

Multi-Sector Pandemic Preparedness Project

Inception Workshop

Thimphu, Bhutan
10 November 2010

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Inception Workshop Report རྩོམ་འཇུག་གི་ རྩོམ་

MULTI-SECTOR PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS PROJECT (CFIA) BHUTAN, 2010

Department of Disaster Management (DDM),
Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs of Bhutan &
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

1. INTRODUCTION

The Inception Workshop was a start-up activity of the Multi-Sector Pandemic Preparedness Project implemented by the Department of Disaster Management (DDM) and UNDP Bhutan. It brought together a broad set of stakeholders: Government officials who play critical role in pandemic planning and response in Bhutan, such as members of NIPPP (National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan) National Execution Committee/Command Center and NIPPP National Task Force; other relevant Ministries and support sector focal points; representatives of international organisations and foreign missions in Bhutan. The participants were not only briefed on the project objectives, expected outcomes and planned activities, but also shared past experiences, lessons learnt and joint efforts on pandemic response in Bhutan. At the Workshop, the concept and principles of the “Whole-of-Society” pandemic readiness and possible impacts of serious pandemic scenarios on society, economy and businesses were put forward. As a result of the Workshop, the participants agreed on establishment of a new Project Task Force under coordination by DDM, which will be responsible in identifying priorities and timeliness of the project activities in line with Government policies. The Inception Workshop saw the beginning of a unified strive towards more holistic and ambitious pandemic preparedness and response in Bhutan.

2. OBJECTIVES

The workshop aimed to inform on the current status on influenza (H5N1 and H1N1) outbreaks, its preparedness and response mechanisms in Bhutan. At the same time, it aimed to introduce the “whole-of-society” pandemic readiness, potential impact of pandemics on non-health sectors, and how the project activities will address to achieve the broader planning and response at national, local and sector levels through strengthened and streamlined coordination mechanisms.

3. THE CONDUCT OF THE INCEPTION WORKSHOP

The Inception Workshop was organized by DDM in cooperation with UNDP Bhutan. Mr.Karma Rapten, Assistant Resident Representative-UNDP Bhutan, moderated the workshop and Ms.Lhachey Dema, Programme Officer of DDM, extended the Vote of Thanks for participants. (Agenda of the Inception Workshop ANNEX 1 and List of Participants please refer to ANNEX 2)



3.1. OPENING REMARKS

On behalf of the Government, DDM Director Namgay Wangchuk expressed his gratitude to participants for participation to the workshop. He highlighted that Bhutan is highly vulnerable to natural disasters and pandemics and it is important to plan and prepare across the society. Pandemics impose not only threats to human and animal health, but also all other sectors directly and indirectly with severe social and economic consequences. A pandemic is recognized as one of hazards in the context of the National Disaster Risk Framework (NDRF). The Draft National Disaster Management Bill is at its stage of endorsement by the Parliament of Bhutan, which highlights needs of Disaster Management Plans and Contingency Plans at National, Local Communal and Sector levels. At the end of his speech, the director thanked UN system and UNDP for initiating and supporting the important initiative. (DDM Director's speech ANNEX 3)

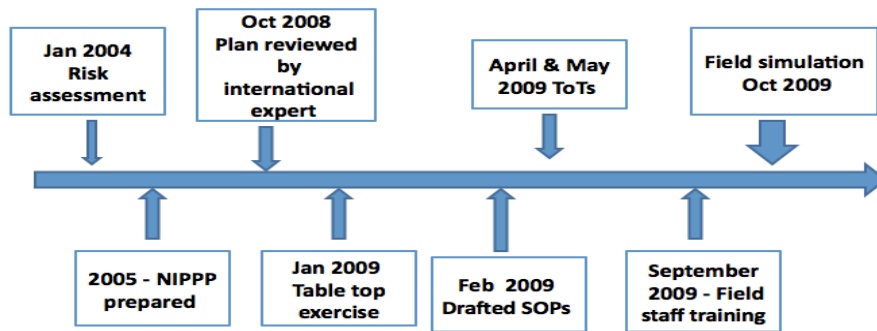
On behalf of the UN System in Bhutan, UN Resident Coordinator Ms. Claire Van der Vaeren appreciated DDM and the Government counter-partners taking strong ownership and cooperation on the initiative. She noted that the project is supported financially by the United Nations Central Fund of Influenza Action (CFIA) at the request of the Royal Government of Bhutan and UN System in Bhutan. She highlighted that from past experiences, the Royal Government of Bhutan has already successfully established and tested the national mechanism on pandemic preparedness and response and it must be commended for these achievements. However, building on the previous efforts and striving for continuous improvements will result in a stronger, multi-sector, multi-hazard preparedness capacity with benefits that reach far beyond pandemic influenza. She called the workshop participants to consider the following three key points for future discussions: preparedness planning beyond the health sector, business continuity planning for all critical sectors, readiness and preparedness of respective agencies on how to respond once disaster strikes out, and integration of pandemic preparedness into wider multi-hazard disaster preparedness. (UN RC Speech ANNEX 4)

3.2. INFLUENZA STATUS AND PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE IN BHUTAN

Dr. Karma Rinzin, Programme Director of the National Center for Animal Health, Department of Livestock, Ministry of Agriculture (MoA) informed the guests on the general threat of pandemics and on the existing institutional arrangements for influenza pandemic response. (Dr.Karma Rinzin's Presentation ANNEX 5).

Dr. Karma presented the milestones that Bhutan already reached with respect to Avian Influenza preparedness in Bhutan, listed in the figure below:





Dr. Karma ended his presentation by showcasing some relevant global trends. With an increasing flow of people and livestock as well as climate change the risk of a pandemic is increasing and the associated health and economic risks are mounting.

Mr. Tandin Dorji, Chief Programme Officer, Division of Communicable Diseases, Ministry of Health (MoH) shared some key points on the past experiences and thoughts on pandemics in Bhutan:

- Due to high population density and close proximity between humans and poultry, South East Asia is considered a high-risk area.
- The risk of contamination is asymmetric across the population. Generally, vulnerable groups, such as pregnant women, young children and infants along with people suffering from chronic diseases, are most at risk from potential pandemics.
- The 2009 H1N1 flu tested the national response to pandemics. When reflecting on the response, MoH did not face any major challenges; however, if the number of casualties had been significantly higher this may not have been the case. Also, while the number of casualties globally was not alarming, the rate of transmission is a major cause of concern. (Mr.Tandin Dorji's Presentation, ANNEX 6)

3.3. "WHOLE-OF-SOCIETY" PANDEMIC READINESS, POSSIBLE IMPACT OF PANDEMICS ON NON-HEALTH SECTORS

Mr. Batsaikhan Zagdragchaa, UNDP Pandemic Preparedness Specialist highlighted a need to go beyond the health sectors due to negative social and economic impacts, for strengthening resilience to other threats, no single agency or organization can prepare for a pandemic on its own, and inadequate or uncoordinated preparedness of interdependent public and private organizations will reduce the ability of the health sector to respond. He stressed the importance of 'keeping society running smoothly' by adopting a multi-sector approach to pandemic preparedness. In this light, two major purposes of Multi-sector Pandemic Preparedness are: 1) to support the government and MoH/MoA to contain and respond. 2) to mitigate the impact on the sectors and maintain Continuity of Operation.

Following this note, Batsaikhan informed the attending stakeholders about the importance of non-health essential sectors for pandemic preparedness and response and "**Whole-of-Society Approach**" (WoS). He highlighted an emphasis of the interdependence of all sectors of society at all levels and 5 key principles under multi-sector planning and response: (1) a whole-of-society approach, (2) preparedness at all

levels, (3) attention to critical interdependencies, (4) a scenario-based response, and (5) respect for ethical norms. He presented an idea how to approach WoS in the context of Bhutan. (WoS Presentation, ANNEX 7)

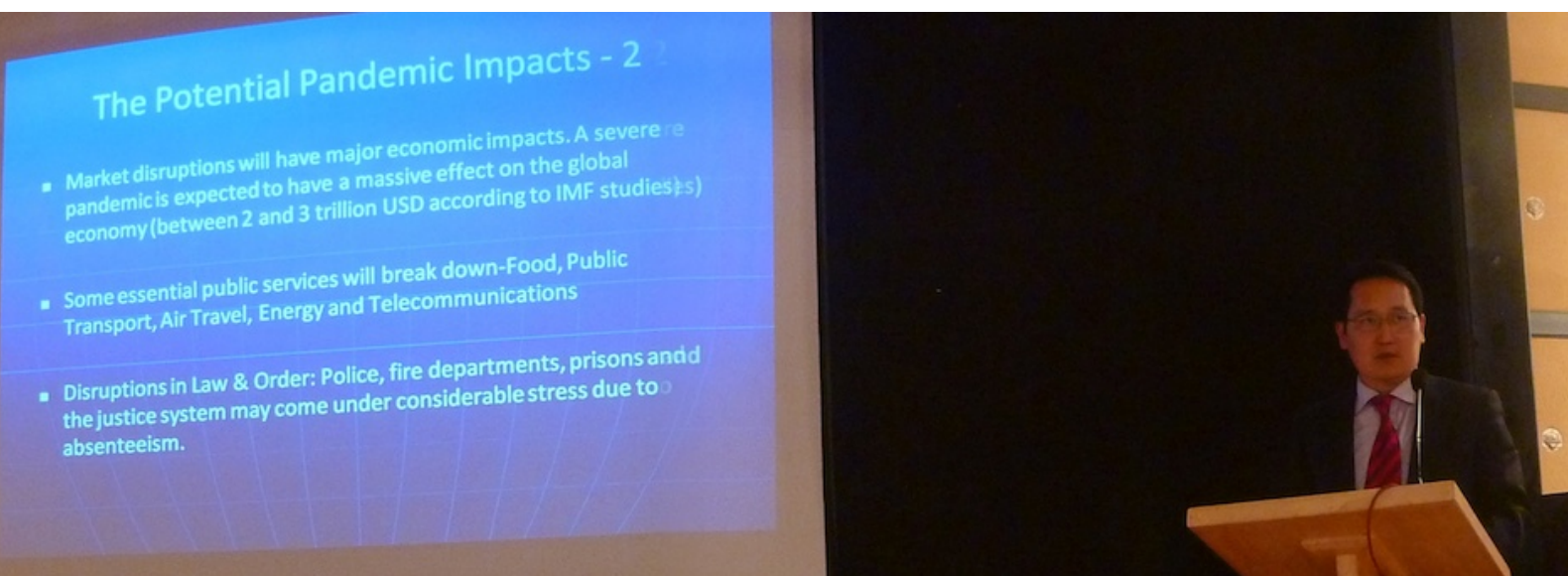
In the second half of the workshop, Batsaikhan presented potential socio-economic impacts of possible pandemic scenario in global and national levels. He highlighted associated risks of pandemics not only in human health, but also in livelihoods, governance and security, social and humanitarian needs and economic systems. A pandemic may affect the non health sectors in either ways: increasing demand for some services (military, mortuary, water and supply, communication etc.), decreasing demand for some services (trade, travel, transportation etc.) and decreasing the supply (reduced production, logistics, etc) and breakdown of services.

Finally, Batsaikhan referred to the importance of Business Continuity Planning (BCP) and detailed a 6-step procedure that would ensure the completion of BCP in the individual agencies. BCP follows the principle: *Secure yourself first in order to secure others*. (Impact of pandemics on non-health sectors, ANNEX 8)

3.4. PROJECT SUMMARY

Batsaikhan presented an overview and outline of the CFIA project. The Project aims to strengthen the integrated national preparedness through strengthening the National Influenza Pandemic Preparedness Plan (NIPPP) and work of Steering Committees, capacity of Line Ministries, essential sectors and private sector through multi-sector consultations, training activities, simulation exercises at the national and district levels for all stakeholders. The project aims to develop preparedness plans at selected sectors and share knowledge from OCHA and other UN agencies, and countries in the region on operationalizing the “whole-of-society” pandemic preparedness.

The project is supported (US\$130,000) from UN Central Fund for Influenza Action (CFIA) that finances small, high-value projects to support national governments to strengthen multi-sector pandemic preparedness and response processes in countries lacking adequate capacity and resources. The Department of Disaster Management (DDM) in cooperation with UNDP is responsible for the implementation of the project until June 2011. (Project activities, ANNEX 9)



3.5. POINTS RAISED IN OPEN DISCUSSION:

There have been strong interest and commitment from the participants. Participants questioned about effectiveness of some previous particular activities related to NIPPP, clarity of roles of some stakeholders, such as police and army during the outbreak, supply and delivery of vaccines and drugs and public perception.

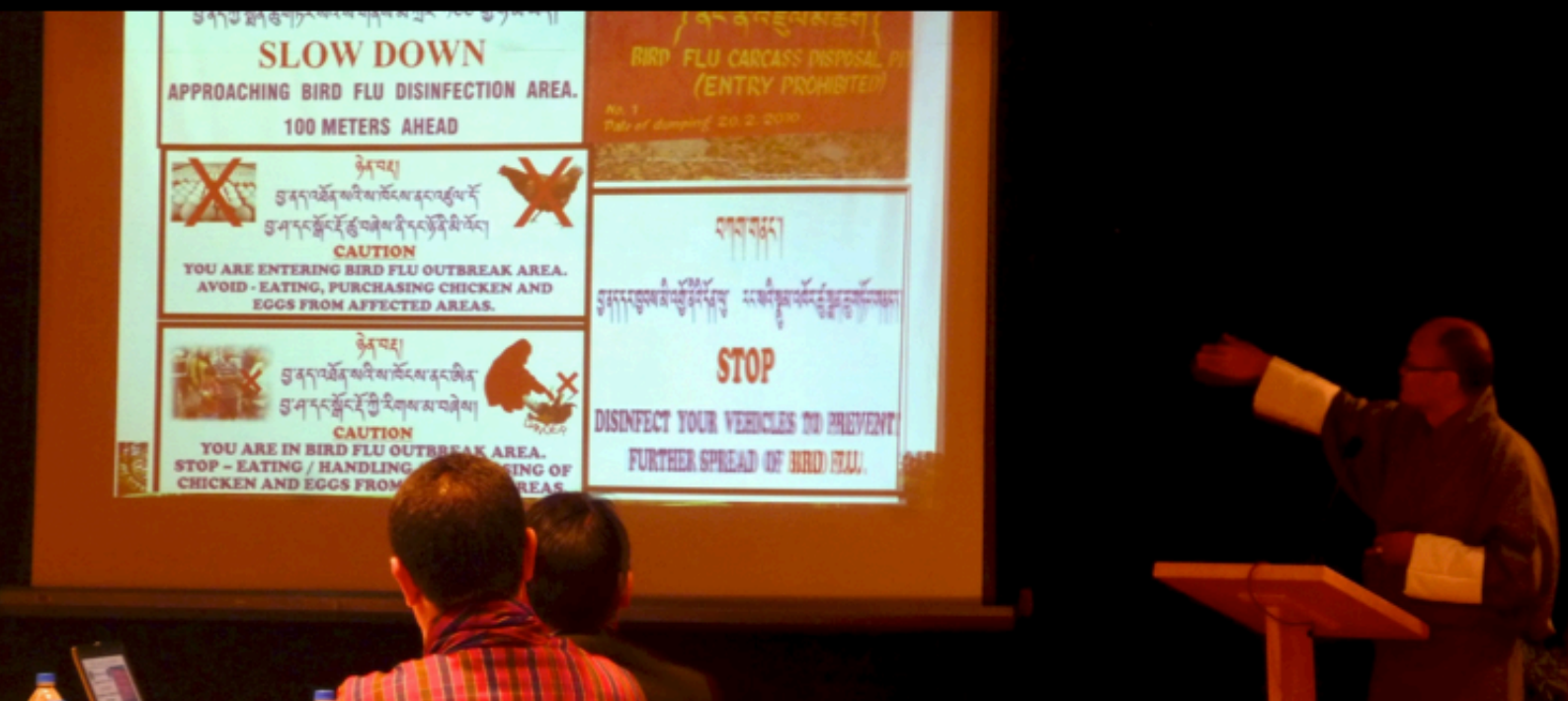
The essential points of discussions were:

- While it was found that there was a lot of collaboration on the enforcement side during past responses to major influenzas, doubts were raised on public perception of the top-down compliance requirement.
- With growing role of the media in Bhutan, it should be a key stakeholder in pandemic preparedness and response. It was agreed to include the media for the further planning as it strongly influences public perception and awareness. Reliability of information is important and NIPPP had mechanisms to screen and approve information which worked well during the previous influenza outbreaks.
- For Bhutan, pandemics are mainly seen as an external threat. It was discussed to what extent the conditions for the development of a pandemic were present in Bhutan. It was discussed that it is unlikely, mainly due to low population density as well as low proximity between humans and poultry.
- All agreed that predicting time and scale of future pandemic is near to impossible. Instead, the focus should be given to strengthen early detection, surveillance and enforcement mechanisms.
- Cross-border collaboration was crucial. Main concerns are about the potential disease corridor allowing transmission from India and Bangladesh to Bhutan through West Bengal. Disease Outbreak Information Systems were suggested.

4. KEY DECISIONS

- All participants are agreed that the project activities are vital in strengthening the pandemics planning and response capacities across the sectors and timely in line with current achievements of pandemics preparedness in health sectors and the recent policy developments in disaster management.
- DDM will facilitate the formation of a new cross-governmental Multi-Sector Pandemic Preparedness Task Force that will be composed of various governmental stakeholders, including DDM, MoH, MoA and other Ministries/Agencies/sectors. The Task Force will work together with the UN to revise the current project activities and make joint decisions on the project activities.

ANNEX I



DETAILED PROGRAM 10th of November 2010

8:45 a.m.	Registration of participants
9:00 -9:15 a.m.	Opening Remarks by Mr. Namgay Wangchuck, Director of DDM & by Claire Van der Vaeren, UN RC
9:15 -9:50 a.m.	Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) – Background, Preparedness and Response in Bhutan. Dr. Karma Rinzin, National Center for Animal Health, Department of Livestock, MoAF
9.50 – 10:20 a.m.	Overview of pandemic preparedness and response status in Bhutan National Response to Influenza A (H1N1) 2009 Pandemic Mr. Tandin Dorji, Communicable Diseases Division, MoH
10:20 -10:50 a.m.	The “Wole-of-society” pandemic readiness Mr. Batsaikhan Zagdragchaa, UNDP
10:50 – 11:00 a.m.	Tea/Coffee Break
11:10 – 11:35 a.m.	Possible impact of pandemics on non-health sectors Mr. Batsaikhan Zagdragchaa, UNDP
11:35 – 11:45 a.m.	Q&A
11:45 – 12:15 a.m.	UNDP Project on Multi-Sector Pandemic Preparedness Mr. Batsaikhan Zagdragchaa, UNDP
12:15 – 12:45 a.m.	Discussions
12:45 – 1:00 p.m.	Vote of Thanks by Ms. Lhachey Dema, DDM

ANNEX II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Inception Workshop for the Multi-Sector Pandemic Preparedness Project 10 November 2010, Thimphu

Government:

Namgay Wangchuk, Director, DDM, MoHCA
Dr.Karma Rinzin, NCAH, DoL, MoAF
Tandin Dorji, MoH
Sonam Wangchuk, PHL, MoH
Rinhcen Namgyal, DMS, MoH
Dr.Pandup Tshering, BMHL, MoH
J.B.Gurung, BAFRA, MoAF
Karma Dorji, BAFRA, MoAF
Dilip Thapa, DOR, MoWHS
Dago Tshering, MoHCA
Ugyen Tshering, PPD, MoAF
Karma Chhophel, DoE
Tandin Dendup, MoH
Rinchen Dorji, DSE, MOE
Jigmi Tenzin, SQCH
Lt-Colonel D. Wangchuk, Royal Bhutan
Police
Kesang Choden, Office of Attorney-General

Department of Disaster Management:

Chencho Tshering, DDM, MoHCA
Lhachey Dema, DDM, MoHCA

Essential Sectors:

Pema Dorji, Bhutan Telecom
Pema Norbu, Druk Air

Diplomatic Mission in Bhutan

Thanglura Darlong, Indian Embassy
Shaikh Shariff Uddin, Bangladesh Embassy

International Organizations

Claire Van der Vaeren, UN RC / UNDP RR
Karma L. Rapten, ARR, UNDP
Esfand Negahban, OM, UNICEF
Roshan Sharma, UNICEF
Tobgye, UNICEF
Dorji Phub, WHO
Karma Tshering, UNFPA
Hendrick Visser, Consultant, UNDP
Batsaikhan Zagdragchaa, UNDP
Michael Plesner, UNDP

ANNEX III

Opening of Inception Workshop for the Multi-Sector Pandemic Preparedness Project Statement by Mr. Namgay Wangchuk, Director, Department of Disaster Management Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs

Hotel Taj Tashi, Thimphu
10 November 2010

Honorable Resident Representative, Madam Claire, UNDP, Thimphu Bhutan
Distinguished Representatives from the UN agencies, Development partners, various
Ministries,
Departments/RBP and Agencies of the RGoB,
Ladies and gentlemen,

First of all, I wish you all, a very good morning and on behalf of DDM/MoHCA and UNDP, Bhutan I would like welcome you to this very important Inception workshop on *Multi-sector pandemic preparedness*. This is a start-up activity under a Project to *Support the Royal Government of Bhutan on Multi-Sector Pandemic Preparedness*, which will be implemented jointly by the Department of Disaster Management, Ministry of Home and Cultural Affairs and UNDP Bhutan.

We are all gathered here today, because we have realized that Bhutan is also not spared from devastative pandemic which could inflict heavy losses on both human and animal lives. Our experiences with recent pandemics in our country are the grim reminder that Bhutan is not immune to pandemic threats.

During the recent H5N1 and H1N1 cases, we were fortunate that the concerned Agencies could successfully contain them with overwhelming cooperation overwhelming from all quarters.

However, global experiences showed that the Tourism Industries shut down in many places around the world, and some hospitals on emergency mode, even experienced casualties among their front line health workers.

Besides, we all know the fear triggered by an epidemic or pandemic can easily cause panic among the general public and cause sudden disruption in the delivery of essential services.

Therefore, not only the Health or related Agencies, but all of us in general need to be aware of the risks associated with epidemics and potential pandemics and the tools and measures that we could put in place to promptly respond and mitigate their impacts.

Today, Bhutan is still vulnerable to various pandemic cases and the potential of influenza viruses to mutate should always serve as a warning and a reminder for us to get prepared through constant survey and vigilance.

A pandemic's disastrous nature lies in its ability to cause massive morbidity, disability and loss of human lives/livestock that could lead to severe social and economic implications to the affected population

Therefore, lack of Contingency Plans/Preparedness Plans will lead to heavier losses, lower production levels and significant disruptions of essential services should a pandemic occur.

Effective preparedness for pandemics requires the coordinated efforts and actions of all segments of Government and society. A severe pandemic would require an emergency response beyond what the Health Sector could manage and contain.

Accordingly, this Project aims to strengthen the existing Government pandemic Preparedness and Response Mechanism, conduct National assessments and simulation exercises to systematically identify gaps within the National structure and mechanism and within relevant multi-Sectoral linkages.

The RGoB has taken steps in recognizing a pandemic as one of serious hazards in the context of the National Disaster Risk Framework (NDRF). The Draft National Disaster Management Bill is at its stage of endorsement by the Parliament of Bhutan, which highlights Disaster Management Plans and Contingency Plans at National, Local Communal and Sector levels.

The Project will assist the Government Agencies and Sectors to develop their Contingency and Preparedness Plans in terms of pandemics and disaster prevention, mitigation, preparedness and response phases.

In closing, I would once again, like to thank all the distinguished participants present here for your active participation in this Workshop and Lastly thank the UNDP, Bhutan for initiating and supporting this important Project.

Let us all work together to build Safer Communities for a Safe and Happy Bhutan.

Thank You/Tashi Delek

ANNEX IV

Opening of Inception Workshop for the Multi-Sector Pandemic Preparedness Project Statement by Ms. Claire Van der Vaeren, UN Resident Coordinator

Hotel Taj Tashi, Thimphu
10 November 2010

Mr. Namgay Wangchuk, Director Department of Disaster Management,
Dashos, Aums,
Distinguished guests from the national and international organizations,
Dear colleagues and partners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you today to the Inception Workshop on Multi-Sector Pandemic Preparedness, the primary activity of the project to Support Royal Government of Bhutan on Multi-Sector Pandemic Preparedness. The project is implemented by the Department of Disaster Management in close cooperation with the UN System in Bhutan.

The project is supported financially by the United Nations Central Fund of Influenza Action (CFIA) – a funding facility to support small and high-value projects to strengthen national Governments in multi-sector pandemic preparedness and response processes.

The project aims to support integrated planning and preparedness for pandemics across all sectors of society, and to strengthen the efforts of the RGoB in pandemic planning and preparedness at national, district and sector levels. It aims to address the beyond-health, humanitarian and societal impact of pandemics.

The readiness of countries to manage a highly disruptive pandemic is of prime regional and global concern. Thus, the promotion of a whole-of-society or multi-sectoral approach is something that the UN pursues in its cooperation with partners and all stakeholders. World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) and United Nations System Influenza Coordination Office (UNSIC) have acquired vast expertise, experience and capacity in this area and are supporting national governments to further develop a better integrated and therefore more effective planning and preparedness capacity.

Pandemic preparedness is not just a public and animal health concern. It is imperative to involve a cross-section of stakeholders and understand that a pandemic will affect all sectors and will therefore require a response that takes them into consideration as well. The recent H1N1 outbreak led to the closing of schools; this affected the education sector. Imagine a pandemic that would deplete the staff capacity and affect the operation of major hydropower plants; what then? Conversely, a break-down of services can aggravate the spread of a pandemic; therefore, ensuring the continuity of essential services such as transport, energy, telecommunication, finance, water supply and so on is paramount in preparing for such an eventuality.

From past experiences, we do know that the Royal Government of Bhutan has already successfully established and tested the national mechanism on pandemic preparedness and response and it must be commended for these achievements. However, building

on the previous efforts and striving for continuous improvements will result in a stronger, multi-sector, multi-hazard preparedness capacity with benefits that reach far beyond pandemic influenza.

Through this workshop, we aim to create greater awareness of the importance of preparing for pandemics across sectors. It is critical to understand that a pandemic is a disaster and therefore that it needs to be integrated in Bhutan's multi-hazard approach to disaster risk reduction; it cannot be the responsibility of the health sector and as the case may be of the agricultural sector, alone. The Department of Disaster Management has an essential role to play on this issue and we hope that they will be able to lead the way going forward—beyond this workshop.

To conclude, (1) It is critically important to prepare for pandemics beyond the health sector; (2) Business continuity planning for essential services is central to integrated, multi-sectoral preparedness; and (3) Pandemic preparedness needs to be integrated into wider multi-hazard disaster preparedness, so that best practices from our pandemic work can help to protect societies and communities from a range of future disaster threats.

With your enthusiasm and participation, I am hopeful that this workshop and upcoming project activities will contribute effectively towards the strengthening of Bhutan's readiness to deal with serious pandemic and disasters in future.

Tashi delek.

ANNEX V-IX

ANNEX V.

Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) – Background, Preparedness and Response in Bhutan

Dr.Karma Rinzin, Director, National Center for Animal Health, Department of Livestock, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. (attached as Acrobat file)

ANNEX VI.

Overview of pandemic preparedness and response status in Bhutan National Response to Influenza A (H1N1) 2009 Pandemic, Mr.Tandin Dorji, Chief Programme Officer, Communicable Diseases Division, Department of Public Health, Ministry of Health (attached as Acrobat file)

ANNEX VII.

The “Whole-of-society” pandemic readiness, Mr.Batsaikhan Zagdragchaa, Multi-sector Pandemic Preparedness Specialist, UNDP Bhutan (attached as Acrobat file)

ANNEX VIII.

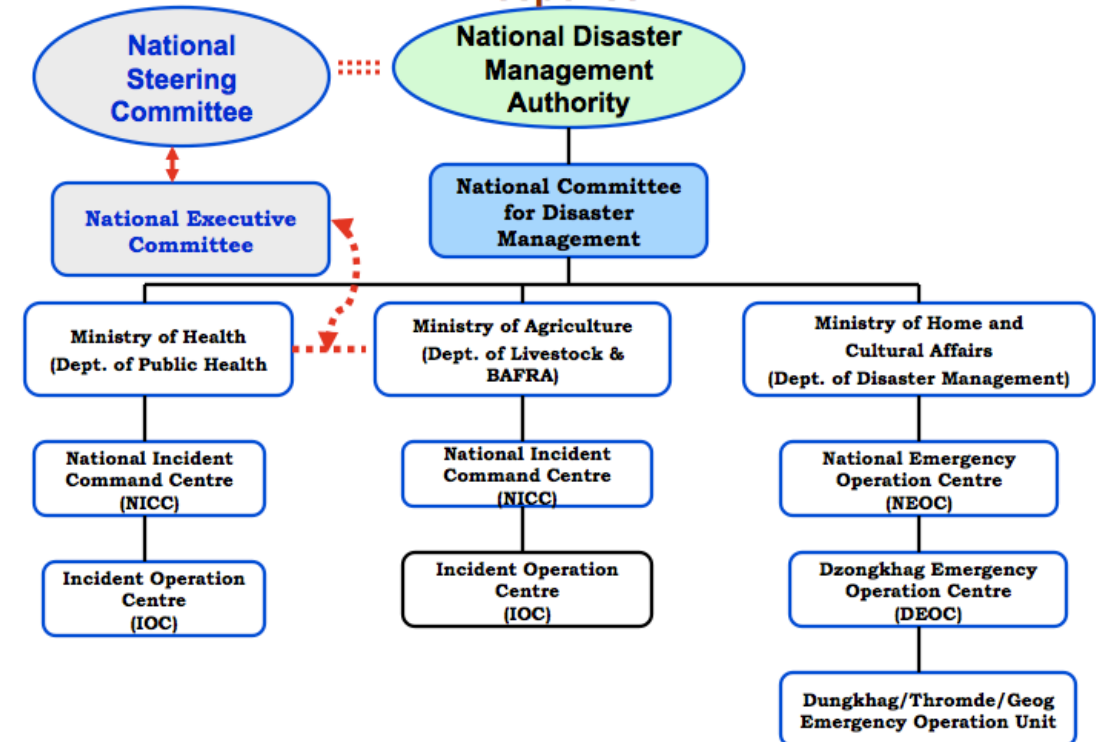
Possible impact of pandemics on non-health sectors, Mr.Batsaikhan Zagdragchaa, Multi-sector Pandemic Preparedness Specialist, UNDP Bhutan (attached as Acrobat file)

ANNEX IX.

UNDP Project on Multi-Sector Pandemic Preparedness Mr.Batsaikhan Zagdragchaa, Multi-Sector Pandemic Preparedness Specialist, UNDP Bhutan (attached as Acrobat file)

ANNEX X

Institutional Arrangement for Influenza Pandemic Response



National Incident Command Structure

