

## GENDER-SPECIFIC ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COMMUNITY-BASED AVIAN AND HUMAN INFLUENZA (AHI) MANAGEMENT IN ASIA

*Gender mainstreaming is considered as one of the most important themes of ADPC's capacity building programs and projects. Whenever possible, ADPC advocates to our partners and training participants, the importance of dealing with gender-specific issues in a multi-sectoral approach involving various stakeholders.*

The "Strengthening Community-Based Approaches to Management of Avian and Human Influenza (AHI) in Asia" Project, funded by the Canadian government through the Asian Development Bank, was implemented by the AHI-NGO-RC/RC-Asia Partnership, comprised of the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, CARE, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Rescue Committee during November 2007 to February 2009. *Some of these specific gender-issues identified on in the implementation of the project were as follows:*

The importance of building relationships – as in the case of the community-based avian and human influenza (AHI) project, cooperation with other organizations and linking of existing community-based AHI activities (*i.e. trainings, AI awareness promotion using IEC materials, etc.*), solicit support and involvement of a broader range of stakeholders such women's unions, farmers' association, civil societies, religious leaders, school communities, government, NGOs, Red Cross/Red Crescent Movements, UN and other international/local organizations implementing AHI related projects is very essential in increasing the likelihood of the project's success and sustainability. This will avoid duplication, maximizing time and other the limited resources. It is therefore important that partnerships are fostered in order to share strengths and overcome weaknesses.

Related to the above point, the AHI awareness-raising messages need to cover to a wider-community beyond the target beneficiaries such as school compound, for instance, and involve other local community groups such as religious, farmers and women-based organizations. Members of these women-based organizations can be trained and in turn will provide an informal avenue for teaching other women and mothers avian influenza (AI) messages, animal raising techniques, disseminating up-to-date information on disease management, channeling assistance to communities, and strengthening linkages between stakeholders. This primarily holds true especially in a context where women are primary involve in poultry-raising, targeting women in efforts to promote healthy and sustainable backyard poultry farming can increase their capacity to protect the livelihoods and health of their families and potentially raise the status of women within the community.

Targeting primary school children as 'learning agents'. They can learn life-skills to protect themselves and can play an important role in disseminating key risk reduction messages to their family members and friends in the community. Young children are regarded as 'excellent multipliers' and if appropriate strategies are applied in awareness building (in primary schools), they can have a major impact to the local communities.

Changes in awareness, attitudes and behavior can not be achieved over a short-time period and needs different approaches. Young children are regarded as the most receptive group when aiming for behavior change – they learn a lot through imitation. Key messages taught in school such as personal hygiene promotion (e.g. proper hand washing techniques) needs to be practiced rather than merely dictating it. The school needs to provide an 'enabling environment' (providing hand washing facilities in the school) to promote hand washing at appropriate times.

**The Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC)**, non-profit organization supporting the advancement of safer communities and sustainable development, through implementing programs and projects that reduce the impact of disasters upon countries and communities in Asia and the Pacific, was established in 1986 with the aim of strengthening the national disaster risk management systems in the region.

In accomplishing its mission, ADPC develops and implements cross-sectoral programs and projects in the following disaster risk management thematic areas: climate risk management, community-based disaster risk management, disaster risk management systems, public health in emergencies, training resources and urban disaster risk management.

**The Public Health in Emergencies (PHE)** team aims to improve health outcomes of communities at risk of emergencies and disasters. In collaboration with our partners, PHE develops and implements capacity building projects and training programs which address continuing and emerging challenges in health emergency management at regional, national, sub-national and community levels. PHE programs help to strengthen health emergency management systems by building relationships between health disciplines and by integrating the health sector into community-wide disaster management systems.

ADPC's work is primarily focused on the Asian region, where it has implemented programs and projects, and provided technical services and training in the following countries in Asia: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Lao PDR, Maldives, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste, Vietnam.

Visit the ADPC website for more details at <http://www.adpc.net>

CIDA-ADB funded project on "Strengthening Community - Based Approaches to Management of Avian and Human Influenza (AHI) in Asia" project website at <http://www.adpc.net/communityAHI->

Project monitoring and evaluation using focus group discussions in a separate groups of audience (i.e. children, men and women) are proven more effective, impartial and promotes openness especially in a culture where children are not allowed to give their opinions in the presence of their parents or elders nor question the views of their parents or elders in the community or in a patriarchal society where women could not freely express their opinions. Project implementers, on the other hand, will be able to validate the information gathered from these different points of view.