

MID-BCC – Communications for Change in Infectious Diseases in Greater Mekong Subregion

Using SMS Technology to Share Information on Potential Avian Influenza Outbreak



5 – 6 September 2012
Mercure Hotel, Vientiane Capital

Background

The Lao Women Union has an extensive network of women's groups that operate throughout Laos - at the central, provincial, district and village levels to carry health and nutrition information to rural women and children and their families. Their total membership currently exceeds 1,000,000 women – reaching virtually every household in the country.

With support from AED under the USAID-funded AI.COMM in 2007, the Lao Women Union has put in place on the ground sources of information and training on how to prevent and control Avian Influenza. During an outbreak, it has an emergency response network in place to immediately reach affected villages with key messages and materials.

FHI360 was optimistic that the Lao Women's Union's capacity to move community outreach and mobilization and be engaged during disease outbreaks and pandemics can be further strengthened if they will be introduced and trained on the use of SMS technology.

Objectives of the project

- ❑ To coordinate the work more effective between LWU at central and local levels.
- ❑ To build the networking information exchange.
- ❑ To report timely.
- ❑ To contribute in surveillance and follow up diseases outbreak.
- ❑ To build the capacity in using new technology for efficiency in information sharing.

Objectives of the Mpanel

- ❑ Orient LWU members from Vientiane Capital, Bokeo, Luang Namtha, and Savannakhet on the use of mobile phone panel.
- ❑ Provide LWU members in select districts of Vientiane Capital an opportunity to experience and use the SMS system in Lao language.
- ❑ Participate in the pre-test of a questionnaire which will be used by LWU in mobile phone panel (*mpanel*) survey.

Training of Trainers

- 2 trainings in Vientiane
 - + To test the system with 20 participants
 - + TOT with 20 participants
- Luang Namtha with 25 participants
- Bokeo with 24 participants
- Savannakhet with 27 participants



How to conduct

- ❑ Selection of participants by criteria
- ❑ Register to mpanel system
- ❑ 71 participants registered
- ❑ The members got the link to answer to the survey questions one a week, in total 6 weeks.
- ❑ The survey' questions were in Lao language
- ❑ Launched 4 to 6 questions in each week.
- ❑ To answer the survey, members should have access with internet.



Data collection

- Data submitted by panel participants was monitored through an on-line administrator
- The administrator also tracked non-response and potential drop-outs across all panel members



Findings

- ❑ In human health, LWU is involved in activities ranging from providing basic health information to families assisting the district office
- ❑ They are engaged in local media campaigns and media broadcasts
- ❑ LWU members are able to report on symptoms they have observed at times they can link to specific diseases

Findings

- In animal health, like Avian influenza, they provide info to the local community, coordinate with the district agricultural office
- They commonly observe sick and dead animals like poultry, pigs, and buffalos
- Cases of animal deaths, while observed, are not reported through formal channels

Lessons Learned

- ❑ LWU members learned new technology in communication.
- ❑ LWU gained knowledge on how to use mpanel system for reporting.
- ❑ Able to explain and exchange what they have learned on mpanel to others.
- ❑ Basic knowledge for using internet on the phone for messaging.

Lessons Learned

- The SMS technology is fast and efficient in reporting and sharing of information but it relies on the efficiency of internet connection which varies among provinces
- LWU could potentially be involved and play a role in regular disease monitoring or surveillance using SMS
- Cases of animal deaths yet remained unreported through proper channels may spark potential infections that could go unnoticed
- A higher level of government support will widen the scope of this innovation especially if this will be applied in other issues internal to LWU

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Thank you!