



BUREAU FOR DEMOCRACY, CONFLICT, AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE (DCHA) OFFICE OF U.S. FOREIGN DISASTER ASSISTANCE (OFDA)

RESPONSE TO A POTENTIAL PANDEMIC INFLUENZA EVENT

WHAT IS PANDEMIC INFLUENZA?

A pandemic is a global disease outbreak. An influenza pandemic occurs when a new influenza virus emerges to which people have little or no immunity. As a result, the virus can replicate in humans, begin to cause serious illness, and be easily transmitted from person-to-person worldwide. Scientists and health experts anticipate that a new pandemic would last six to twelve weeks in a given community, but may continue in waves for as long as two to three years. A pandemic would be expected to cause significant disruption in basic services, leading to a multi-sectoral disaster, possibly accompanied by population movements and large-scale security threats.

WHAT IS USAID/OFDA'S ROLE?

The USAID Continuity of Operations Plan has designated USAID/OFDA as the lead U.S. Government (USG) office for humanitarian response to a pandemic disaster. In the event that the U.N. World Health Organization declares a Pandemic Phase Six¹, USAID/OFDA may be called upon to lead the USG provision of humanitarian assistance to affected countries. USAID/OFDA's response would not include preparedness, containment, vaccines, or medical treatment, as these activities are the responsibility of other USG agencies.² USAID/OFDA would provide humanitarian aid if the magnitude of the disaster exceeds the affected country's response capacity, the affected country has requested or will accept USG assistance, and it is in the interest of the USG to respond. In line with USAID/OFDA's mandate, USAID/OFDA would attempt to minimize the number of lives lost, alleviate suffering, and reduce the social and economic impact of the pandemic in affected communities.

HOW WOULD USAID/OFDA PROVIDE SUPPORT TO PARTNERS?

USAID/OFDA would work with USAID's Global Health Avian and Pandemic Influenza (USAID/API) Unit, in close partnership and collaboration with other USG agencies, national governments, the U.N., the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, local Red Cross/Red Crescent societies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), to reduce excess morbidity and mortality from an influenza pandemic. USAID/OFDA's response would potentially include:

- Coordination of the humanitarian response for the USG, including activation of a modified Disaster Assistance Response Team and Response Management Team structure;
- Support for public international organizations (PIOs) and NGOs to respond at the country level;
- Dissemination of accurate and timely information about the worldwide situation to relevant USG agencies and partners;
- Provision of funding to PIOs and/or NGOs for broad spectrum public health messaging and other multi-sector pandemic response activities;
- Engagement with funded NGO partners to continue, refocus, or suspend active awards;
- Guidance on prioritization of activities for USAID partners; and
- Support for the USAID/API Unit to assist countries to implement established national pandemic preparedness plans (PPP).

¹ http://www.who.int/csr/disease/avian_influenza/phase/en/index.html

² Additional information is available at <http://pandemicflu.gov>

WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO USAID/OFDA'S ONGOING PROGRAMS?

USAID/OFDA regional offices could be asked to conduct country or regional meetings with partners to discuss USAID/OFDA's response plan and coordination efforts.

As possible, USAID/OFDA would request that partners:

- Coordinate with local governments to streamline existing services and use national PPPs;
- Gather information about and report on the situation in-country;
- Assist with information dissemination to local communities through multi-sector programs, additional health and hygiene messaging campaigns, and education on the availability of essential services; and
- Organize and provide resources for sector-wide programs.

NOTE: A pandemic influenza event would also affect humanitarian agencies, leading to sick and absent employees. USAID/OFDA does not wish to endanger partner staff, and response activities would be at the discretion of the partner, given the situation in their operational areas. In the event of a pandemic influenza disaster, agencies that have active awards with USAID/OFDA funding should contact the cognizant technical officer for the program to notify USAID/OFDA of any changes in program activities, delays, or additional actions to respond to the pandemic.

WEBSITE RESOURCES

- USG pandemic and avian influenza information: <http://pandemicflu.gov>
- Information on the UN response to avian influenza and the pandemic threat: <http://www.un-influenza.org/>
- World Health Organization Pandemic page: <http://www.who.int/csr/disease/influenza/pandemic/en/>
- InterAction member response to pandemic and avian influenza: <http://www.interaction.org>
- UN System Influenza Coordination (UNSIC): <http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=21>

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