

The political economy of HPAI: Planning and methodology workshop for SE Asia country case study work

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IDS, University of Sussex

Workshop Report

1. Background

The objective of the IDS project is to investigate the politics of policy processes surrounding avian flu, identifying key actors and networks and associated narratives and practices of policy.

The first phases focused on the international level highlighting broad issues in terms of the framing of the problem, and the forms of response. An analysis of the political economy of policy is aimed at revealing key challenges, obstacles and opportunities for responding to avian flu – and potentially other global epidemics. This has involved an extensive literature review, some selective interviews with key players based in Europe and the preparation of a forthcoming discussion paper.

However, ‘international’ processes can only be understood in relation to national contexts. For this reason it is proposed that, in parallel to completing the international work, a series of country based cases studies are undertaken in SE Asia.

2. Country case studies: SE Asia – Terms of Reference

This phase will produce a series of country case studies in Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam and Indonesia. These will follow (broadly) the same methodology used in the international work, in order to allow later integration and comparison. The country studies will be rapid surveys, based on some limited fieldwork in-country, combined with some background literature reviews.

IDS provides the coordinating support function for these studies. Details of the country researchers and the wider project can be found at: <http://www.steps-centre.org/ourresearch/avianflu.html>

The outline Terms of Reference for the country studies was developed at the workshop. Each country study will include the following 8 elements:

1. An overview of policy making and political economy contexts for the country, particularly as related to avian flu. This will involve compiling information to complete the 'comparative table' (see below), plus other relevant material relating to the particular country context.
2. An assessment of the avian flu 'time line', identifying key policy events, moments and shifts, based initially on secondary/Internet based material and confirmed through interviews. This will look at both changes in the disease dynamics and the policy response, and the comparisons across countries will allow us to examine the contrasts between 'outbreak/emergency/epidemic' mode and more 'endemic' situations. Part of the timeline analysis will be to see what elements of the global debate and associated timeline impinged on national debates. Timelines from different perspectives, and in relation to different stories/themes, will highlight how different moments were important for different strands of policy change.
3. An assessment of key policy narratives/framings driving policy debate from different actor networks/groupings. This will derive from a combination of document analysis, review of media reports and interviews. Triangulation across sources will ensure a nuanced picture of contrasting narratives – highlighting the 'mainstream' views and those with less purchase on the policy process. A tracing of narratives over time, in relation to the timeline (above), will hopefully reveal changes in policy discourse, including divergences and convergences of views.
4. A mapping of the actor networks associated with policy change around avian flu in the country (including national/international actors, and those from business, farming, veterinary and other groups). An initial 'baseline' map was developed during the workshop (see below). A more elaborate map will be developed – either as part of discussions themselves in participatory mode – or derived from interview notes. Changing configurations of actors/networks may be traced also in relation to the timeline, and related to the analysis of narratives. A series of further maps will be developed as a basis for the analysis of policy dynamics as a result of interviews and other analysis.
5. An examination of competing interests and politics involved in making avian flu policy and the consequences for the design and implementation of response mechanisms. This will involve a commentary on the actor-network maps with a view to drawing out the political and other factors which have influenced policy change. For example, the actor-network maps may be analysed in relation to funding relations, political patronage relationships, administrative/institutional links, information flows and so on. A broad overview will be complemented by a series of focused 'thematic stories' which will pursue different policy decisions/moments/controversies.

6. A series of 3-4 'thematic stories' have been identified (see below) for each country. These may of course change, but each will illustrate a different dimension of policy change through a detailed focused analysis of a particular moment, event, decision, controversy etc.
7. Across the examples, all country studies will reflect on the following cross-cutting themes. These echo some of the themes emerging from the global response study (see below):
 - Links between the global/international and the local/national – how relevant, how mediated, and with what political consequences?
 - The role of science, expertise and evidence in framing and influencing policy – how important, what sources, what consequences? How is risk/uncertainty framed and dealt with?
 - The distributional consequences (who wins/loses) of the policy responses – how is this handled in political debate?
 - How are (international) public goods constructed in the policy debate? Which goods, which public etc?
 - What are the sustainability/resilience implications of policy responses – will the responses that have emerged be up to the task of meeting future shocks, stresses, challenges? Are there weaknesses and limitations.
8. And drawing on the above, a conclusion which reflects on what lessons from the H5N1 response for the future?

Case study themes

Working groups undertook preliminary analyses of the country situations through the development of a timeline, an actor network mapping and an analysis of political interests and policy processes. A series of themes which have dominated the national debate, and are illustrative of the broader policy processes, were identified for each country. These will help focus the country studies.

Vietnam

- Vaccination controversies
- Compensation/support debates
- Market restructuring policies
- Ducks and their role
- Food safety (duck blood)

Cambodia

- Aid effectiveness - development vs. emergency: What happens to large amounts of uncoordinated donor aid in an emergency mode? How does that work when

absorptive capacity of the state is low (or high in the wrong ways)? Non-Existent Emergency

- Focus on health and behaviour modification with an emphasis on biosecurity and prevention of animal to human transmission, creating a focus on a low cost one emphasis individual responsibility.
- Interest groups, evidence and the 'blame game', including debates about the role of wild birds.
- Human rights and policy options (including culling and compensation), given the longer history of the country and donors' sensitivities.

Thailand

- The role of CP in policymaking – patronage politics (on reporting, on vaccination)
- The cockfighter story – how local pressure around a key issue influenced changes in policy, while the wider 'backyard bird' farming population had little influence.
- The patents and pharma story and the role Thailand has played in the Tamiflu and vaccines story.

Indonesia

- Implementing policy in the context of decentralisation and weak state capacity
- The Jakarta ban – food safety and food security dilemmas
- Late reporting of the outbreak – reasons for secrecy
- Virus sharing and the Indonesian stand
- Vaccination, or not – and questions of efficacy (managing an endemic situation).

Action points

- a) Links between the projects will be enhanced through a project wiki and circulation list.
- b) Contacts will be made with the FAO and ILRI/IFPRI teams in the Mekong countries and Indonesia respectively working on 'institutions'.
- c) FAO will facilitate introductions for country researchers with a project letter to be sent from IDS.
- d) Outputs of the IDS-coordinated work will feed into parallel thinking on communications/decision support efforts to intervene in policy.
- e) Early outputs of the IDS work will provide 'hooks' for the wider discussions around the 'One World, One Health' effort.
- f) A follow up event will be organised in early 2009 which will provide an opportunity to feed back the global and country policy process studies to a senior policy audience, identifying lessons learned and ways forward.