

## **RESEARCH SUMMARY**

**Title:** Laos Country Report

**Study location:** Three provinces in Laos – Champasack, Savannakhet, Vientiane

**Study dates:** June 2008 (preparation date)

### **Introduction**

This research summary pulls together the findings from two related reports on information drawn from the three provinces in Laos. In response to the need for Avian Influenza (AI) prevention, AED is planning to conduct behavioural change communication activities in Vietnam, Cambodia and Laos, mainly targeted to backyard poultry farmers and small commercial poultry farmers. Research was needed to gain insight and information for developing communication strategy, and to establish baseline measures for a number of pre-determined indicators. A qualitative assessment focused on the extent to which AI is a concern to poultry farmers and other stakeholders. A quantitative report focused on KAP (Knowledge, Attitude, Practice) indicators and setting a baseline by which future communication efforts can be assessed.

### **Objectives:**

- To highlight main concerns about AI as well as knowledge gaps.
- To map results in terms of behavioral change process.
- To determine extent of behavior compliance in relation to specific KAP indicators.
- To determine main barriers to AI prevention.
- To gain an insight into effectiveness of current AI initiatives and establish a benchmark by which future programs can be assessed.
- To determine how people best can gain access to information about AI.

### **Methodology:**

The research design consisted of door-to-door surveying using a structured questionnaire with farmers in sectors 3 and 4, as well as face-to-face interviews with specified farmers and with the following stakeholders:

- Central Government Officials (GOs)
- Village / Opinion Leaders
- Animal Health Worker (district level)
- Animal Health Worker (local level)
- Human Health Worker (district level)
- Human Health Worker (local level)
- NGO's / Media

### **Key findings**

#### **Quantitative Portion:**

- Awareness of AI and AI initiatives in Laos is very high, though slightly lower than in Vietnam and Cambodia (where awareness is 100%). In Laos, 95% are aware of AI, and 87% have seen an AI initiative.
- Knowledge about AI is generally low, with the exception of knowing who to notify of an AI outbreak, and the need to take a potential victim to a health facility.
- Knowledge is alarmingly low regarding AI signs in humans and preventative action.
- Preventative behavior in Laos is focused on human protection.

- TV and radio are the main media owned and used. TV watching is highly concentrated during the 19-22 pm hours. Program interest is a mix between news and films, with some music and sports as well.
- Action Barriers:
  - Money is perceived to be a significant barrier to building a pen or enclosure to separate poultry from humans.
  - Farmers are not aware of “keeping visitors away from poultry” as a preventative action,
  - Farmers are not aware “not letting children handle poultry” as a preventative action.
  - Eating sick or dead poultry, blood pudding, and undercooked poultry are all potential dangers. Around 70 percent don’t believe it is an important preventative action to refrain from these foods.

#### Qualitative Portion:

- Despite direct experience with AI in 2 out of the 3 provinces, respondents demonstrate a fundamental lack of concern and disbelief regarding its relevance to humans.
- AI in Laos faces “disease competition” from other serious diseases affecting the population (malaria, liver disease, HIV/AIDS). Along with AI, these specific diseases dominate people’s health concerns in Laos.
- While AI is noted by farmers at the top of their health concerns, it is not necessarily ranked at the top by all stakeholders until prompted.
- When prompted, both farmers and stakeholders keenly feel the danger of AI, demonstrating that communication and awareness drives concern.
- Farmers can clearly articulate that AI is a dangerous poultry disease that can spread to humans, with no treatment and death as a consequence.
- Farmers are still unaware of some of the key measures, or unlikely to perform them because they run contrary to ingrained habits.
- In contrast to other countries, the beneficiaries in Laos are more spontaneously concerned than the stakeholders.

#### Recommendations

- More effective behavior change is necessary to break ingrained habits, ensure strong concern and awareness of the severity of the disease, and clarify the full gamut of measures.
- Eating habits are especially important as an area for building awareness and attitude change.
- Stakeholders/NGOs and Media can continue to help by contributing to mobilization and awareness raising about AI at all levels
- Greater frequency of communications is recommended.
- Increase focus to a few key preventative methods.
- As stakeholders are more concerned about other diseases than AI, the communication task in Laos should ensure that AI is kept at the “top of the priority list.”
- TV can be highly effective, especially using PSAs and other news announcements during news. Radio may serve as a complement for more effective reach. Media penetration will benefit from scheduling during the evening time slots, with morning radio as a complement.