

National Study Tour: Ensuring Safe & Sustainable Small-Scale Poultry and Livestock Raising Among Vulnerable Communities

CRS-ADPC – Thanh Hoa, Vietnam: 9th – 11th July, 2008

Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Vietnam was invited by the AHI-NGO-RC/RC-Asia Partnership to host a three-day national study tour focusing on its project on 'Ensuring Safe and Sustainable Small-Scale Poultry and Livestock Raising Among Vulnerable Communities in Vietnam'. This invitation was an outcome of the interest expressed by participants in the case study presented by CRS at the Regional Community-Based AHI Management Practitioners' Workshop, held in March 2008.

The study tour, held on 9th – 11th July 2008, brought together representatives from NGOs, Vietnam Red Cross and Provincial Veterinary Departments as well as members of the AHI-NGO-RC/RC-Asia Partnership. Held in Thanh Hoa Province, Vietnam, the study tour focused on CRS' community-based project on enhancing safe and sustainable small-scale poultry and livestock production.



Study tour participants were welcomed at the Thanh Hoa People's Committee

Hosted by CRS in collaboration with Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), this was the second of four national and international study tours to be conducted as part of the project on Strengthening Community-Based Management of AHI in Asia. This project, funded by the Canadian government via Asian Development Bank (ADB), is jointly implemented by the AHI-NGO-RC/RC-Asia Partnership, comprising ADPC, CARE International, International Rescue Committee (IRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC).

CRS' PROJECT IN COMMUNITY-BASED MANAGEMENT OF AHI

CRS' project entitled, 'Ensuring safe and sustainable small-scale poultry and livestock raising among

vulnerable communities in Nghe An and Thanh Hoa provinces, Vietnam was implemented between December 2006 and November 2007. The project aimed to provide vulnerable communities with the skills and resources to safely manage their small-scale poultry and livestock livelihoods. This aim was achieved through strengthening the capacity of local governments and communities to identify, manage and mitigate the risks of AI and other infectious animal diseases.

Activities involved in the project included:

- **Strengthening the capacity of local livestock extension staff** through four technical training workshops providing hands-on, in-the-field training in AI prevention and detection.
- **Promoting biosecure livestock practices through 48 demonstration farms**, which exposed farmers to safe poultry-rearing techniques and to the economic benefits of biosecurity. Workshops were also held to educate community members about Vietnam's national messages concerning AI and about hygiene and other risk reduction practices. In order to make the workshops more relevant to community participants, AI awareness raising was integrated into sessions for improving agricultural productivity and livelihoods. Farmer Field Days were also conducted to enhance knowledge through peer-to-peer education and information sharing.
- **Increasing participatory AI surveillance to make the nationally mandated AI Early Warning System more participatory and sustainable** by strengthening the skills of community members to: identify possible cases of AI infection; report such infections to authorities; and effectively contain or suppress the virus. CRS worked with Provincial Project Management Boards, District Veterinary Stations, Commune Peoples' Committees and communities, providing these groups with the necessary materials and skills for surveillance, tracking and reporting.
- **Showcasing alternative livelihoods** for farmers interested in moving away from the poultry business. CRS established seven demonstration farms, which enabled poultry farmers to adopt alternative income-generating activities, such as cattle-raising, aquaculture and crop cultivation. Farmers modeling alternative livelihoods saw an increase in their incomes and were less dependent on poultry, thereby reducing their vulnerability in the event of an AI outbreak; moreover, neighbouring farmers were able to benefit from the observation of an alternative livelihood model put into practice by their peers.

*For an in-depth description of the key outcomes of the project initiated by CRS in Thanh Hoa and Nghe An – as well as an insight into the lessons identified by CRS – refer to CRS' Case Study in Chapter 3 of the resource kit, *Communities Respond: Experience Sharing in Community-Based Management of AHI in Asia*.*

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY TOUR

A. Study tour participants and organisation

The national study tour in Vietnam brought together a total of 23 participants and facilitators. Participants consisted of representatives of organisations working in community-based management of AHI in Vietnam – Academy for Educational Development, CARE Vietnam, Vietnam Red Cross, Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations – as well as representatives of the Animal Health Sub-Department of Bac Ninh, Dong Thap Veterinarian Department, Thanh Hoa Provincial Veterinary Branch Office and Nghe An Provincial Veterinary Branch Office. CRS and ADPC representatives facilitated presentations and discussion sessions. *For a full list of participants, see Table 1 (Annexes).*

The three-day study tour was held on 9th – 11th July 2008 in Thanh Hoa, Vietnam, and hosted by Catholic Relief Services. CRS took the lead in arranging on-the-ground logistics and facilitating field visits and presentations/discussions of their project in Thanh Hoa. Asian Disaster Preparedness Center played a supporting role, coordinating the involvement of the organisations participating in the study tour and facilitating group discussions and activities on lessons identified for different aspects of community-based management of AHI.

B. Highlights of the study tour

1. CRS presentation of their work in Vietnam on ‘ensuring safe and sustainable small-scale poultry and livestock raising among vulnerable communities’

This presentation was followed by a question & answer and discussion session, in which participants were able to learn more about CRS’ project and provide initial feedback and impressions.



Model farmer, Thanh Hoa Province, Vietnam

2. Field visits to two CRS project sites in Thanh Hoa province:

- a. Model of alternative livelihood (cattle-raising) in Hau Loc district, Thanh Hoa province
- b. Model biosecure small-scale poultry farm in Trieu Son district, Thanh Hoa province

The field visits provided the opportunity for study tour participants to engage directly with project beneficiaries. Discussions with the farmers focused on their successes and difficulties in adopting the models of alternative livelihood

and of biosecure poultry farming. The project beneficiaries also highlighted their in-depth knowledge of the risks of AHI and of the different risk reduction behaviours that have been promoted by national and local campaigns for AHI risk reduction; they also openly discussed the context-specific costs and benefits of different risk reducing practices. Changes in their behaviour to reduce the risks of AHI were recognised by the farmers themselves (e.g. the poultry farmer limited access by traders to only a certain part of the farm), while they also highlighted difficulties in implementing other changes that might further reduce risks.

3. Group discussions on:

- a. successes, challenges and lessons for the promotion of biosecurity and safe/sustainable livelihoods within the context of community-based management of AHI
- b. lessons learned for community empowerment, stakeholder involvement and project sustainability

The study tour also provided an opportunity for sharing experience between practitioners (NGO, UN and government representatives) involved in community-based management of AHI and between community members and these practitioners.

C. Study Tour Evaluation

Throughout the study tour, participants were invited to share what they had learned in relation to community-based management of AHI via group activities, discussions and written evaluations (*for a synthesis of key lessons identified by participants, see the following section*).

In their evaluations, participants stated that they had learned most from the following aspects of the study tour:

- Visits to the models of an alternative livelihood and a biosecure farm enabled participants to see CRS' project in practice
- The study tour provided an opportunity for participants to share experiences and discuss successes and challenges for aspects of community-based management of AHI
- The study tour focused on a real-life situation and context, ensuring discussions were realistic and practically oriented
- The field site visit enabled participants to discuss successes and challenges in community-based management of AHI with the farmers themselves

The compiled quantitative results of the written evaluation are listed in Tables 2 and 3 (see Annexes).



Study tour participants discussed successes and challenges in reducing risks of avian influenza with project beneficiaries in Thanh Hoa, Vietnam

Overall, participants felt that the study tour was a success, enabling capacity building through cross-learning and sharing of experience between representatives of different types of organisations. In particular, participants recognised the importance of working together and fostering the kinds of inter-sectoral relationships that characterised both CRS' project and the study tour itself.

LESSONS IDENTIFIED

The following section represents a synthesis of the issues discussed by participants throughout the study tour, based on written evaluations, informal feedback, group discussions, and observation of the study tour by the reporters.

Successes of community-based management of AHI

1. Community-based management of AHI should be based on the principle of community participation and should use methods and processes that aim to empower communities and enhance community resilience.
2. The participation and cooperation of all relevant stakeholders is important (including not only NGOs and governments, but mass organisations, the private sector, UN organisations, donors, etc.) at all stages of the project cycle, most significantly at the development and evaluation stages of the project. In the case of CRS' project, a multi-stakeholder approach improved the overall quality of the project.
3. Community-oriented projects cannot and should not work in isolation of government structures; CRS provided an example of NGOs working productively with local government structures and having established an excellent relationship with partners in Thanh Hoa and other provinces.
4. Projects concerned with the management of AHI at the community level should be suited to local contexts and respond to local needs. Baseline/preliminary assessments conducted by CRS were useful in determining the objectives and design of the project and in ensuring that the project responded to the needs of the target communities. Such assessments also provide

the basis to monitor and evaluate project outcomes.

5. The involvement of the community and of community leaders in the selection of the beneficiary 'model' households was important to build community trust, to establish the legitimacy of the project and to support project sustainability.
6. CRS' project resulted in an increase in incomes and safer livelihoods for project beneficiaries who had adopted alternative livelihoods or biosecure poultry-raising practices; linking AI prevention and control to efforts to safeguard and improve livelihoods can increase stakeholder buy-in and sustainability of projects.
7. 'Model' farmers can act as agents of change within their own community contexts by putting risk reduction measures into practice – practitioners can assist this process by providing these farmers with key messages and materials/means to transmit these messages, as done by CRS through their model poultry farms.



A workshop was conducted, involving study tour participants in discussions on issues such as project sustainability and barriers to risk reduction

Challenges for community-based management of AHI

1. Projects with short timeframes are more difficult to evaluate and may have less sustainable outcomes than those characterised by longer-term involvement with the target communities. In the case of CRS' project, the rates of adoption of the model are uncertain; it would be beneficial to integrate into project design some simple methods for follow-up and evaluation in order, for example, to estimate replication rates of the models put in place (e.g. the model biosecure poultry farm).
2. While awareness of the risks of and risk reduction measures for AHI is often high in communities in Vietnam, translating knowledge into behaviour change remains one of the biggest challenges for community-based management of AHI.
3. Applying risk reduction methods and biosecurity may not only involve a change in behaviour that has been ongoing for a long time, but additional costs in terms of time and input; these can become real barriers to change, especially in communities that have lower level of incomes and where livelihoods are already at risk due to other factors such as seasonal flooding, etc.

4. Since AI is still a relatively rare disease – even in Vietnam – AI control should adopt a livelihood or at least an overall poultry production/poultry health approach rather than considering AI as an isolated phenomenon.
5. Some structural issues (for example, unrealistic government policies, limited capacity of veterinary services, poor compensation policies) threaten the goals of projects for community-based management of AHI. Practitioners therefore have to take into account the structures within which they have to operate and may have to take on an additional advocacy role not originally anticipated in the project.
6. The established mechanism for project proposal development and funding generally requires highly detailed project outlines to be developed in a relatively short space of time. As a consequence, there is usually insufficient time to carry out in-depth consultation with stakeholders. This often has negative impacts on the extent of stakeholder participation in the project, which can only be rectified partially through participatory processes during later project implementation stages.
7. Projects often run late, and sustainable results tend to be visible only by the time project staff have moved on and budgets are closed. This inhibits effective impact/outcome evaluation and forces even conscientious agencies to conduct evaluations of processes rather than impacts. One possible – and partial – solution would be to conduct participatory impact assessments with stakeholders that can be conducted real-time and without having to wait until all impacts are visible.

Lessons for capacity development in community-based management of AHI

1. The study tour involved provincial government representatives from the neighbouring provinces of Thanh Hoa and Nghe An; Nghe An participants were therefore able to learn from the experiences in Thanh Hoa and recognised, through their evaluations of the study tour, the value of sharing experience and working together for more effective community-based management of AHI.
2. Study tours such as the one in Thanh Hoa were identified by participants as a good way to expose central-level decision-makers to the realities of the field. Study tours and similar activities therefore increase decision-makers' awareness of the opinions, needs and priorities of community members.
3. The study tour created a network of practitioners – representatives from NGOs, the UN and provincial government – who recognised the importance of working together to overcome the challenges to community-based management of AHI.

4. The study tour drew attention to the ongoing importance of cross-learning between organisations working with communities: on the one hand, a wealth of experience already exists in community-based approaches to risk management and participatory development and on the other hand, many agencies have technical expertise in managing AHI; but few agencies have experience in both. It is therefore important that partnerships are fostered in order to share strengths and overcome weaknesses.



*Study tour participants and facilitators,
Thanh Hoa, Vietnam*

5. While community members can learn from technical experts in order to strengthen management of AHI, the study tour highlighted the reality that community members are themselves experts in managing their livelihoods and health, and have as much – if not more – experience, knowledge and skills to share.
6. Conducting critical analyses of project design and implementation is important in order to reveal successes and challenges and improve future projects; study tours can provide the opportunity for external – impartial – project analysis and for open discussions with a view to further improving community-based management of AHI.

PROJECT DETAILS AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The project on ‘Ensuring Safe and Sustainable Small-Scale Poultry and Livestock Raising Among Vulnerable Communities in Vietnam’ is implemented by Catholic Relief Services and funded by USAID (Kenan Institute Asia). *For more information on this project and on other work conducted by CRS, contact Gregory Auberry, Country Representative, CRS Vietnam, gauberry@vn.seapro.crs.org*

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The study tour was part of the project on ‘Strengthening Community-Based Management of AHI in Asia’, which is funded by the Canadian government via the Asian Development Bank.

For further information on this study tour as well as on the different aspects of the project on ‘Strengthening Community-Based Approaches to Management of AHI in Asia’, contact phe@adpc.net

ANNEXES

Table 1: Study tour participants and facilitators

	Organisation	Name & Position
1	Academy for Educational Development (AED)	Le Thanh Hai, Training and Communication Officer
2	Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC)	Anne Décobert, Project Coordinator, Public Health in Emergencies
3	Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC)	Janette Lauza-Ugsang, Project Manager, Public Health in Emergencies
4	Bac Ninh Animal Health Sub-Department	Tran Trong Dung, Deputy Manager of Epidemiology Unit
5	CARE International in Vietnam	Nguyen Tuan Hung, Project Manager, Avian Influenza Project
6	CARE International in Vietnam	Tran Thai Binh, Project Officer, Avian Influenza Project
7	Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	Le Quang Hai, Emergency Specialist/ Infrastructure Technical Advisor
8	Catholic Relief Services (CRS)	To Trung Phong, Project Officer
9	Dong Thap Veterinarian Department	Nguyen Thanh Huong, Deputy Director
10	Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)	Andrew Bisson, Technical Advisor, Avian Influenza Control Programme
11	Nam Dan District Veterinary Station, Nghe An	Nguyen Huu Quoc, Director
12	Nghe An Provincial Veterinary Branch Office	Le Thi Lan (Ms)
13	Nghe An Provincial Veterinary Branch Office	Tran Minh Hanh (Mr), Deputy Director
14	Nghe An Provincial Veterinary Branch Office	Vo Ding Khoa (Mr), Director
15	Partnership for Avian and Human Influenza (PAHI)	Nguyen Cong Tin, Information Officer
16	Thanh Hoa Provincial Veterinary Branch Office	Nguyen Huu Dinh (Mr), Director
17	Thanh Hoa Provincial Veterinary Branch Office	Kim Ngoc Hiep (Mr), Expert, Provincial Unit for Foreign Relationships
18	Thanh Hoa Provincial Veterinary Branch Office	Le Van Son, Deputy Director
19	Thanh Hoa Provincial Veterinary Branch Office	Nguyen Thi Thuy (Ms)
20	Vietnam Red Cross (VNRC)	Hoang My Chau, Project Officer, Health Department
21	Vietnam Red Cross (VNRC)	Nguyen Thi Thu Ha, Project Officer, Social Welfare Department

	Organisation	Name & Position
22	Thanh Hoa Veterinary Department	Nguyen Trong Quynh (Mr), Head of Foreign Relationships
23	Vin City Veterinary Station, Nghe An	Tran Van Chat, Director

Tables 2 and 3: Compiled results of the study tour evaluation

Criteria	Yes, completely	Very satisfactory	Satisfactory	Insufficient	Not at all
Overall, the Study Tour was useful to you	25%	70%	5%	-	-
Was the invitation and information given to you prior to the Study Tour satisfactory?	15%	60%	25%	-	-
Were the study tour facilities, organisation and general support satisfactory?	23%	47%	30%	-	-

Criteria	Yes	No
Would you like to be notified of other aspects of the Partnership?	100%	-