



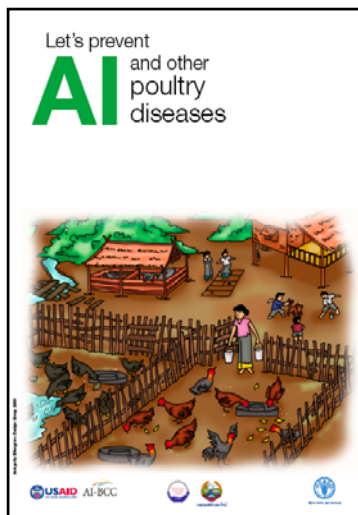
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## SUCCESS STORY

# Job Aids Developed for Village Veterinarians

### Nurturing Village Veterinarians to Become Knowledgeable Resources on Avian Influenza in Lao PDR

Preventing and controlling poultry diseases has always been a challenge in Lao PDR. In a country where approximately 80 percent of the chickens are raised in small backyard farms, getting information out to all of these farms – scattered throughout Lao PDR's thickly forested and mountainous landscape – has been a longstanding concern. Many of the smaller villages do not have regular contact with veterinarians, and not all villages have the electricity needed to access radio or television news. This was the quandary faced by USAID's Avian Influenza – Behavior Change Communication (AI-BCC) Project, implemented by AED beginning in early 2006.



Not surprisingly, early knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) surveys carried out by the AI-BCC Project found that only 13 percent of farmers used a credible source of information (veterinarians or other animal health workers) on AI and other animal diseases. Moreover, the Project discovered that many of the paraveterinarians and village veterinary workers did not have the capacity or access to provide information even if they were sought out for advice by farmers. “The farmers ask us for information, but we do not always have the answers on something new, like the bird flu,” explained Phraxayavong Phayvanh, a village veterinary worker in the Oudomxay province. “We could look at our [reference] manual from when we became village veterinary workers, but that does not have specific information on avian flu outbreaks.”

In light of the KAP findings, the Project aimed to build a cadre of village veterinarians to serve as a source of reliable avian influenza information for these widely dispersed farmers. In collaboration with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the Project designed training curricula for provincial and district animal health workers and held workshops to provide these animal health workers with the information and interpersonal communication skills they would need to help their communities respond to AI outbreaks. As part of this process, many veterinary professionals admitted that they rarely used – or even had access to –

- appropriate and easy-to-use documents or other visual aids related to their daily activities that would help them to get the correct messages across.

More targeted focus group discussions were held with village veterinary workers and district veterinarians to determine what resources would be helpful to them as they interacted with their community members. Because the district veterinarians were often called upon to speak to their communities at general meetings, they expressed interest in a flip chart to help them reinforce the information they were expressing verbally. A 14-page flip chart was created to help the animal health workers explain “what people should know about avian influenza” when they made visits to communities and specific farms.



Anton Schneider

The village veterinarians had different needs. They often spoke to farmers one-on-one and simply wanted to ensure that they delivered correct information. As a result, a smaller booklet was created that could be carried around by the village vets and used as a reference tool. The Project took advantage of FAO’s already-established relationships with networks of animal health workers, and asked them to take the lead in distributing these resource materials.

Over two years later, supporting animal health workers was a strategy that paid off. A follow-up KAP survey conducted by the Project in 2009 found that 41 percent of farmers were receiving AI information from animal health workers – a 450 percent increase from 2006 KAP survey. Moreover, many of the more recent AI outbreaks were reported first by trained village veterinary volunteers and district veterinary officials. “We feel very prepared to fight outbreaks in the future,” remarked village vet Phayvanh. “I tell all the farmers, ‘come to me if you have any questions, I can help you.’”

