



UNITED NATIONS

Pandemic Influenza Contingency, OCHA

In a nutshell

Pandemic Influenza Contingency (PIC) is administered by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). It is based in Geneva with 7 regional officers posted around the world. PIC focuses on greater readiness of the UN System, national governments and the humanitarian community for the next influenza pandemic. In 2007, PIC:

- Organised regional platforms in 4 regions;
- Held training and planning workshops with representatives of governments and organisations from over 80 countries;
- Conducted simulations or simulation training for specialists from over 40 countries;
- Developed an online tracking system for monitoring global pandemic readiness, and populated it with initial data;
- Put practical tools at the disposal of UN Country Teams and others, including new guidelines and resources for national preparedness;
- Organized a high level meeting with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) during which 21 NGOs, Red Cross actors and UN humanitarian agencies agreed to work together to strengthen the humanitarian community's collective readiness to meet humanitarian needs in a pandemic;
- Was appointed by WHO to chair an International Task Force which is developing new WHO guidelines on preparing essential service sectors to sustain operations in pandemic.

Objectives

In 2008, PIC's overall goal is to support implementation of the multi-sector elements of the *Vision and Road Map* from the December 2007 *New Delhi Ministerial Conference on Avian and Pandemic Influenza*. PIC's overall objectives include:

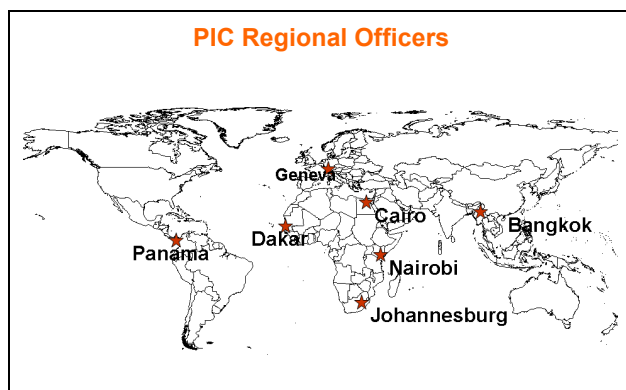
- 1) Improve the readiness of the UN system around the world to cope with a sudden pandemic — to ensure the safety of staff, the ability to continue essential programme activities, and respond to emerging humanitarian caseloads resulting from the pandemic;
- 2) Assist national authorities (through UN Country Teams) to improve the preparedness of their country beyond the health sector, and;
- 3) Help national actors and their international partners to prepare for delivery of humanitarian assistance in a pandemic.

Background

For at least the last 500 years, deadly human influenza pandemics have occurred periodically, killing millions; the 1918 pandemic alone is thought to have killed 20-40 million people. The resurgence of a highly pathogenic avian influenza virus (H5N1) in 2003 resulted in leaders focusing on the importance of pandemic preparedness.

Since that time, UN agencies, including FAO, WHO and UNICEF, have supported governments to address the animal health, human health and communication challenges of avian and human influenza and pandemic preparedness. In 2006, the UN as a whole initiated contingency plans for operating under pandemic conditions – to ensure the safety of staff, the ability to continue essential programme activities, and to respond to emerging humanitarian caseloads resulting from the pandemic. Upon the request of the Secretary-General, and with the support of the UN System Influenza Coordinator in New York, UN teams in 140 countries around the world were asked to prepare contingency plans. Even now, many of these plans continue to be updated and improved upon.

A much bigger task which continues to be a priority in 2008 is to provide assistance to national authorities, particularly in low income developing countries, with the establishment of their national plans. An additional priority, also led by national authorities in most cases and assisted by UN Country Teams, is to prepare to mitigate the humanitarian consequences of a sudden pandemic. PIC's 7 Regional Planning Officers support UN country teams in their regions to improve UN country team readiness and plans, and to assist national governments. PIC coordinates a group of UN humanitarian agencies which is working collectively to improve the UN humanitarian system's pandemic readiness. PIC also works



with the IFRC to coordinate a coalition of NGO, Red Cross and UN humanitarian actors to work together on these issues. One of the outcomes of the New Delhi meeting in December 2007 was also the recommendation that national disaster risk reduction institutions incorporate pandemic planning. An important part of the PIC approach in 2008 is to very closely work together with other such forms of contingency planning.

PIC Strategy

The overall PIC strategy combines *measurement, advocacy, assistance* and *coordination*:

Measurement: PIC uses a business process based on a simple website with maps of indicators of global – UN and national – preparedness. Building upon available baseline data, PIC will measure progress, analyse results, and design or modify its assistance tools accordingly.

Advocacy: PIC will produce and disseminate presentations, printed, online and e-mailed materials to advocate for greater pandemic readiness.

Assistance: Much of PIC's time will go into helping UNCTs prepare, and helping them to assist their host governments when requested. Examples of such assistance include simulations or 'desktop testing' of existing plans or missions to actually provide help in situ.

Coordination: PIC works to promote coordination of efforts among the wide range of UN, government and non-government actors engaged in multi-sector preparedness; PIC facilitates the activities of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)-based 'Humanitarians in Pandemic' working group and PIC Regional Officers also organise regional and sub-regional platform meetings.

Expected results in 2008

- UN Country Teams worldwide are more ready to maintain essential operations and assist their national host governments;
- Greater awareness in low income developing countries of the need to prepare for a high-mortality influenza pandemic;
- Governments in low income developing countries improve their preparedness for a sudden pandemic;
- Governments, UN and partners are prepared to support humanitarian response in a pandemic;
- Existing national and international institutions for disaster risk mitigation add 'sudden high-mortality pandemic' to their list of risks that they work to mitigate;
- Information management systems are established to monitor global multi-sector impact of and response to pandemic; online monitoring of UN and national preparedness improved;
- In the event of WHO Phase 4, 5 or 6 being declared the UN performs well in assisting governments to face the situation in a broad multi-sector fashion.

PIC Organization

PIC was set up through an inter-agency effort. Donors and UN agencies have seconded staff to work in PIC, while others spearhead their agencies' involvement in PIC's work from within their organisations. The Consolidated UN System Action Plan lays out a division of responsibility among UN agencies, within which PIC focuses on promoting pandemic preparedness (in particular humanitarian preparedness) through UN Country Teams, their host governments, and together with partner agencies such as IFRC, IOM, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP. PIC's 7 Regional Planning Officers work closely with and support UN Country Teams as well as regional actors. They also help to set up and facilitate Regional Inter-Agency Platforms. Such meetings bring together representatives of UN and non-UN agencies (including NGOs), governments, specialised government institutions, regional and sub-regional organisations, and the private sector to agree on common priorities and the way forward.

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