In 2009 IOM facilitated a training in Nigeria with participants from some of the West African countries. This activity was conducted in the framework of the project Humanitarian Pandemic Preparedness and Response: Capacity Building 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.

The activity was conducted in partnership with government counterparts from the ministries of health, national taskforces for pandemic preparedness and counter-trafficking services. 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.

The training strengthened basic counselling and communication skills of IOM focal points from Ghana, Senegal and Sierra Leone and of Nigerian government officials from the health and non health sectors.

**Background**

West Africa is a region characterized by high internal mobility. Movements of regular and irregular migrants within the region are determined by economic disparities between rural and urban areas and between countries. The progressive application of the ECOWAS Protocol on the Free Movement of Persons and the Right of Residence and Establishment has boosted migration within the region. Political instability and natural disasters are other factors affecting intra-regional and international mobility of migrants, internally displaced people and refugees. West Africa is also the point of departure of many irregular migrants for their journey to Europe.

Cross-border movement is an issue of importance in transmission of emerging and re-emerging diseases, including pandemic influenza. Many governments at the national, provincial or district level do not have pandemic preparedness plans that are inclusive of migrants and mobile populations needs.

**Summary**

In 2009 IOM facilitated a training in Nigeria with participants from some of the West African countries. This activity was conducted in the framework of the project Humanitarian Pandemic Preparedness and Response: Capacity Building 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.

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The training strengthened basic counselling and communication skills of IOM focal points from Ghana, Senegal and Sierra Leone and of Nigerian government officials from the health and non health sectors.

**government officials and humanitarian workers often do not have appropriate skills to provide support to migrants and other vulnerable groups to cope with a pandemic or any other crisis situation.**

IOM sensitized stakeholders from different backgrounds on the need to elaborate pandemic preparedness plans and communication strategies that include migrants and mobile populations, and strengthened their skills to communicate with and counsel migrants during a pandemic or any other crisis situation.

Project activities implemented in Nigeria were part of IOM contribution towards the UN System and Partners Consolidated Action Plan for Animal and Human Influenza (UNCAPAHI).

IOM worked in collaboration with the government and raised awareness on the importance of including migrant and mobile populations in pandemic preparedness plans and communication strategies. Migrant friendly information, education and communication (IEC) materials were developed and disseminated among migrants and their host communities to raise awareness on avian and human influenza and to promote behaviour change in relation to pandemic influenza.

**Healthy Migrants in Healthy Communities**

Achievements

Ø IOM sensitized the Government of Nigeria on the importance of including migrants in communication strategies.

Ø Basic hygiene measures to prevent and mitigate the spread of avian and pandemic influenza were promoted among migrant and host communities in the four states of Anambra, Lagos, Borno and Kano. A total of 5,892 beneficiaries participated in the social mobilization campaigns. A total of 18,650 IEC materials were produced.

Ø 26 individuals were trained on basic counselling and communication skills.

Ø The training brought together Nigerian government officials from: the Avian Influenza Control Project (Human Health and Animal health), the Federal Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Information and Communication, the Federal Ministry of Women Affairs & Social Development, the National Agency for the Prohibition of Traffic in Persons (NAPTIP), from the Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF). Representatives from FAO, IFRC and the Nigerian Red Cross Society also participated in the training. Staff from other IOM missions in West Africa, Ghana, Senegal and Sierra Leone was also included in the training with the purpose of conducting similar activities in the future.

Ø Participants acknowledged that basic counseling and communication skills can be used in different crisis, post crisis situations and everyday life.

Ø Awareness was raised on the importance of mainstreaming migrant and mobile populations’ needs into pandemic preparedness and communication plans for effective public health management.

Ø Participants acknowledged the importance of communication plans as essential means to cope with crisis situations.

Ø Development of networks of organizations providing different services was promoted to facilitate referral systems in case of a pandemic or for everyday needs.

Ø Requests were made by several participants for IOM information, education and communication (IEC) materials

Outputs

Ø In collaboration with the Government of Nigeria, migrant friendly IEC materials were produced in the main spoken languages: Arabic, English, Pidgin English, Ibo and Yoruba.

Ø In collaboration with the Government of Nigeria IOM conducted social mobilization campaigns in the states of Anambra, Lagos, Borno and Kano to raise awareness on avian and pandemic influenza among migrant and host communities.

Ø A training on basic counselling and communication skills was hosted at the IOM Office in Abuja, Nigeria.

Through the training, the counseling and communication skills of government officials, humanitarian workers and other stakeholders who engage with migrants and other vulnerable groups were strengthened. These skills are essential for good public health and humanitarian crisis management.

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
- Research and Dissemination

The IOM training manual on basic counselling and communication skills is available in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Russian.

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