



Australia Provides \$12 Million to Combat Emerging Infectious Diseases in our Region

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22 May 2007, Australia will provide \$12 million to assist countries in the western Pacific and South-East Asia combat emerging infectious diseases.

Our contribution will help the World Health Organization (WHO) implement the Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Diseases. Asia remains the epicentre of avian influenza outbreaks worldwide. Over 30 new infectious agents have been detected in the past three decades, 75 per cent originating in animals. New pathogens, particularly viruses, remain unpredictable and continue to emerge and spread across countries. Several have profoundly affected countries of the Asia Pacific region - home to over 3.4 billion people, or 53 per cent of the world's population.

Through the Strategy, the WHO will work to minimise the health, economic and social impacts of emerging diseases such as avian influenza in the Asia Pacific.

Australia's contribution will assist the WHO to work with countries in the region to develop effective surveillance systems for early warning and response; strengthen laboratory facilities and procedures; and improve infection control in health care services.

The WHO and its partners will work to promote national and regional coordination, information exchange and risk communications; provide technical support and emergency assistance during outbreaks; and facilitate collaboration with the animal health sector to reduce the risk of transmission of disease from animals to humans.

Our funding will support the important work of the WHO's regional and country offices, and forms part of our four-year \$100 million commitment to combat the threat of pandemics and other emerging infectious diseases in the Asia Pacific.

Australia is already helping countries such as Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, East Timor and those in the Mekong build their preparedness, surveillance and response. This support has included placing epidemiologists in WHO country offices in Indonesia, Vietnam, Laos, China, East Timor and Papua New Guinea.

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