

## **ADB Update on Avian Flu Crisis, 10 February 2004**

**Countries affected and latest figures:** At present,<sup>1</sup> outbreaks of influenza in captive bird (predominantly chicken) populations caused by the highly contagious H5N1 virus subtype have been reported in eight countries: Cambodia, People's Republic of China, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Viet Nam and Lao Peoples' Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). Human cases have been reported only in Viet Nam (18 confirmed cases, 13 deaths) and in Thailand (5 confirmed cases, 5 deaths). Pakistan and Taipei, China have reported outbreaks of avian flu but caused by different, more benign strains. No outbreak has been reported in the Philippines.

On 6 February, WHO reported that the results from further analysis of a cluster of family members that were infected and died in Viet Nam show that no human influenza virus was involved. This is reassuring because it indicates that the virus has not changed to a form easily transmitted from one person to another.

The figures on the outbreak – countries affected, number of outbreaks, human infections and fatalities – are changing rapidly. The most recent figures can be found at: [www.who.int](http://www.who.int), where there is an 'Avian influenza A (H5N1)' update most days.

**Latest information:** There is a very good synopsis of the bird flu outbreak in the journal Nature this week (thanks to Brad Philips for providing the reference): <http://www.nature.com/nsu/040202/040202-11.html#>

**ADB activities:** An information paper was prepared for President Chino and went to the Board on Friday 5 February. President Chino has written to counterparts in Indonesia, Philippines, Viet Nam, Cambodia, Thailand, Lao People's Democratic Republic and People's Republic of China to express ADB's concern and willingness to provide assistance.

The Regional and Sustainable Development Department convened a meeting of all involved areas (RDs, OER, etc) on Monday 2 February. The meeting heard from Dr Richard Brown of WHO and Dr David Hall of FAO. Both advised that culling of infected, or potentially infected, chicken populations remained the major focus. WHO is monitoring human cases very closely with the key concern being to confirm infection with the H5N1 virus and track modes of transmission. While the media reported a possible case of human-to-human transmission in Viet Nam, WHO says it will probably be impossible to confirm what happened in this particular situation (three infections within one family) and they do not necessarily see this as being indicative of a new form of virus that will lead to widespread human-to-human transmission. Regional departments continue to monitor the situation in respective countries and work with Resident Missions to offer ADB support. An update from Resident Missions is below.

**Viet Nam Resident Mission.** The mission has purchased 15,000 suits for animal control workers doing the culling of chickens (\$50,000 in expenditure) whom are recognized as being most at risk.

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<sup>1</sup> This memo incorporates outbreak statistics reported by WHO as of 9 February 2004.

These were presented to Vietnamese authorities at a turn-over ceremony in Hanoi on 9 February. See news release at:

<http://www.adb.org/Documents/News/2004/nr2004014.asp>

**Cambodia Resident Mission.** Cambodia's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) convened a meeting of the Interministerial Committee on Combating Avian Flu on 3 February with the donor community in attendance. The Government presented a draft proposal to mobilize financial resources for combating the flu and ADB has offered \$50,000 for immediate purchase of supplies that can be obtained in Cambodia or Thailand.

**Lao Resident Mission.** ADB has met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and there has been a request for some assistance with purchasing supplies immediately needed to contain the outbreak. Further discussions are being held with the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture.

**PRC Resident Mission:** ADB has been in discussions with the Ministry of Health about the situation and, in the context of ongoing implementation of the SARS related technical assistance, discussed needs for the response to avian flu. More discussions are expected.

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