

# **Technical workshop Avian Flu and the Workplace: Preparedness and Response**

## **Document for Discussion**

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### **ILO's Preliminary Proposals to the UN Action Plan:**

The ILO is fully committed to supporting the *Consolidated Action Plan* and stands by the principles so well captured by the United Nations Secretary General in his introduction of the *Consolidated Action Plan*, where he says that health, development and global security are inextricably linked.

The ILO has been invited to contribute to the next Consolidated Action Plan due for revision early next year. The Consolidated Action Plan proposes seven key objectives of which objective two, three, four and five are of particular relevance to the ILO's mandate.

This document is an attempt to summarize the main suggestions that the ILO experts raised in internal consultative meetings, held in preparation for the workshop.

#### **Objective 2: Protect Livelihoods in a Sustainable Manner and Encourage Resilience:**

Description:

This objective deals with the issue of livelihoods, as impacted by the Avian Flu; it also emphasizes the importance of protecting and sustaining these livelihoods. Key Items covered: close monitoring of the labour markets in affected regions and procedures of compensation for farmers/producers, whose poultry has been affected by the avian flu.

In this regard the following actionable points are suggested:

- Use employers' and workers' organizations to mobilize the poultry industry to obtain the ILO's own stream of information on the impact of the Avian Flu on livelihoods, employment and related topics. The ILO will position itself as a facilitator to the efforts undertaken by the FAO, OIE and the WHO, since it has effective entry points through its constituents.
- The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) and the Public Services International (PSI) unions will mobilize their affiliates in gathering first hand information from the workplace. Very

effective and relevant information can be collected in this manner and thus further assist Avian Flu efforts.

- It is essential to educate the public on matters concerning the Avian Flu; however this objective should be achieved in a way so that it does not alarm the public but informs them. In this scenario we must recognize the importance of the workplace as a successful tool.
- The ILO will assist in the development of a methodology to assess the labour market implications of the Avian Flu, utilizing its experience and database for similar types of situations (e.g. Tsunami, Pakistan Earthquake etc).
- The ILO will assist in the design of safety net income support measures for those adversely affected by the Avian Flu, building on its experience in dealing with situations arising from natural disasters.
- The ILO will examine the measures that have been taken to mitigate health and livelihoods-related hazards stemming from Avian Flu and also of the measures that are planned. Keeping in mind that the effects would not be limited to the poultry sector but could also affect travel and tourism sectors.
- Efforts should be undertaken to develop the capacity of the health departments to respond to a possible pandemic.
- The importance of involving the private sector in relief efforts will be helpful as they could play a vital role in preparing for a pandemic. Due to its tripartite mandate the ILO is well situated to further this goal.
- The ILO will assist the Ministries of Labour to be actively involved in both preparing for as well as relief efforts emerging at the national level. They could play a vital role in preparing for a pandemic to catalyze the capacity building process.

### **Objective 3: Ensure that Systems for Ensuring Health of Human Populations Reflect International Health Regulations and WHO Standards:**

Description:

This objective deals with the health hazards that the human population faces as a direct result of the Avian Flu and stresses that their health should be protected in cases of Avian Flu outbreaks. The objective also emphasizes the preparation of early warning systems that can prompt early identification of disease within a population.

In this regard, the following Actionable Points are suggested:

- The ILO will assist countries to improve working conditions and protect workers against the Avian Flu, drawing from ILO international standards and technical guidelines dealing with occupational safety and health.
- The issue of workers rights is very important and thus the Consolidated Action Plan must give it prominent attention. In discussions with the union representatives it was identified that there was very little protection for front line workers, health workers and labour and food inspectors and awareness of their rights at work.
- The ILO has been a pioneer in assuring the protection of workers' rights and thus will substantially contribute to the third objective in pushing for higher occupational health and safety standards.

**Objective 4: Achieve Synergy between the Actions of National, Regional and International Stakeholders:**

Description:

The fourth objective accentuates the need for harmonizing the actions undertaken by different governments and agencies in tackling the Avian Flu.

In this regard, the following Actionable Points are suggested:

- It is imperative that governments, employers' and workers' organizations be engaged in the process of policy development and implementation as a result of consultation and collaboration between all concerned parties.
- Collaboration amongst the various stakeholders is essential in the development of successful plans. Thus the ILO will play the role of engaging its tripartite partners and could make available its tools and publications.<sup>1</sup>
- Effective consultative procedures will be set up between Governments, UN Agencies and Trade Unions at the international, national and regional levels. The ILO should emphasize the right to consultation and social dialogue.

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<sup>1</sup> *Handbook for Practitioners, Social Dialogue in the Health Services*

## **Objective 5: Provide Key Decision Makers with Timely Information and Encourage Behavior Change:**

Description:

This objective stresses the need for providing timely and relevant information to key decision makers as well as promoting a behavior change amongst people at risk of contracting the Avian Flu virus.

In this regard, the following Actionable Points are suggested:

- The ILO will facilitate access to up to date information on risks and control measures to promote preventive behaviors at the workplace. This function should be appropriately recognized.
- The ILO will be active in offering, disseminating and exchanging up-to-date information on risks and control measures among governmental agencies and national institutions responsible for occupational safety and health-related issues.
- The ILO will also:
  - Collect, organize, summarize, and disseminate information produced by the UN agencies and national safety and health institutions on health risks and control measures.
  - Disseminate and facilitate the exchange of information among the ILO tripartite partners responsible for the establishment and implementation of national policies and programmes in the area of occupational safety and health.
- The ILO with the help of the social partners will promote behaviour changes in areas of sanitation, processing of poultry products and safety for front line workers.