

COMMUNICATION

Impact!

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HEALTH COMMUNICATION
PARTNERSHIP



A scene from Egypt's Communication for Healthy Living Avian Influenza television ad campaign



"Your Health, Your Wealth" —
Communication for Healthy Living and
Egypt Ministry of Health & Population

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Communication for Healthy Living's Campaign Improves Response to Avian Influenza in Egypt

A Quick Response to an Avian Influenza Outbreak

Within hours of the confirmation of the first cases of the H5N1 "Avian Influenza" (AI) virus in Egypt on February 17, 2006, all the major state-owned television channels were airing an informative TV spot showing families how to protect themselves from the deadly virus. The Communication for Healthy Living (CHL) Project, whose core partners include the Ministry of Health and Population (MOHP) and the Ministry of Information/State Information Service (MOI/SIS), worked well before any outbreak, under the "Your Health Is Your Wealth" Program, to develop an integrated package of communication interventions. Their goal was to develop a quick, unified and effective response to any outbreak. As a result of this concerted effort, which included broadcast and print materials as well as community outreach activities, 86 percent of the adult population—an estimated 38 million people—were able to recall messages from the campaign. Seventy-eight percent of those—nearly 30 million people—reported taking at least one protective action, including avoiding contact with birds, keeping children and the elderly away from poultry, and washing their hands and utensils more carefully after preparing poultry.

TV Spots

In addition to the initial TV spot, CHL collaborated on the production of three other TV spots on AI with more specific messages on modes of transmission, hygiene and safe preparation of poultry for consumption, safe handling of live poultry, keeping children safe, and promoting a national AI hotline. The AI hotline received close to 300,000 calls in the first three months. CHL also produced a public service announcement on AI as a joint activity with *Alam Simsim* (the Egyptian version of *Sesame Street*), with special messages on keeping children safe from exposure. These spots were aired regionally via satellite.

Wide Distribution of Print Materials

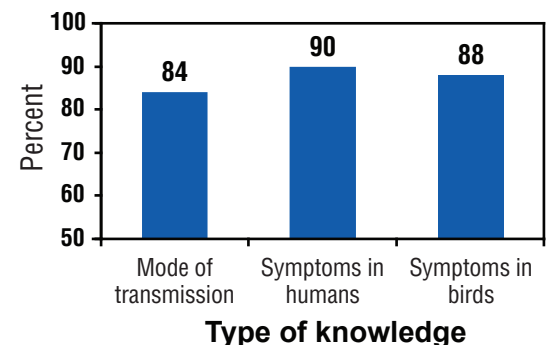
The TV spots were only one component of the larger communication strategy. Addressing AI in the Egyptian context required producing specific messages for specific audiences. Therefore, the campaign included messages to address the health, agricultural, and environmental sectors. For example, poultry is a very important source of income for many families—especially rural—in Egypt. Nearly a third of the population own poultry in Egypt. Pre-testing of preliminary avian flu communication materials showed that rural groups as well as the general public wanted more information on signs of flu in poultry and its means of control.

In response to the pre-testing results, CHL and the Ministries produced fliers with messages on AI prevention and protection for families with and without poultry and distributed them before the outbreak via channels such as the MOHP's 5000+ clinics, outreach workers from the government and NGOs, and the national "Ask, Consult" network of 13,000 private pharmacies. The materials are available on the CHL website (www.healthcom-egypt.info).

Community Mobilization

Volunteers in CHL's community programs used the existing program structure, including regular community meetings, to mobilize communities

Figure 1: Percentage of respondents that learned about Avian Flu transmission and symptoms from the CHL Campaign



on AI. Through these meetings, volunteer committees were set up to disseminate AI health messages, to screen all the households breeding domestic birds, and to facilitate the closing of shops that sold live birds in their villages as per government policy. Pharmacies, often the front-line health service delivery venue for the majority of Egyptians, also proved to be a critical source of public information on AI. The program distributed hundreds of thousands of AI informational flyers for providers and consumers through the Ask-Consult pharmacies, and pharmacists received 30,000 informational posters to display on their storefronts.

The Egypt Health Communication Survey

CHL had already scheduled a national survey (the Egypt Health Communication Survey or EHCS) for May 2006 to assess the reach and impact of its family health communication activities. The program augmented the survey to assess the reach of the AI campaign and its impact on knowledge of transmission and symptoms, and initiation of protective practices. The survey used a nationally representative sample (n=4052) of 15- to 49-year-old adults in 21 governorates.

RESULTS

Knowledge

The EHCS 2006 data showed that three months after the launch of the national AI campaign, the vast majority (86%) of respondents could recall a message from the TV spots and programs. This in turn helped produce an impressive increase in knowledge concerning the disease. Eighty to ninety percent of respondents reported that they had learned about modes of transmission, symptoms in humans, and symptoms in birds of avian influenza (Figure 1).

Protective Behavior

The campaign messages also increased the practice of protective behaviors against AI. Seventy-eight percent of respondents who could recall campaign messages reported that they had taken at least one action to protect themselves or their family from avian flu, compared to 55 percent of those who could not recall any campaign messages. Respondents who could recall a message were significantly more likely to report the following protective behaviors: handling poultry differently, washing their cooking utensils more thoroughly, washing their hands after handling birds, avoiding birds, and keeping children and the elderly away from birds (Figure 2). People who

could recall two or more messages were even more likely to report these protective behaviors.

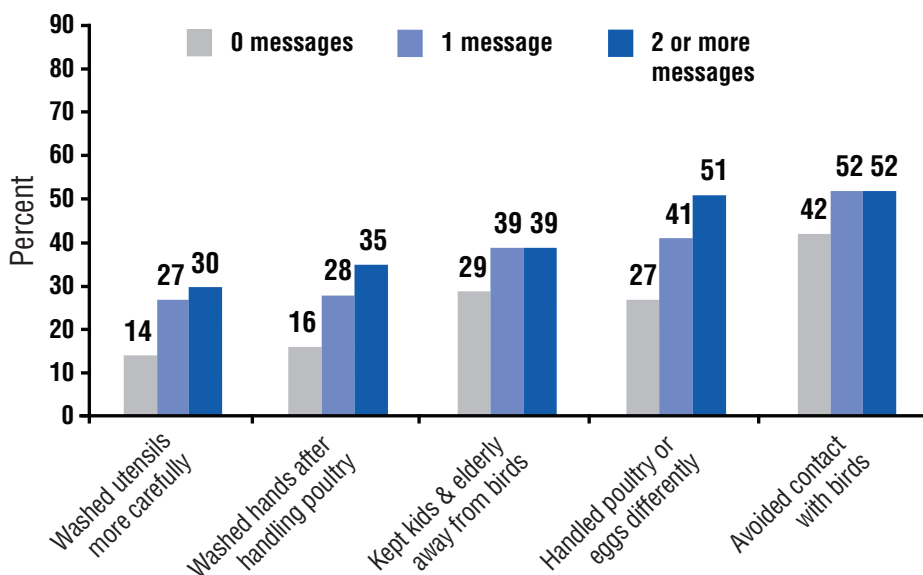
An Integrated and Sustainable Response

Egypt was in a unique position to respond swiftly and effectively to the AI crisis because of the partnership and cooperative mechanisms established between the MOHP and the MOI/SIS through the CHL Project, implemented by the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/Center for Communication Programs (CCP) through the Health Communication Partnership (HCP).

All of these partners were able to mobilize their efforts according to the practical communication strategy developed by CHL under the auspices of the national AI committee, chaired by the MOHP with representatives from all the concerned national bodies (including the MOI and the Ministry of Agriculture) as well as international partners (such as USAID and WHO).

Because the AI threat will likely remain in Egypt indefinitely and at varying levels, CHL and its partners are continually refining and adapting the communication plan to identify and address threats and gaps that exist or might develop in the future.


Figure 2: Protective behaviors reported in past three months, by number of campaign messages recalled



Source: MOHP/SIS/CHL Egypt National Health Communication Survey 2006, n=4052 Chi-square (df=4,4048), p<.0001, Controlling for respondent's education, employment, urban/rural residence, age, and whether or not live birds are kept in the household


COMMUNICATION Impact!

Summarizes research and programmatic findings from the Health Communication Partnership (HCP) and other bilateral agreements.



HEALTH COMMUNICATION PARTNERSHIP

Based at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health/Center for Communication Programs. HCP partners include the Academy for Educational Development, Save the Children, the International HIV/AIDS Alliance, and Tulane University's School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine.



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Communication Makes the Difference!

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