



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

NOTE FOR THE PRESS



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**Note for the Media WHO/7
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WHO WIDENS WORK ON AVIAN AND PANDEMIC INFLUENZA PREPAREDNESS TO REACH DISPLACED POPULATIONS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Geneva: This week, the World Health Organization (WHO) organized two technical meetings on preparedness for the impact of pandemic influenza on refugee and displaced populations, and on social mobilization to reduce the risks of avian influenza.

1. Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Mitigation in Refugee and Displaced Populations

WHO met with humanitarian agency partners including other UN agencies, international organizations and NGOs to finalize guidelines for pandemic influenza preparedness among refugee and displaced populations. The meeting of technical experts from NGOs, other UN organizations and donor agencies addressed key issues surrounding detection, response, containment, and impact mitigation in the event of an influenza pandemic. Overcrowding, high rates of malnutrition and poor access to healthcare and public health services are likely to dramatically increase rates of death and disease in the event of an influenza pandemic.

New guidelines, entitled "Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Mitigation in Refugee and Displaced Populations - WHO Guidelines for Humanitarian Agencies," are being finalized for publication in late March. Participants discussed critical issues facing humanitarian agencies, particularly early warning surveillance, risk communication, protection of staff, infection control, clinical management and stockpiling.

Following the release of these guidelines, WHO will continue to provide technical support to humanitarian agencies as preparedness activities are strengthened at the field level.

2. Social mobilization

WHO, together with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and UNICEF, met to identify ways to better support Member States and affected populations in developing clear public health communication to reduce the spread of avian influenza in animals and protect the human population from infection.

The participants from the three UN agencies examined the most important behaviours needed to reduce risks of transmission and the impact on individuals, communities and groups such as poultry producers, and how best to disseminate the messages through national and local organizations. The meeting identified a set of behavioural interventions to contribute to reducing the risk of AI transmission.

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