Outcome of meeting of the National Influenza Centers (NICs) in the Asia-Pacific Region

WHO Regional Office for South East Asia
New Delhi
Background

• 10th Bi-Regional Meeting of National Influenza Centers in the South-East Asia and Western Pacific Regions
• 25 – 28 July 2016
• Bangkok (Thailand)
• A total of 86 participants
  – 31 participants from 14 countries from the Asia-Pacific region.
  – 21 from partners in various institutions (US CDC, CDC Beijing, CDC Viet Nam, WHO CC Melbourne, FAO, USAID, OIE, and AFRIMS)
  – 8 temporary advisers (NIV Pune, NIH BKK, NIID Japan, Melbourne, Hongkong, Atlanta and Memphis (USA)
  – 26 from WHO Country Offices, WHO Regional Offices and HQ
Meeting objectives

**Overall objective:**
To strengthen influenza virus detection, isolation and sharing; reporting and data usage; and to strengthen and develop influenza vaccine policies in Member States.

**Specific objectives:**
To update the participants on current global and regional status of seasonal, avian and other influenza viruses of pandemic potential.

To review the progress made under the current five-year influenza strategy from 2012-2016 in the Asia-Pacific, and present APSED as a forward strategy for the surveillance of influenza and other emerging diseases.
Specific objectives...

To provide updates on virology; discuss ways to further strengthen detection and characterization of influenza virus; review approaches to anti-viral resistance surveillance; and discuss the external quality assurance schemes.

To discuss strengthening of reporting, virus tracking and data usage in the Asia-Pacific, including approaches to obtaining the burden of influenza.

To introduce the path from data to influenza vaccine introduction in the Asia-Pacific and share global and regional evidence on protecting pregnant women and infants through influenza vaccination.
Conclusions

Influenza remains important in the Asia-Pacific region due to the impact of seasonal influenza in high risk groups and the ongoing threat of influenza viruses with pandemic potential.

Laboratory capacity for the detection and isolation of influenza viruses; timely sharing of isolates and specimens; and participation in external quality assessments (EQA) are essential.

Influenza surveillance, laboratory and GISRS networks in the Asia-Pacific region continue to play a critical role in laboratory diagnostics, vaccines, antiviral susceptibility and risk assessment for policy and decision-making.

Regional dashboards, when implemented, will play a useful role in sharing of epidemiology and laboratory surveillance data which contributes to global influenza updates and systematic risk assessments.
Conclusion…

Efforts to assist Member States to quantify and describe the burden (including economic burden) of influenza should continue, as should efforts to strengthen the sentinel surveillance sites they are based on.

Use of data generated through epidemiology and laboratory surveillance to guide vaccination strategies for the prevention of influenza, especially for high risk populations such as pregnant women and young children, should be encouraged.

Greater coordination and sharing of data and information between national influenza centres (NICs), surveillance networks, immunization programs and policy makers is needed in member states.

*The Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies* (APSED) is a useful strategy to enhance influenza surveillance and response going forward.
Recommendations for Member States

Continue to strengthen influenza surveillance systems, sharing of national epidemiology and laboratory surveillance data, and use of surveillance data in risk assessment and decision-making.

Continue with burden of influenza (including economic burden) estimation efforts and the sentinel surveillance systems they are based on.

Continue to strengthen/maintain laboratory capacity for the detection of influenza viruses and ensure laboratory quality through participation in external quality assessments (EQA).
Recommendations for Member States...

Ensure influenza viruses of pandemic potential are shared by NICs with WHO CCs and relevant reference centres for confirmation and further characterization; and use the Influenza Virus Traceability Mechanism (IVTM) where appropriate.

Encourage the use of data and collaborations between surveillance networks, immunization programs and policy makers to guide vaccination strategies or support the development of influenza vaccination policy.

Continue using the Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies (APSED) for influenza surveillance.
Recommendations for WHO

Continue to support Member States to strengthen influenza epidemiology and laboratory surveillance and networks, including burden of influenza activities.

Promote the sharing of regional influenza surveillance data through regional influenza surveillance dashboards, global platforms and publications.

Support Member States through their NICs and national influenza laboratories to maintain laboratory quality; encourage influenza virus detection, isolation, characterisation and sharing; and the use of IVTM for influenza viruses of pandemic potential.
Recommendations for WHO...

Expand the name of the annual meeting to the *Bi-Regional Meeting of National Influenza Centres/Programmes in the WHO South-East Asia and Western Pacific Regions*

Coordinate the integration of *Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases and Public Health Emergencies* (APSED) for influenza surveillance.