

## Module 14///Innovative Activity Profile 3

### Vietnam: Gender Mainstreaming in the UN Joint Programme on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza<sup>1</sup>

The UN Joint Programme on Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) provides a framework for reducing the risk of HPAI and enhancing national and local capacity to manage the outbreak of epidemics. Due to women's dependence on poultry for their livelihoods and their vital roles in backyard poultry production, (e.g. involvement in decisions about vaccination, marketing, and reporting of HPAI cases), FAO initiated a gender program that was incorporated into Phase I of the HPAI program. Those involved were concerned about the socioeconomic implications of avian influenza. The program, which included a gender analysis of HPAI in Vietnam, used methodological tools such as desk reviews, interviews with key informants, and consultation with gender officers from FAO headquarters.

#### What is innovative?

Examining the HPAI problem from the point of view of gender issues uncovered eye-opening results on how gender differences can affect outcomes in the prevention and spread of HPAI. It also led to findings on the disparities in how HPAI outbreaks affect women and men.

FAO also supported a study on the gender issues of HPAI control in Vietnam. A national consultant undertook a farm-level survey to address the gender and social aspects of livelihoods and biosecurity among smallholder poultry producers in the Red River and Mekong Delta regions.

---

<sup>1</sup> This Innovative Activity Profile was prepared by Argaporn Sumrit (FAO office, Vietnam), based on a number of documents and discussions with responsible staff, and reviewed by Catherine L.M. Hill, Chitra Deshpande, Catherine Ragasa (Consultants); Marcela Villarreal (FAO), Maria Hartl, Antonio Rota (IFAD); Jimmy Smith and Eija Pehu (World Bank).

The findings and detailed analysis on the gender dynamics of HPAI were used to identify specific areas in which gender differences could affect the prevention or spread of avian influenza in terms of both human and animal health. This resulted in a gender work plan that incorporated the development of gender-sensitive indicators and recommendations to be implemented in the program activities under Phase II. Although the main objective of gender mainstreaming in the program was to concentrate on the differences in gender *roles* and the impact on the prevention and control of disease, the findings have shed light on the socioeconomic aspects of HPAI in relation to gender equity, the livelihoods of women poultry raisers, and the vulnerability of their social and economic positions.

#### Innovative Features

The objectives and rationale underlying the Joint Programme constitute an innovation in themselves. The HPAI epidemic was initially viewed more as a technical and scientific phenomenon that primarily had implications on human health. For the most part, socioeconomic ramifications were neglected. Moreover, the fact that women play an important role in poultry raising and marketing—thus contributing significantly to household livelihoods and food security—had been overlooked and not well understood. Consequently, very little or no attention had been paid to gender issues in the formulation of HPAI control strategies in Vietnam or elsewhere.

Employing gender as an analytical lens in the Joint Programme established the link between gender disparity and its undermining role on the effectiveness of avian influenza disease control and eradication. Recognizing the gender aspects of HPAI is instrumental in seeing women as a frontline defense against the disease and is indispensable to the design and implementation of future HPAI programs. One of the key findings of the Joint Programme was that addressing gender is important for the success of HPAI communication campaigns with farmers and others.

In addition, using gender as an analytical tool calls for a paradigm shift in viewing avian influenza and its differential effects on the livelihoods of rural

women and men. By addressing gender, a number of positive solutions can be identified for planning and policy making.

## Benefits and Impacts

- Gender and socioeconomic aspects have been given new consideration and high importance in the development of Phase II of the Joint Programme. Gender issues are to be integrated into the various components of Phase II—enhanced coordination activities, HPAI control and eradication in the agricultural sector, HPAI prevention and preparedness in the health sector, and monitoring and evaluation.
- The gendered impacts of avian influenza on rural communities and their livelihoods are increasingly gaining attention from policy makers.
- The centrality of women in the prevention of HPAI is growing in public awareness.
- It is increasingly acknowledged that gender differences may determine the risk of exposure to the avian influenza virus due to occupational or “traditional” roles within the family. More specifically, women are often most at risk of getting infected by the virus due to their roles as poultry raisers
- Evidence-based awareness helps in designing and applying more targeted strategies for women in preparedness for and prevention of HPAI. Neglect of this important group can exacerbate the effects of economic shocks resulting from HPAI outbreak.
- In terms of livelihoods, mainstreaming gender in the HPAI program will improve women’s knowledge about biosecurity and increase their capacity to manage the disease.
- Investment in educating small-scale women poultry producers on biosecurity is expected to improve their economic well-being and prevent the loss of livelihoods. These women should be better able to secure their income from selling safe poultry products, enhancing market value, and gaining trust from buyers, particularly in the event of an outbreak. Indeed, women are primarily responsible for the sale of poultry at markets. The relatively small income from poultry production is often the sole income that is managed and

controlled by rural women. That income is often used for school supplies for the children and nonessential household items.

## Lessons Learned and Issues for Wider Applicability

***Raising awareness on the gender dynamics of HPAI and poultry raising.*** Although the gender aspects of HPAI are gaining attention, there is still a lack of gender-disaggregated data. It is imperative that a systemic awareness-raising program on the gender implications of avian influenza and the gender dynamics of poultry raising is established and supported among project officers, decision makers, and most importantly, the public. Additional research and analysis are required to provide evidence-based advocacy and supporting analysis on the role of gender in the success of HPAI prevention and control.

***Capacity building.*** Women, who are often the managers or owners of small poultry, should receive direct training in disease control methods. Women dominate most agricultural activities but do not have equal access to training. While responsible for up to 90 percent of poultry production, they represent only 25 percent of the participants in training programs for animal husbandry and 10 percent in programs on cultivation. Moreover, extension staff are most likely to communicate with men rather than women, because they believe that men are responsible for decision making on production and family matters (as head of the household). However, on the basis of the FAO study and Joint Programme analysis, women actively participate in the decision making on disease control, disinfection, and biosecurity activities. This preferential training also holds true in the veterinary service, where men maintain an advantageous position. Therefore, it is imperative that women develop an understanding of disease control methods and are appropriately trained along with their male counterparts. This should also be applied to the design of extension services in other areas where women and men’s different division of labor, knowledge, and practices must be taken into consideration for effective implementation of disease prevention and control.

***Need for a gender-sensitive communication strategy and dissemination of information and***

**materials on HPAI.** Vietnam's Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, one of the main partners of the Joint Programme, encourages a more localized and women-targeted communication strategy. This is because women predominantly participate in local planning through their representatives in the Vietnam Women's Union (VWU). In addition, women poultry raisers are less likely than men to receive the information not disseminated in their area because of their lower mobility. More importantly, women are believed to be the first line of defense in controlling the spread of disease—by recognizing the initial signs of disease and by implementing safety and biosecurity measures.

**Appropriate and strong institutional support and linkages.** The VWU is central in mainstreaming gender issues and in the outcomes in HPAI prevention initiatives. Important links have been established between the study team and the VWU in the Joint Programme. The VWU's presence in most communities offers the potential to reach women poultry keepers and to explore ways for them to participate in biosecure poultry production. The VWU is in strong favor of gender mainstreaming and agrees that a focus on women for avian influenza prevention is necessary because women are usually responsible for backyard free-range poultry, child care, and food preparation. Examples of activities to be organized by the VWU include:

- key prevention messages for small-scale poultry farmers;
- demonstrations of safe food preparation;
- safe poultry-raising practices in households with children; and
- mobilizing community members to improve reporting on suspected avian influenza cases.

Nonetheless, the capacity of VWU officers at the village level must be strengthened, including through the provision of additional training.

#### **Project Time Frame and Budget**

- The time frame for the Joint Programme is from April 2006 to December 31, 2010 (total budget of \$16,212,400).
- Time frame for FAO participation in the Joint Programme is from April 2006 to December 31, 2008, with the possibility of extension through the submission of a new work plan (total budget of \$1,810,300).
- There is no budget specifically allocated to gender mainstreaming.

#### **References**

- Curry, John. 2006. "Market Impacts as Hidden Costs of Avian Influenza on Rural Livelihoods and Households." IGG HPAI Symposium, November 14.
- FAO. 2006. "Assessment of the World Food Security Situation." Committee on World Food Security, 32<sup>nd</sup> Session, Rome, October 30–November 4.
- FAO/Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. 2007. "Future of Poultry Farmers in Vietnam after HPAI." Hanoi, March 8–9.
- Van, Cao Thi Hong. 2007. "AIERP: Poultry Restocking Impacts for Smallholders." Presented at a workshop on "The Future of Poultry Farmers in Vietnam after Highly Pathogenic Influenza," Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development/FAO, Hanoi, Vietnam, March.