

Scenarios and strategies on future pandemics

ASEF-ASAP: A NEW APPROACH TO ACTIVE PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

A new, future-oriented approach to the preparation for pandemics and public health emergencies is proposed by an international panel of experts and stakeholders brought together by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF). The approach put forward by ASEF is based on a scenario method and has first been applied in pandemic preparedness across two world regions.

The lack of effective reaction to the outbreak of the Enterohemorrhagic *E. coli* or EHEC bacteria in Europe underlines that complacency on the side of government and society is dangerous and costly. Public sector preparation and communication alone is not effective in preparing for the pandemic threats to come. The ASEF panel called on all actors involved to overcome their passiveness following the hype around the H1N1 pandemic, which turned out to be surprisingly mild. Anticipating, understanding and finding measured responses to the pandemic threats of the future is key to the new scenario-based approach presented in Bangkok on Monday, 13 June, 2011. This launch marks the beginning of an outreach action to society at large, calling for developing multi-sectoral strategies and actions across Asia and Europe with the tools of the project: Accurate Scenarios, Active Preparedness (ASAP).

As part of this approach, different kinds of pandemics are included in preparation. The range of preparedness is enlarged from influenza-type viruses to cover other possible types of disease, including different kinds of biological and non-biological agents - from prions to even possible cybernetic infections. Multiple stakeholders including business and civil society actively take part in pandemic preparedness, rather than being mere recipients of information. Preparedness addresses key uncertainties and is able to play into different possible future contexts for public health emergencies.

The approach provides first concrete tools to turn better preparedness into reality across Asia and Europe. It calls on stakeholders in government, business and civil society to apply and further elaborate these tools. They will be used for testing existing preparedness plans and developing strategies for effective implementation.

Applying the approach to Asia and Europe, the ASEF panel recommended to take a series of actions for pandemic preparedness and large scale public health emergencies:

Accepted minimum standards for pandemic preparedness across all actors

Systems and plans developed in collaboration between civil society, business, health and non-health actors, governments and International Organisations focussing on early detection and early, sustainable response.

Public Private Partnerships for Pandemic Preparedness (P⁵)

Businesses in direct partnership with authorities, creating shared plans & practice, including private infrastructure and including, supporting & motivating Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) for contingency planning.

Shared responsibilities with Civil Society incl. religious & spiritual leaders

Civil society engaged in pandemic preparedness; enabling support for outreach, psychological support

and behavioural change; Service provision by civil society organisations to vulnerable groups in public health emergencies, filling the gaps.

Cross-sharing of information and engaging citizens through social media

Effective means to share information between all involved actors; Engaging traditional mass media as partner in dealing with public health emergencies; Involving individuals as active citizens through social media and crowd-sourcing, avoiding both public hysteria and negligence.

Developing and keeping diversity in diet, food production & ecology

diversity in diet for enabling proper immune response and flexible adaptation; nutrient variety in food production and emergency food reserves; ensure broad ecosystem services to strengthen community resilience.

Mobilising more resources for closing gaps in R&D

Engaging multiple stakeholders in R&D (Research and Development); R&D on diseases in the animal-human-ecosystem interface; R&D on Climate Change induced diseases, new opportunistic agents and new forms of diseases with pandemic potential; new technologies to isolate pathogens and to counter with effective vaccines and therapies

Global Forum to create Circle of Commitment among multi-sector actors

Global gathering to engage all relevant stakeholders; Prioritising and coordinating actions for effective early warning and response; Developing best practice and addressing future challenges; Developing interactive databases, hands-on tools and e-applications for multiple actors.

ASEF invites stakeholders to use the scenarios, recommendations and materials for testing and developing preparedness plans for pandemics and public health emergencies. For more information and support please contact the ASEF-ASAP project at www.asef.org.

The ASEF-ASAP panel of experts and stakeholders comprised participants from both health and non-health sectors across Asia and Europe, from civil society, business, governments and International Organisations. ASEF is the only institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), involving governments from 46 countries plus the European Commission and the ASEAN secretariat. The ASEF-ASAP project is supported by the Government of Japan.