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## Avian Influenza TV Spot Reaches Broad Azerbaijani Audience

One of the key components of USAID's Primary Health Care Strengthening (PHCS) Project coordinated by International Medical Corps is to prevent avian influenza in Azerbaijan through supporting effective communication. To address the potential for a second outbreak of avian flu in the country, the Project has launched a campaign to increase public awareness of the virus.

In a collaborative effort with the Azerbaijan Ministry of Health, PHCS Project approached Argo PR to produce four television and radio spots that would provide information on preventative measures and urged citizens to protect themselves and their families against avian flu.

"We were increasingly concerned with the possibility that bird flu may develop into a human influenza pandemic when USAID PHCS Project approached us to develop TV and radio messages. The timing could have not been more appropriate," said Dr. Tamilla Nagiyeva, Argo PR Director. The spots were aired on the most popular TV and radio stations during the period considered high-risk for a potential second avian influenza outbreak.

"Clearly, we need to prepare ourselves," remarked Ali-kishi, a community elder from a remote community in the district of Gazakh after watching the TV spots. The head of a big family, he is a respected decision-maker both in his family and community.

"This TV message helped us understand the nature of the threat. It also offered advice to help us prepare for possible scenarios and protect ourselves, our families and the communities around us," added Ali-kishi's daughter Ganira, a school teacher in the Gazakh district.



**The Project-developed TV spot calls on people to prevent avian influenza in their community**

In the villages of Azerbaijan, TV provides more than entertainment; it is an important form of education as well. Housewives received comprehensive information on avian influenza prevention through spots run during a popular soap opera. The public health ads were aired in primetime—appearing during broadcasts of football games, local news shows, and Hollywood movies, thus reaching men and women, young and old.

"There was a lack of information before," Ganira continued. "Even if people were given information leaflets, mostly they did not care what was inside of it. But these animated and creative TV spots captured the attention of all viewers."

She also pointed out that schoolchildren in particular loved the character of a farmer who, aware of the avian influenza threat, tries to help his community. "They know each word from this TV spot by heart, and they even play an 'avian influenza' game," she smiles. "They always argue about who gets to play the smart farmer."

Ali-kishi is happy to see that preventive measures are now being taken in his community. "Thanks to these TV spots, we are not afraid of avian influenza any more," he says. "We are ready to fight the infection."