



Controlling Avian Flu and Protecting People's
Livelihoods in the Mekong Region, Africa and Indonesia

DFID-Funded Collaborative HPAI Research Project for Asia and Africa

**Taking stock of the communication
environment**

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The role of communication

(when faced with an emerging disease)

- To inform and to educate
- To initiate behavior change and support protective action
- To warn of disaster and provide emergency information
- To support joint problem solving and conflict resolution

Information for communication

- The right information
- In the right form
- At the right time

In 2005

- Rapidly spreading HPAI
- Big differences in the perception of risk (“we’re all going to die”; “it will never come to my village”; “smallholders are the problem”)
- Limited information on the real risks or the impact of different approaches
- International pressure

Communication tasks

Information for:

- **policymakers** to decide on and finance the response strategy
- **outbreak managers** to direct what is done on the ground
- **the public** to respond sensibly and appropriately
- **farmers** to know what is expected of them and what the government is doing in support

“What does this crisis mean for me?”

The communicators

- The media
- The public
- Farmers
- Private vets and doctors
- Researchers
- Government officials
- Professional communicators

communicating with their peers and others they trust

To support a positive outcome

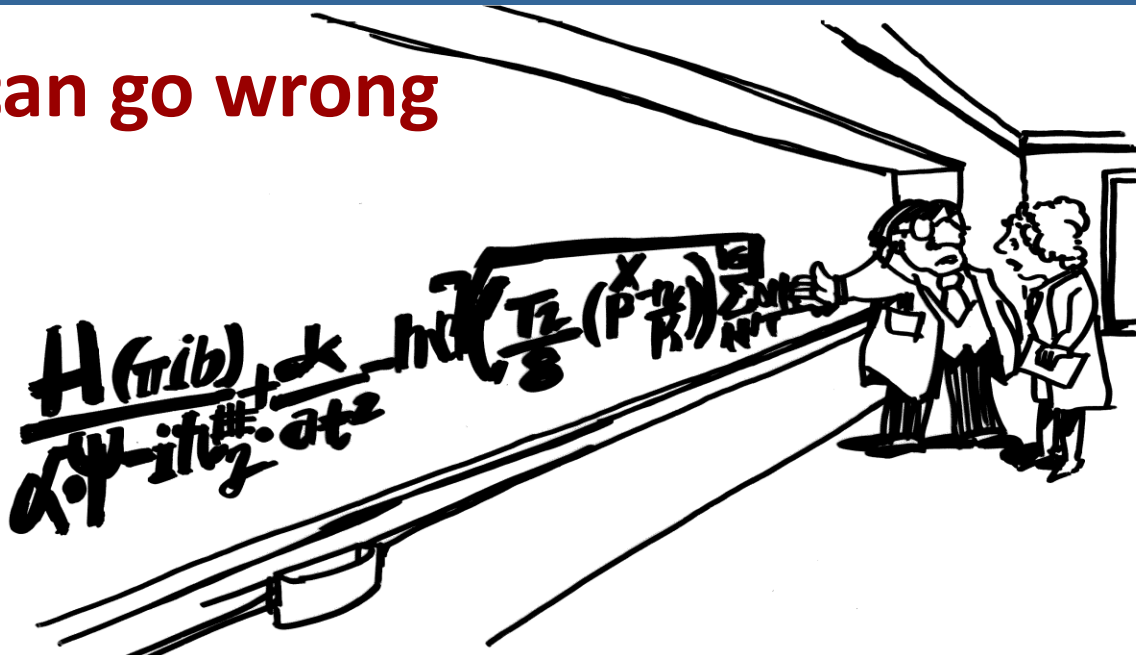
- The public, Commercial livestock producers, Small scale livestock producers: take sensible precautions, comply with official requirements
- Media: not create panic, act responsibly on what they know

The right amount of information about risks and rules for each group

Clear, easy to find

Official communication is only a partial solution but it can help

What can go wrong



“But this is the simplified version for the general public!”

wrongly phrased... wrong time... wrong person

→ panic, distrust, non-co-operation, no disease reporting

Early HPAI

- Big differences in the perception of risk
- Media and human health messages conflicting with animal health messages
- Not much real information for farmers on what to do
- Some consumers panicked (market shocks)
- Many farmers/traders sold birds or carried on as before

To support a positive outcome

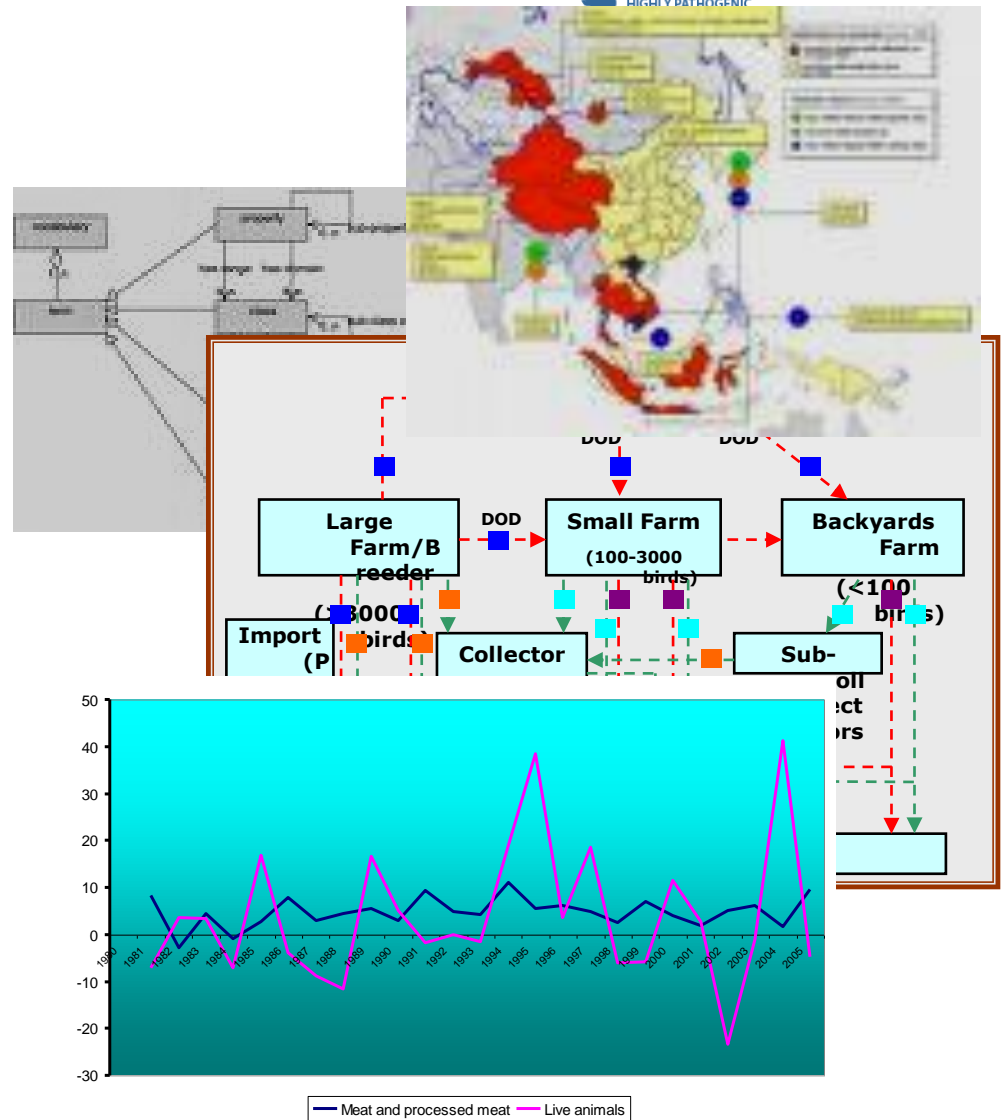
- Policymakers: plans ahead of time; clear lines of command
the overall picture of risks, progress and possible options
- Outbreak managers and vets : find outbreaks fast and get ahead of them
**contingency and operational plans; surveillance/
epidemiological reports; communication with farmers**

Good communication can make a real difference

What can go wrong

Too little/ too much/
conflicting/ wrong/ late/
misinterpreted
information

- caught by surprise
- strategies that don't match risks or take account of tradeoffs
- funds too late or too little
- outbreaks run away from control teams



Early HPAI

- Slow reporting of first outbreaks
- Slow decisions about what to do
- A lot of people trying to communicate with governments – but not always with consistent messages
- Contingency and operational plans not ready
- Accurate information about real risks came later

To support a positive outcome

- Professional government communicators: assist in the communication between the government and everyone else
information about actual risk and knowledge of stakeholders

What can go wrong



Forget to do stakeholder analysis

Too much advocacy and not enough risk communication?

(T.Abraham)

- **Risk communication:** “The process by which the results of a risk assessment and risk management actions are communicated to decision makers, farmers and the public”.

Should be two-way. Should include information on the nature of the risk, likely impacts, the options that were assessed, uncertainties in the analysis.

- **Advocacy:** “the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal”

Risk communication includes an element of advocacy but not all advocacy is good risk communication

Both have their place but we need a balance

HPAI: some positive stories

Some examples of :

- Improved government \leftrightarrow public and gov \leftrightarrow industry
- Industry getting together and hiring a credible spokesperson
- An expanding range of communication media – radio, tv, leaflets, direct contact
- Money put into research on real risks and (not enough) into passive surveillance systems

Open questions

Do we have the right balance between risk communication and advocacy?

Is the link between research and government strong enough and clear enough to have a beneficial impact on policy?