

**Ministry of Healthcare & Nutrition
Epidemiological Unit**

231, de Saram Place, Colombo 010, Sri Lanka

Telephone: Epidemiologist :(+94-11-)2681548, Epid unit: (+94-11-)2695112 Fax: (+94-11-)2696583, E-mail:
chepid@sltnet.lk and epidunit@sltnet.lk

National Workshop on Table Top Exercises on National Avian/Pandemic Preparedness

The National Workshop on Table Top Exercises on National Avian/Pandemic Preparedness was held on the 20th September 2007 at the Hilton Colombo Residence, Colombo. This workshop was organized by the Epidemiology Unit, Ministry of Health and was sponsored by WHO. Main collaborator for the workshop was the Department of Animal Production & Health. The workshop drew participants from varied sectors such as higher officials from Ministries of Health and Animal Husbandry & Livestock, armed forces, finance, education, environment, media, disaster management, local authorities, major referral hospitals and international donor agencies.

The workshop was declared open by Dr M R N Abeysinghe Chief Epidemiologist, Dr P G Maheepala, Deputy Director General Public Health Services, Dr Paba Palihawadana, Deputy Epidemiologist and Dr J Dharmawardane, Director Veterinary Research Institute. The introductory session was on the objectives of the programme by Dr Abeysinghe, country preparedness on Avian Influenza by Dr Palihawadana, progress on AI preparedness in animal health by Dr Dharmawardane and the National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan (NIPP) by Dr Ranjan Wijesinghe, Consultant Epidemiologist.

The afternoon session consisted of group work with the participants being divided into 3 groups to work individually on given scenarios. Each group was assigned a facilitator and an evaluator who were responsible to steer the group through the scenarios and to compare their discussions with the NIPP. Overall supervision of the group work was done by the team of external evaluators from WHO which consisted of Dr Y Choudri of WHO/SEARO, R Najeem of Public Health/Maldives and C Wannous of WHO/Maldives. A spokesperson from each group presented their recommendations to the forum.

Recommendations

Communication

- Communication messages and material relevant to every stage/event and activity need to be developed in advance for each target group
- Spokesperson (national and local) for each stage need to be identified in advance and the flow of communication need to be established

De Population and containment

- Mechanism of enforcement need to established
- Guidelines on monetary compensation need to be established

Personal Protection

- Regular simulations need to be held at each level

Disposal of Carcasses/human bodies

- Guidelines need to be expanded and strengthened

Quarantine

- Guidelines need to be strengthened

Prophylaxis

- Strict guidelines need to be developed

Isolation of Patients

- Establishment of isolation units in selected hospitals has to be expedited

Social Distancing

- Strict guidelines need to be developed with involvement of all stakeholders

Surge Capacity

- Guidelines for each level of hospital including private hospitals and military hospitals need to be developed
- Simulation and training need to be carried out

International Health Regulations

- Relevant target groups need to be well trained

Case Investigation and Management

- Case investigation forms need to be prepared and pre-tested
- Protocols on screening of patients, infection control and personal protection should be displayed at hospitals in simple one page formats

Advocacy

- Representations from trade, finance and political groups need to be made to the National Steering Committee

Assistance from Donor agencies/WHO

- Financial assistance may be required from WHO and other donor agencies