

PRIPPP: a joint effort to accelerate influenza pandemic preparedness

SPC convened a workshop in Nadi, Fiji Islands on 23 and 24 February 2006 in collaboration with AusAID to finalise an important proposal: the Pacific Regional Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Project (PRIPPP).

PRIPPP has been developed mainly in response to Australia's announcement to support Pacific states' capacity to counter threats posed by highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), influenza pandemic threat and other infectious diseases, through funding of AU\$8 million to PPHSN through SPC (mentioned in *Inform'ACTION* 22: 25). The announcement was made during the Pacific Islands Forum leaders' meeting in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea in late 2005. New Zealand has also made funding available to SPC for influenza pandemic preparedness work in the Pacific (NZ\$825,000). SPC intends to seek additional funding from other donors with a direct interest in the Pacific region and who may be interested in supporting the initiative.

The project is in line with resolutions from the Pacific Heads of Agriculture and Forestry and Heads of Veterinary and Animal Production Services. It will involve a number of key organisations working in human health and animal health – namely SPC, WHO and OIE – for the benefit of the 22 core member PICTs of PPHSN.

PRIPPP will allow regional coordination of initiatives related to avian influenza and human influenza preparedness and ensure optimal utilisation of limited resources, avoiding duplication.

Objective and components

The aim of PRIPPP is to ensure preparedness among all PICTs, at both national and regional levels, against avian influenza epidemic, the human influenza pandemic threat and other emerging diseases. While significant progress has been made in many PICTs with influenza pandemic preparedness plans (IPPP), there is an urgent need for all PICTs to further develop, finalise and test their national influenza preparedness plans and reinforce their animal surveillance and response activities in the region.

PRIPPP's components reflect the following three broad areas of intervention:

- preparedness and broader emergency plans;
- surveillance and response by public and animal health systems; and
- regional coordination and project management.

Implementation

The project will be implemented in all PICTs with the assistance of the regional institutions mentioned above (SPC, WHO and OIE), under the management of SPC and WHO. The activities related to human health will be coordinated through PPHSN with the guidance of the PPHSN Influenza Specialist Group or a PPHSN Regional Pandemic Preparedness Taskforce yet to be defined, while those related to the animal health component will be coordinated by the Animal Health and Production team at SPC in Suva.

Contacts

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First PRIPPP recruit

'Ana Seini Tupou Veihoa Motuliki Kupu joined SPC's Public Health Surveillance and Communicable Disease Control Section team in early April 2006 to start implementing PRIPPP activities. Before coming to SPC, Dr Kupu worked in the Tonga Ministry of Health as Senior Medical Officer in charge of Communicable Disease Control and Prevention, Public Health Division. Her main role and responsibilities within the PRIPPP project include, but are not limited to, working with PICTs to facilitate completion of their IPPPs and test their plans, and other related activities as required in her terms of reference. Dr Kupu is

no stranger to the region or to influenza pandemic preparedness – she worked at SPC in 2004 on a regional project for SARS and influenza preparedness as an ADB consultant to PPHSN.