATIVE – H2P?

The Humanitarian Pandemic Preparedness Initiative (H2P) is a three year, USAID-funded initiative, whose goal is to build a fully prepared and deployable capacity of likely responders during an influenza pandemic. These responders will provide the rapid, coordinated, and effective response designed to limit morbidity and mortality, safeguard livelihoods, and maintain societal cohesion and integrity. This initiative intends to support community-level planning on how to organize, coordinate, and deliver an effective humanitarian response in countries deemed to be most vulnerable to an outbreak of pandemic influenza.

THE H2P INITIATIVE IS COMPRISED OF THE FOLLOWING PARTNERS:

- The International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)
- The CORE Group (an association of U.S. private voluntary organizations including Save the Children, CARE, World Vision, and others)
- AI.COMM (a USAID-funded communication project implemented by AED)
- InterAction (also an association of U.S. NGOs)
- United Nations agencies, including OCHA and the WFP

HOW H2P CAN HELP:

Technical assistance that can be provided by H2P includes:

- Developing training curricula and materials for trainers and trainees
- Providing master trainers from the Red Cross/Red Crescent and NGO volunteers to ensure country-wide coverage
- Training trainers at a regional level
- Adapting health education messages and materials to the specific country or community context
- Developing templates for public information materials
- Organizing exercises or simulations
- Promoting the sharing of plans and lessons learned with other districts and countries
- Coordinating planning meetings
- Mapping the capacities of NGO's and partner programs at the national and district levels that may be mobilized for disaster response

ROLE OF NATIONAL LEADERS

HOW TO PREPARE FOR PANDEMIC INFLUENZA: ESSENTIAL ACTIONS FOR NATIONAL LEADERS TO CONSIDER

Being prepared means taking steps to reduce the spread of the virus, minimize hospitalizations and deaths, maintain essential services such as food supply, water, fuel and electricity, and reduce panic. Here are key activities to consider:

1: Review and update the national pandemic preparedness plan.

Work with appropriate groups to review and update the national pandemic preparedness plan. Key partners can include the Ministries of Health, Education, Information, Local Government, Defense, and Interior; the national Disaster Management Office; and national NGOs such as the Red Cross. At the very least, the plan should provide pre-pandemic and rapid-response policies and plans for the following areas:

- Community health care
- Non-pharmaceutical interventions
- Food security and livelihoods
- Communication

(More information on each of these areas is provided in the following pages.)

2: Initiate planning and training for community-based health care.

Planning needs to include building the capability of both the health system and community health workers to care for the sick. Consider training midwives, health promoters, teachers, and members of unions or faith groups to help with community and household care during a pandemic. Review and adapt international guidelines and materials on influenza care. Adapt training materials on pandemic response and train a core group of master trainers who can be relied on to implement these trainings in the event of a pandemic.

3: Help districts, local governments, NGOs and communities to plan.

National-level organizations can provide assistance to district and local governments, NGOs and communities to:

- Develop their own preparedness plans and test them through simulations.
- Engage local partner organizations from both the private and public sectors to encourage them to participate. Include health workers, local businesses, members of police or emergency response organizations, NGOs, and local media outlets. Make sure they understand how to mobilize resources and respond quickly when a pandemic strikes.
- Develop training plans for community health workers to manage flu-related illnesses and complications.
- Encourage communities and households to learn as much as they can about pandemic influenza and what to do if they or their family members become sick.

4: Prepare messages and materials to educate the public.

It will be important to have materials ready to inform people what actions they can take in their households if an outbreak hits. These include messages on practicing good respiratory etiquette and hygiene, knowing how to care for sick family members at home, understanding how to prevent the spread of pandemic influenza, and being aware of social distancing measures that might help to slow the spread of the virus, such as closing schools and postponing public events.

ROLE OF COMMUNITY LEADERS

HOW TO PREPARE FOR PANDEMIC INFLUENZA: ESSENTIAL ACTIONS FOR COMMUNITY LEADERS TO CONSIDER

1: Establish a local task force to plan and coordinate preparedness activities.

Identify organizations in your area (district, municipality, community) to help develop a plan for pandemic preparedness. These organizations can include local departments of health, education and information; local businesses; local disaster management groups (or Red Cross groups); police and other civic organizations; faith-based organizations; schools; and media outlets.

Meet with these community, civic, and faith leaders to advocate for the importance of preparing for a pandemic and engaging their support. Provide them with key messages to distribute and appropriate contacts and sources of information in the case of a pandemic outbreak. Support the mobilization of community groups to begin pandemic preparedness together.

2: Develop local preparedness plans.

Obtain any existing local pandemic preparedness plans and determine whether they should be updated. Obtain national preparedness plans and see if there are recommendations for what districts and communities should be doing to prepare. The plan should outline the roles of local partners and address how to prepare pre-pandemic and how to rapidly respond during an outbreak in the following areas:

- Community health care
- Non-pharmaceutical interventions
- Food security and livelihoods
- Communication

(More information on these areas is provided in the following pages.)

3: Conduct simulations to test elements of the plan.

Simulate what it would be like if a pandemic hit to explore the implications of an outbreak in your district. Simulations can help to identify ways to improve stakeholder communication and collaboration, create resource-allocation strategies, and develop next steps that partners can take to improve their preparedness and response to pandemic influenza.

4: Develop plans for mobilizing community health workers.

Develop training plans for community health workers and other first responders to manage flu-related illnesses and complications. Training plans should include midwives, health promoters, teachers, members of unions or faith groups, and others who could help with community and household care during a pandemic.

5: Prepare messages and materials to educate the public.

It will be important to have materials ready to inform people what actions they can take in their communities and households if an outbreak hits. Examples of messages that can be used are found on the page Essential Messages.

COMMUNITY HEALTH CARE

Community health systems will need to prepare to provide high-quality care to patients with influenza during a pandemic, recognizing that it is unlikely that effective vaccines will be available to prevent cases, and that antiviral drugs to treat cases will be in limited supply. It is expected that during the next influenza pandemic, the volume of illness will be so large that the vast majority of ill persons around the world will be cared for in their own homes. For this reason, communities should not only build the capability of their health systems but they should also build the capacity of their community members to care for those with influenza as well as other illnesses. Investing in this effort will have immediate benefits in the event of a pandemic and will make a long-term contribution to building healthier communities.

For this reason, countries should plan their health services along two broad axes:

1. Caring for influenza cases, both in health facilities and in the community

- Review and adapt international guidelines and materials on the most effective and efficient ways to provide care for influenza cases. These guidelines are forthcoming from the World Health Organization and other technical partners.
- Develop or update plans for implementing these guidelines. Technical support for doing so can be accessed through WHO or other agencies as needed.
- Adapt training materials and train a core group of master trainers who will be responsible for the rapid roll-out of training on a large scale once a pandemic threshold is reached.
- At the health facility level, develop plans for handling increased patient flow, including requirements for human resources and essential commodities.
- At the community level, identify additional human resources, such as volunteers or auxiliary health staff, who can provide direct care or guidance to families on how to care for their sick. Training such “community health responders” to care for sick people at home may reduce the severity of influenza cases and their complications, and reduce the burden on the health system.
- Conduct simulation exercises at sub-national levels to test whether plans are likely to be effective. Make revisions as needed.

2. Managing indirect impacts: caring for people with other illnesses

- Because the health system will be overwhelmed with caring for the most serious cases of influenza, it probably will not be able to care for other common and chronic illnesses, such as tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, and diarrheal disease in young children.

- For this reason, a large portion of such care will need to be provided at the community and household level by community health responders. WHO has issued technical guidelines that countries can use to plan on how to shift the care of these common illnesses to community health responders at community and household level.
- National and local leaders have the important responsibility of identifying the resources within their communities, including civil society organizations (such as Red Cross chapters), NGOs, and faith-based organizations, who can be trained and deployed to provide this care. These organizations can greatly augment the care provided by the health system, while also serving as trusted sources of accurate information on the pandemic.
- For these reasons, the planning conducted by health managers should address how health personnel will train and interface with community health responders before, during, and after a local outbreak of pandemic influenza. They should also identify the technical, material, and financial resources that will be needed to do so.

FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS: A COMMUNITY BASED APPROACH

Experts believe that an influenza pandemic will have the potential to disrupt the world economy and may disrupt the distribution of food and other supplies that are important to communities. As a result, organizations like the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and Donor Nations are preparing for an influenza pandemic and its possible consequences for food security and livelihoods in communities.

In the case of a severe pandemic, economists have predicted that financial losses could reach up to \$4.4 trillion in its first year – that is 12.6% of the global GDP. The more severe a pandemic, the more developing countries will be economically hurt relative to North America and Europe.

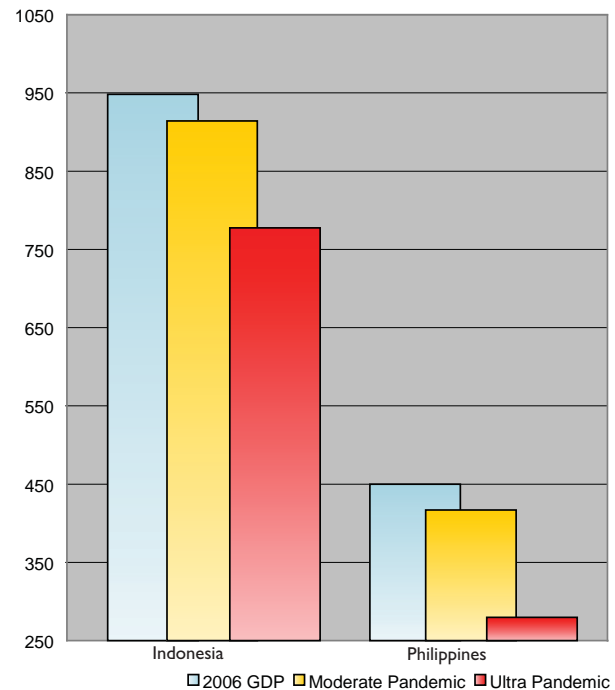
It is widely recognized that chronic food insecurity, malnutrition, and the vulnerability to it, is widespread in many parts of the developing world. The goal of this project is to help strengthening or developing community-based systems minimize the additional negative impacts that a pandemic influenza could have on food security and livelihoods.

In preparing for a pandemic, leaders should gather information that will allow them to produce a community-based food security “pandemic preparedness plan.” Part of the information-gathering process should include:

- Mapping national and district food flows to assess how a pandemic might affect food access, including identification of possible vulnerable spots in the food supply chain.
- Identifying alternate food supplies for loan or purchase.
- Identifying opportunities for Ready-To-Eat (RTE) foods that help bridge short term gaps in supply of food.
- Identifying whether there are any key food stocks, stores or silos that may require protection.
- Develop a plan how a food system is put in place and protected that ensures the flow of food to hospitals, clinics and therapeutic feeding sites and other locations of high concentration of (vulnerable) people.

A community based approach for pandemic preparedness and readiness requires the need to involve a broad selection of partners and stakeholders at all levels.

Impact of an Influenza Pandemic on GDP in \$US Billions



The following tables offer practical tasks that communities can undertake to help mitigate the effects of food insecurity before and during an influenza pandemic.

Pre-Pandemic

Task	How often	Result	Requires
Map food stocks	Annually	Map, List	Visiting farms, industry
Identify food protection priorities	Every 2 years	List	Convening local experts
Identify most vulnerable households	Annually	Roster	Surveys, measures
Communicate to key organizations	Every 2 years	Messages	Meetings
Compile public works projects	Every 2 years	List	Creative exploration
Track early warning signs of local livelihood disaster	Continuously during pandemic	Decisions	Track markets, movements of people, local rumors
Propose increase in food for the medically vulnerable	Every 2 years	Commitment	Convening community

During an Influenza Pandemic

Task	How often	Result	Requires
Hold community meetings to plan for food sharing	Pandemic onset	Transparency & volunteers	Leadership
Negotiate channels and networks for food or voucher provisions to vulnerable households	Outset	Mapping and new vouchers	Cooperation among merchants & CBOs
Deliver small-scale food rations to homesteads	Twice/month	Household receipt of minimal food supplies	Trucks, motorcycles, community volunteers
Deliver nutrient-rich therapeutic foods to households with malnourished children	Twice/month	Prevention of severe malnutrition and dehydration	Ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTF), oral rehydration solution (ORS), fortified foods
Initiate public work projects that minimize working in large groups	Daily	Self-targeted safety net	Food, mobile supervision
Merge feeding, child health, and agricultural extension programs	Ongoing	Food to families where they live	MOA and MOH sharing
Increase center-based feeding after epidemic wave	Daily	Malnourished rehabilitated	Fuel, structures, volunteers
Promote livelihoods through new loans in new loan cycles with new short-term loan products	Once a month	Increased currency circulation among poor	Capital from banks into microfinance networks
Provision of short-cycle seeds post epidemic wave	Ongoing	Effective sowing of next crop cycles	Cooperation of seed companies

NON-PHARMACEUTICAL INTERVENTIONS

Non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPIs) refer to measures that individuals and communities can take to reduce the person-to-person transmission of influenza. Some of these measures involve “social distancing,” which means keeping people physically separated from each other so that there is less opportunity for the influenza virus to be transmitted from one person to another. Other measures have more to do with maintaining good personal hygiene and are not unique to pandemic influenza. While some measures require substantial advance planning and would only be implemented during a moderate or severe pandemic, others can be implemented through ongoing health promotion efforts and have broad public health benefits.

To promote the following *community-level* NPIs, national and local officials must first analyze their advantages and disadvantages, including their likely health, economic, and social impact and acceptability. Using this information, officials must then develop policies and plans for how these measures would be implemented. These community-level NPIs include the following:

- Canceling public gatherings such as religious services, festivals, and sporting events
- Discouraging people from visiting crowded places such as markets
- Closing schools and non-essential businesses temporarily
- Introducing the voluntary quarantine of those who are exposed to patients with influenza

To promote the following *household-level* NPIs, countries can provide training to community health workers and communication to the public on the following:

- Wash hands with warm, soapy water or apply a germ-killing handrub after:
 - contact with an influenza patient or with objects near or used by a patient;
 - using the bathroom
 - handling garbage or animal waste
 - coughing or sneezing
- Maintain good respiratory etiquette by covering coughs and sneezes: sneeze into upper arm or tissue instead of hand and dispose of tissue properly
- Keep your distance – at least 2 meters – away from other people during an outbreak.
 - Avoid crowds (for example, only send one designated person to the market)
 - Limit travel and avoid crowded public transportation, if possible
 - Work from home, if possible
- Isolate patients infected with influenza from other family and community members. Care for the patient in the home, with only one family member providing care, if possible.

ESSENTIAL MESSAGES

Each country will need to develop its own key messages, based upon the pandemic influenza circumstances in that country. However, health officials from the World Health Organization, UNICEF, Red Cross, and other agencies have identified some broad messages that may be useful to use as a starting point. Countries would need to review these to decide whether they are appropriate to their situation and also pre-test them to determine the precise wording. To be effective, messages must be easy to understand, acceptable, and describe actions that are feasible for people to carry out.

General messages to the community - to disseminate widely as soon as there is a triggering event:

- Pandemic influenza is a serious illness, even though it may not look serious at first. The symptoms are: fever, muscle aches and pains, fatigue, headache, sneezing, runny or stuffy nose, cough/sore throat, and sometimes nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea (although intestinal symptoms never occur without the other symptoms and should not be confused with a “stomach flu”)
- To prevent the rapid spread of pandemic flu, stay put and keep your distance:
 - Avoid crowds, such as social or family gatherings, or religious services
 - Avoid traveling, even back to your home village
 - Consider sending just one family member to the market or for shopping
 - Consider keeping children home from school (depending on decisions by local authorities)
 - Work from home if possible
- Seek information about the situation from reliable, trusted sources.

Messages for caregivers for sick family members:

- To protect yourself and your family, everyone should cough and sneeze into their arm
- Keep sick family members away (separated) from other people
- Care for sick people at home and seek medical care only if they are extremely ill
- Provide basic care – rest, quiet, fluids, food
- Wash your hands frequently

COMMUNICATION

Effective communication will play a crucial role in controlling the spread of pandemic influenza and maintaining stability in the face of a disruptive situation. To achieve effective communication during a pandemic requires advance planning now.

While the exact messages to convey to the public will depend upon country-specific circumstances that cannot be predicted in advance, there are a number of essential issues that countries can address in their planning. These include the following:

- Identifying key audiences to receive information on pandemic influenza, including the media, the general public, health care workers, civic leaders, and community health responders
- Clarifying in broad terms the types of actions or practices that each of these groups could take
- Identifying communication channels to reach each audiences (for example, TV or radio, interpersonal communication through community or religious leaders)
- Specifying official chains of communication to expedite rapid and accurate dissemination of information
- Designating official spokespersons as well as other popular and trusted individuals to convey messages to the public
- Training spokespersons on how to convey information to reassure the public, dispel false rumors, minimize anxiety, and motivate the desired actions
- Educating journalists on key facts about pandemic influenza and how to communicate them without inducing panic
- Conducting research and pre-testing of possible messages to understand people's perceptions of risk and how to word messages so that they will lead to appropriate actions.
- Orienting local leaders and community health responders on how to communicate effectively with families and communities about pandemic influenza.

These issues need to be addressed in a specific communication plan that is part of the larger pandemic preparedness plan, both at national and lower (i.e. sub-national, district, or local) levels. The elements of the communication plan may include the following:

- Communication goals
- Plan implementers—roles and functions
- Conducting a situation analysis—rapid assessment/communication mapping
- Identifying the communication chain ("telephone tree")
- Setting up the communication control center

- Links to technical experts
- Target audiences (public, stakeholders, media, government)
- Key message points
- Channels of communication (mass media, electronic, traditional, interpersonal)
- Managing misinformation
- Tracking and monitoring communication

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

What is pandemic influenza?

An influenza pandemic occurs when a new form of an influenza virus starts spreading. Because it is a new virus, people have no resistance to it and it therefore spreads easily from person to person worldwide. People are also more likely to become sick in a short period of time. Previous influenza pandemics have led to widespread disease and death.

How is pandemic influenza different from avian influenza?

Avian influenza is a strain of the influenza virus (H5N1) that is generally found in birds, and in a few cases the virus has infected people. Pandemic influenza will occur when this virus or another new strain of the influenza virus changes into a strain that easily infects and spreads among humans.

How is pandemic influenza different from seasonal influenza?

There are several key differences between pandemic and seasonal influenza. Seasonal outbreaks of the flu are caused by flu viruses that are already circulating among people, so they have some resistance to them. Pandemic influenza is caused by a new strain of the virus that people have no resistance to. Because people have no resistance to it, pandemic influenza is likely to infect many more people and cause complications in more otherwise healthy people than seasonal influenza.

What drugs are available for treatment?

WHO and the US Government are investing in the research and development of vaccines to prevent catching the H5N1 virus and medications to treat the H5N1 virus in people. There are several studies being conducted to test the vaccines but these are not ready for wide distribution, and will only work if the pandemic is due to H5N1. Currently, there are two medications (antivirals) that are given to people with seasonal flu that reduce symptoms like aches and pains – they may also shorten the length of the illness and help prevent its spreading. These medications' brand names are Tamiflu and Relenza and their generic names are oseltamivir and zanamivir.

Most medical experts believe these may be helpful during an influenza pandemic but they are not a guarantee. We should not rely on medications to combat pandemic influenza. It could be at least six months into a pandemic before an effective vaccine becomes available, and even then, supplies will be limited and expensive. It is important that we not rely on or plan for a pharmaceutical treatment. Instead, we should plan to practice other measures such as social distancing.

How serious of a threat is pandemic influenza?

It is a very serious public health issue. The leading international health organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), along with donor nations, including the US, Great Britain and Japan, have committed financial and human resources to conduct research that will help reduce the threat and minimize the effects of an influenza pandemic.

How can pandemic influenza be spread from person to person?

Pandemic influenza can be spread the same way seasonal influenza is spread - by coughing, sneezing, or touching something that has come in contact with the virus from people's sneezes or coughs. One person can give influenza to another person if they are in close contact (generally within an arm's length). Influenza can spread easily in places where there are many people in close contact. People with influenza can spread the disease even before they have symptoms.

QUESTIONS FOR NATIONAL AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

With all the other issues my community has to worry about—why should I invest in an event that may not happen?

Your question is valid. The investment you and your community would make in pandemic planning would be relatively small – mostly your time – and the planning for a pandemic response can be incorporated into existing disaster preparedness activities. The preparation planning would be beneficial in saving lives as well as be reassuring to your community and could be used when there are natural disasters or other public health outbreaks.

The idea of pandemic influenza is overwhelming—what can I do as a *national* official to prepare for it?

Keeping pandemic influenza in perspective is important. Working with your colleagues in the government, civil society, and private sector will make your preparations manageable and successful. There are a few steps you can take that will help you organize and be prepared. These include:

1. Review and update the national pandemic preparedness plan. Bring together a wide variety of organizations and groups to work together. These would include the Ministries of Health, Education, Information, Local Government, Defense, and Interior; the National Disaster Management Office; and national NGOs such as the Red Cross or Red Crescent Society.
2. Initiate planning and training for community-based health care. Include midwives, health promoters, extension workers, teachers, and members of unions or faith groups among the groups to be trained to help with community and household care.
3. Help districts, local governments, NGOs and communities to plan. Bringing together representatives from all groups and organizations to share the activities and planning will make this more manageable.
4. Prepare messages and materials to educate the public. It will be important to have materials ready to inform people what actions they can take in their households if an outbreak occurs.

The idea of pandemic influenza is overwhelming—what can I do as a community official to prepare for it?

Keeping pandemic influenza in perspective is important. Working with your colleagues in the government, civil society, and private sector will make your preparations manageable and successful. There are a few steps you can take that will help you organize and prepare. These are:

1. Establish a district or local-level task force to plan and coordinate preparedness activities. Advocate with community, civic, and faith leaders to become involved. Provide them with key messages to distribute and appropriate contacts and sources of information in the case of a pandemic.
2. Develop local preparedness plans. Keep plans updated and practical. Support the mobilization of community groups to begin pandemic preparedness activities together.
3. Test your plan. Practice what you would do in a pandemic situation and make adjustments that are realistic and practical.
4. Train community health workers and other first responders on how to manage influenza-related illnesses and complications.
5. Plan how to share information about the pandemic to your community. Print and broadcast materials and word-of-mouth information should be prepared and ready to distribute when a pandemic is likely.

What are the benefits to planning now?


There are five key benefits to planning – and they all contribute to reducing the loss of lives.

1. Experts have predicted that the time for final planning and preparations will be a few weeks. Planning ahead is important.
2. Being prepared for a pandemic will help to reduce public panic and anxiety when an outbreak occurs. Learning how to communicate information clearly will help minimize anxiety and risk.
3. The more people that are prepared for a pandemic, the better able health workers and first responders will be to assist greater numbers of people, especially those who need the most help, such as the elderly and people who are already ill with diseases such as HIV, TB, malaria, and chronic illnesses.
4. You will reduce the potential economic and social ramifications of the pandemic.
5. Preparing for a pandemic will help to prepare your country for other disease outbreaks, natural disasters, or other crises.

QUESTIONS FOR THE MEDIA

How serious is the current pandemic risk?

The risk of pandemic influenza is serious. With the H5N1 virus now present in large parts of Asia, the risk that more human cases will occur will continue. Each additional human case increases the chances that the



virus will be transmitted to humans and could develop into a pandemic strain. As the virus spreads to new areas and regions of the world, the chances grow for more human cases to occur, grows. We cannot predict when a pandemic will occur, or how severe it will be, but with each human case the risk becomes greater.

Why is a pandemic such a dreaded event?

Influenza pandemics generate dread because they are unpredictable and most people have never experienced illness to this degree. Plus, the threat of the infection spreading quickly, the severity of the disease, and number of anticipated deaths are staggering. This is why planning how to respond to an influenza pandemic is so important. Although we do not know exactly when a pandemic will happen, or where influenza will first appear, it is very reassuring to know that you and your community have taken the necessary steps to prepare. This can be done by planning and training first responders on the correct procedures and care.

What strategic actions are recommended by the World Health Organization?

In August 2005, WHO sent all countries a document outlining recommended strategic actions for responding to the avian influenza pandemic threat. Recommended actions aim to strengthen national preparedness, reduce opportunities for a pandemic virus to emerge, improve the early warning system, delay initial international spread, and accelerate vaccine development.

Is the world adequately prepared?

WHO has urged all countries to develop preparedness plans. To date, 40 countries have done so. WHO, FAO, and donor countries are urging countries to take the pandemic threat seriously and plan how to minimize the risk. The H2P Initiative (discussed below) is an excellent resource to help countries plan a response to an influenza pandemic.

What can we do to help keep our community calm during a pandemic outbreak?

The first step is to make sure that information being reported is correct and that it comes from a credible source. During a national emergency such as an influenza pandemic the media plays an important role in helping to maintain calm and reduce panic. It does this by continued broadcasting and by stopping rumors and misinformation. Staying in contact with local authorities and experts will help give you access to correct information. The pandemic influenza situation may change rapidly. Keeping people updated through community announcements, television and radio broadcasts, and newspapers helps to eliminate fear. Reliable information is reassuring.

Where can I find more information about pandemic influenza?

There are several regularly updated websites that you can visit that have in-depth information on the pandemic influenza planning and response. These are the World Health Organization's Epidemic and

Pandemic Management Response web site (<http://www.who.int/csr/en/>) and the US Government's Centers for Disease Control (<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/pandemic/healthprofessional.htm>).

CARING FOR PEOPLE WITH PANDEMIC INFLUENZA

Who is most at risk of developing severe disease from pandemic influenza?

Some people are at greater risk for illness and death if they have pandemic influenza, such as people who already have a health problem. For example, people with certain medical conditions, such as tuberculosis or other lung diseases, HIV/AIDS, diabetes, heart problems, or kidney disease, are at a higher risk of having serious problems from pandemic influenza.

How can you be prepared for a pandemic influenza outbreak?

A good way to prepare for pandemic influenza is by knowing how to prevent it, knowing how to treat the symptoms, practicing good health habits, and keeping basic supplies at home, such as food, water, medicines, and cleaning items.

What good respiratory etiquette practices can help prevent the spread of pandemic influenza?

If you are sick, wearing a mask, scarf, or other piece of clean cloth over your mouth and nose may protect others from getting pandemic influenza, and protect you from other illnesses. If you wear a disposable mask over your nose and mouth, throw it away in a trash bin immediately after use. If you wear a cloth over your nose and mouth, wash it with soap and warm water immediately after use.

What good hygiene practices can prevent the spread of pandemic influenza?

There are several good hygiene practices that can help to control the spread of pandemic influenza. They are:

- Do not spit in public. If you are sick, this can spread the disease to others.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose and eyes with your hands.
- If possible, wash your hands with soap and water before handling food or drink and after coughing or sneezing, using the bathroom, caring for a sick person, or handling garbage or animal waste.
- Regularly clean areas that many people touch, such as door knobs or telephones.
- Keep the household clean; influenza viruses can usually be killed by using soap and water.

It is important to note that you can spread the influenza virus to other people before you are aware you are sick. It is therefore helpful to follow these practices routinely.

What are the benefits of isolation and quarantine?

Keeping sick people and people who have been exposed to pandemic influenza away from others may help to slow the spread of the disease. Slowing the spread of pandemic influenza can provide more time for health care facilities and families to prepare.

How do you care for those who have pandemic influenza?

As soon as symptoms develop, people should stay home and rest to improve the chances that they will recover from the illness.

If you are caring for someone with pandemic influenza, make sure that they rest and keep them as comfortable as possible. Keep people with pandemic influenza in a separate room or area that is away from others.

How do you protect yourself and your household if you are caring for a person with pandemic influenza?

If you are caring for a person with influenza, take care of your own health first. If you become sick, you will be of little use to those who need you. Wear a mask or cloth over your mouth and nose whenever you are within an arm's length of them. After contact with a sick person or anything the sick person touches, wash your hands with soap and water. Do not touch your eyes, nose, or mouth without first washing your hands with soap and water.

Wash soiled dishes and eating utensils with warm water and soap. It is not necessary to wash eating utensils used by a sick person separately from other utensils. Wash laundry with water and detergent. It is not necessary to separate soiled linen and laundry used by someone with influenza from other household laundry. When doing laundry, do not hold the laundry close to your body or face. Wash your hands with soap and water after handling soiled laundry.

Place tissues used by the sick person in a bag and throw them away with other household waste. Consider placing a bag at the bedside for this purpose.

QUESTIONS ABOUT USAID'S H2P

What is the Humanitarian Pandemic Preparedness Initiative – H2P?

The US Government has recognized the critical potential of a pandemic threat and has joined with its global partners to help countries, especially those believed to be the most vulnerable, to prepare a response to an influenza pandemic. Called Humanitarian Pandemic Preparedness – or H2P – this initiative's overall goal is to minimize the number of deaths from an influenza pandemic.

USAID on behalf of the US Government is providing technical assistance in more than 20 countries to help build the capacity of community health workers and local NGOs, as well as national governments, so they will be able to provide a rapid, coordinated, and effective response. It also is supporting community-level planning on how to organize, coordinate, and deliver an effective humanitarian response.



What organizations are partners in H2P?

USAID is the funder for the H2P Initiative. Its global partners are the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), the CORE Group, AI.COMM, InterAction, and agencies from the United Nations including OCHA and the WFP.

What are the countries where H2P is working?

Twenty countries have been identified to conduct assessments and begin pandemic response planning. To date, assessments have been conducted in Egypt, Nepal, Ethiopia, Mali, and Rwanda. Assessments will be conducted in 5 more countries by the end of 2008.

RESOURCES

Nonpharmaceutical Interventions

- Recommendations for nonpharmaceutical public health interventions, WHO 2005 checklist: Annex I of the WHO global influenza preparedness plan:
http://www.who.int/csr/resources/publications/influenza/WHO_CDS_CSR_GIP_2005_5/en/
- Nonpharmaceutical Interventions for Pandemic Influenza, National and Community Measures, WHO Writing Group, Emerging Infectious Diseases, January 2006:
<http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/EID/vol12no01/pdfs/05-1371.pdf>

Community and Home Care

- Reducing excess mortality from common illnesses during an influenza pandemic, WHO guidelines for emergency health interventions in community settings, Draft HSE/EPR/DCE 30 May 2008
- WHO/UNICEF Informal discussion on behavioural interventions for the next influenza pandemic, Summary and recommendations, December 2006:
http://www.unicef.org/influenzaresources/index_764.html
- Good Home Treatment of Influenza by Grattan Woodson, MD, FACP:
<http://www.birdflumanual.com/>

Continuity of Services

- Government of New Zealand pandemic flu Business Continuity Planning Guide, October 2005
http://www.med.govt.nz/irdev/econ_dev/pandemic-planning/business-continuity/planning-guide/index.html;
- Pandemic influenza preparedness & mitigation in refugee & displaced populations, WHO guidelines for humanitarian agencies, May, 2006,
http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/guidelines/humanitariandoc2006_04_07/en/index.html);
- Avian & Pandemic Influenza Planning Assumptions, Summary Preparedness Matrix, Save the Children (US)
http://www.savethechildren.org/publications/technical-resources/avian-flu/aifpp/19-Flu_Planning_Assumptions_Matrix112706.doc

World Health Organization Guidelines for Avian Influenza

http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/guidelines/en/

International Health Regulations

<http://www.who.int/csr/ihr/en/>

PAHO-CDC Generic Protocol for Influenza Surveillance

<http://www.amro.who.int/English/AD/DPC/CD/flu-snl-gpis.pdf>