
US\$13 Million Grant to Fight Avian Flu in the West Bank and Gaza Approved by the World Bank

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WASHINGTON, September 22, 2006 – The World Bank has approved a US\$13 million grant to minimize threats posed to humans by avian influenza in domestic poultry in the West Bank and Gaza. US\$3 million is being provided from the World Bank's Avian and Human Influenza Facility, a multidonor financing mechanism set up earlier this year, while a US\$10 million grant from the World Bank's own resources has been approved and will serve as a second stage of this project.

*"These grants will assist the PA to improve their readiness and protect their citizens from a potentially devastating threat as the migration season is around the corner" says **Arif Zulfikar, World Bank Head of Department responsible for all Facility Grant Applications**, "In particular, the Bank is committed to helping the poor and vulnerable benefit from quality public health care as well as reforms in the animal health system, to help avert a possible human pandemic with the devastating social and economic impacts this would imply."*

In April 2006, the avian influenza (H5N1) virus was confirmed across eight locations in Gaza. The proximity of outbreaks in neighboring countries, coupled with a large volume of bird migrations, increases the probability of a spread of the virus among domestic poultry, and thus places West Bank and Gaza at high risk.

The World Bank's project is consistent with the priorities set out in the Palestinian Authority's 2005 National Plan for the Pandemic Influenza. The US\$3 million grant from the Avian and Human Influenza Facility will be implemented through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), in coordination with the Palestinian authorities, while the Palestinian Authority will implement the other parts of the program.

The World Bank's Avian and Human Influenza is supported by generous commitments from eight donor agencies, the European Commission being the largest donor. The Avian Flu Facility is dedicated to help countries prepare and implement integrated action plans designed to reduce the social and economic impact of avian influenza and minimize possible outbreak of a human flu pandemic.

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For more information, see
www.worldbank.org/avianflu