

Consultative meeting with MoH and DoL, MoA on Influenza A(H1N1)

Date: 10th June 2009

Time: 4.00pm – 5.30pm

Venue: Secretary's Chamber, Ministry of Health

Participants:

1. Honorable Secretary, MoH
2. Director General, DoL, MoA
3. Director, DoPH, MoH
4. Dr. J B Gurung, DoL, MoA
5. Dr. Karma Rinzin, NCAH, DoL, MoA
6. Mr. Tandin Dorji, CPO, DoPH
7. Ms. Roma Karki, DoPH

Background

Considering the imminent pandemic and the rapid spread of H1N1 virus globally from country to country, an ad-hoc consultative meeting was called between Ministry of Health and Department of Livestock, MoA to draw a plan of action for further response and preparedness to potential pandemic.

Discussion

The meeting started with a brief note by Honorable Secretary, MoH on the global situation of H1N1 and detection of confirmed cases in India and Thailand which leaves Bhutan vulnerable to H1N1 infection. In his note, Honorable Secretary acknowledged the smooth collaboration between MoA and MoH in working together to prevent incursion of Avian Influenza virus into the country. Also, he highlighted the importance of working collectively with other stakeholders in preventing the H1N1 infection as well from entering into the country. He said that since the H1N1 infection is in human, MoH would be at the forefront to lead in fighting against H1N1 virus with support from other relevant agencies.

He also briefed on the preventive measures put in place by Ministry of Health like screening of passengers, advocacy through media, posters and leaflet, re-enforcement of ARI surveillance, and vigilance at the border entry points. He reminded that it is important to exchange information on the updates and response activities with other ministries and agencies.

The Director General, DoL also acknowledged the close collaboration between MoA and MoH in fighting against AI and reminded that two ministries is sharing a common project which is an advantage for close coordination. He pointed out that MoH needs to be more vigilant at this stage since it is at the verge of declaring a pandemic. He added that close monitoring of travelers screening at the entry points, especially at the airport is very important. He also emphasized on having a platform where information of Influenza A activities are updated.

Director, DoPH and CPO, CDD informed on the recent updates of ongoing activities and the activities planned for the coming days. They also sought directives on some concerned issues like having emergency funds for Influenza A activities and activation of different committees of National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan.

Recommendations

1. Department of Livestock, BAFRA and MoH should continue working jointly on prevention and preparedness from/to Influenza A though health would take lead role since the infection is in human at this stage.
2. Information needs to be shared to all ministries/sectors and agencies at both central and district level. Ministry of Health will upload all influenza A related updates in the health website.
3. An emergency fund to conduct activities related to Influenza A(H1N1) needs to be set up. At the moment, the MoH is facing great difficulties in mobilizing funds for these activities. Therefore, MoH shall request the Government for carrying out Influenza A activities.
4. Executive Committee members and National Incident Command Center (NICC) members need to be reviewed and revised. Executive Committee should consist members at Secretary, Director General and Director levels where as NICC should have more technical people.
5. Meeting for activation of Executive Committee of NIPPP shall be conducted in the coming week (18th June).
6. Diagnostic facility need to be urgently in place. Therefore, procurement of RT-PCR through World Bank should be expedited by exploring the possibility of using shorter procurement method. The NIPR project will communicate this with the World Bank and work out the options of shorter procurement procedure.
7. Thermal scanner at all five entry points is required for smooth and affective screening of travelers for Influenza A. High priority will be given for Paro Airport and Phuntsholing gate. Therefore, MoH will request WHO Office for their support in procuring the thermal scanner.
8. The Government will be requested for Executive Order for the activation of National Steering Committee and Executive Committee of National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan.
9. Ministry of Health will appraise the National Assembly and National Council members on Influenza A(H1N1) response and preparedness during the next National Assembly session.

