From 2008 to 2010 IOM implemented advocacy and capacity building activities for pandemic preparedness in Egypt. These activities were conducted in the framework of the project Pandemic Preparedness for Migrants and Host Communities funded through the Central Fund for Influenza Action (CFIA).

The project contributed towards national, regional and global efforts for avian and human influenza response and pandemic preparedness. Project activities were conducted in partnership with government counterparts from the ministries of health, national taskforces for pandemic preparedness and immigration authorities. IOM also worked in collaboration with UN partner agencies, partners of the Humanitarian Pandemic Preparedness (H2P) Initiative, international NGOs and Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

IOM sensitized the government on the importance to include migrants and mobile populations needs in pandemic preparedness plans for good public health management. Health workers and migrant community leaders were trained on health promotion and pandemic preparedness. Social mobilization campaigns were conducted among migrant and host communities to raise awareness on avian and pandemic influenza and to strengthen their resilience to an influenza pandemic.

IOM also facilitated a training on basic counseling and communication skills for humanitarian workers and migrant community leaders, to strengthen their capacity to communicate with and to counsel migrants and other vulnerable groups in the event of a pandemic or any other crisis.

Background

Egypt is country of origin, transit and destination for migrants. Some Egyptians migrate in search of better opportunities towards Arab countries, Europe and North America through regular or irregular patterns. As Egypt is positioned at the crossroads between Africa and the Mediterranean, it receives flows of irregular migrants and refugees from the Middle East and Sub-Saharan African countries. In particular, large communities of refugees from Iraq, Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia have mainly settled in the greater Cairo area.

The transmission of emerging and re-emerging diseases such as avian and pandemic influenza is strictly linked with population mobility.

Only few governments have pandemic preparedness plans that are inclusive of migrant and mobile populations needs. Often access to health and social services is not granted to migrants and, even if it is granted those services are not migrant friendly due to existing legal, socio-cultural, behavioral language and communication barriers.

In Egypt IOM has conducted activities in line with the UN System and Partners Consolidated Action Plan for Animal and Human Influenza (UNCAPAHI). The aim of the project was to ensure the continuity of essential social, economic and governance services as well as the effective implementation of humanitarian relief efforts under pandemic conditions.

IOM has worked in collaboration with government counterparts from the health and non health sectors, to sensitize them on the importance to include migrant and mobile populations need in pandemic preparedness plans. IOM has also strengthened the capacity of migrant and host communities to prepare for and respond to a pandemic, in collaboration with government counterparts and with local civil society organizations.
Outcomes

- IOM advocated to the Government of Egypt on the importance to include migrant and mobile populations needs in pandemic preparedness plans for good health management.
- An assessment on pandemic preparedness knowledge, attitudes, practices and behaviour was conducted among Sudanese migrants in Greater Cairo.
- A training manual on health promotion and pandemic preparedness was developed in English and Arabic. Several trainings on health promotion and pandemic preparedness were facilitated in Egypt and in other countries in the region, targeting health workers and migrant community leaders.
- Migrant friendly IEC materials in English and Arabic were developed in collaboration with the Government of Egypt. These IEC materials were disseminated during social mobilization campaigns to raise awareness on avian and pandemic influenza among migrant and host communities in Egypt.
- The IOM training manual on basic counseling and communication skills was translated in Arabic. IOM facilitated a training on basic counseling and communication skills for humanitarian workers and

Achievements

- Awareness was raised to the Government of Egypt on the importance of mainstreaming migrant and mobile populations’ needs into pandemic preparedness plans.
- The health promotion and pandemic preparedness skills of community health workers and migrant community leaders were strengthened.
- Knowledge on avian and pandemic influenza and on basic hygiene measures to prevent and mitigate their spread was improved among migrant and host communities. At least 13,022 IEC materials were distributed, and at least 4,758 individuals participated in the social mobilization campaigns.
- 16 individuals, among humanitarian workers and community leaders, were trained on basic counseling and communication skills.
- Participants to the training acknowledged the importance of communication plans as essential means to cope with crisis situations.
- Development of networks of organizations providing different services was promoted during the training on basic counselling and communication skills to facilitate referral systems in case of a pandemic or for everyday needs.

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IOM’s Migration Health Division (MHD) aims to meet the needs of Member States in managing health related aspects of migration, and to promote evidence-based policies and comprehensive preventive and curative health programmes which are beneficial, accessible, and equitable for vulnerable migrants and mobile populations.

The Migration Health Division works in five interconnected strategic functions to address the migration health challenges throughout the migration process: Advocacy; Health Policy Development; Health Service Delivery; Capacity-Building and Research and Dissemination

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