



## **Summary of the OFFLU Steering Committee Meeting, 15 September 2011, OIE Headquarters, Paris, France**

Members of the Steering Committee: Steve Edwards (SE) (Chairman), Cristobal Zepeda (CZ), Gideon Brückner (GB) (by telephone), Gerrit Viljoen (GV) (by telephone)

Other participants: Peter Daniels (PD) (Chairman of Executive Committee), Gwenaëlle Dauphin (GD) (FAO), Keith Hamilton (KH) (OIE), Gounalan Pavade (GP) (OFFLU Secretariat), Liz Mumford (LM) and Sara Martins (SM) (WHO – by video conference), Filip Claes (FC) and Mia Kim (MK) (FAO – by telephone)

Apologies: David Swayne (DS)

Steve Edwards welcomed participants, emphasizing that the role of the Steering Committee (SC) was to provide strategic oversight, with detailed implementation delegated to the Executive Committee (EC).

The minutes from the previous Steering Committee meeting held by teleconference on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2011 were agreed.

### **Matters arising**

The legal status of OFFLU, particularly in the context of FAO, remained unresolved. It was agreed to remove this item from the action list.

### **Progress on OFFLU technical activities (TAs) / Projects / Resources:**

The TA programme is managed by the EC and a brief overview was provided for the SC members.

**Action GP:** List of technical activities and members/coordinators to be revised and updated

A paper on H5N1 highly pathogenic avian influenza worldwide in 2010 prepared by FAO was posted on the OFFLU website. FAO were asked to repeat this exercise for 2011, bringing in data from OFFLU labs on H5N1 and H9N2. This will support our representation at the WHO Vaccine Composition Meetings (VCM).

**Action GD:** To co-ordinate 2011 review.

## **WHO Vaccine Composition Meetings**

The arrangement for OFFLU participation in WHO VCM is initially for three years (up to November 2013). We should initiate discussions with WHO after the February 2013 VCM regarding extension/modification of the agreement.

### **Action: secretariat to prompt dialogue with WHO**

Reference Laboratory experts are key contributors to the WHO VCM process, currently represented by Ian Brown. The OFFLU scientists based in FAO had also played a pivotal role in preparing and analysing the data. It had been agreed earlier by SC that our reference expert representation should be rotated, although not changing at every meeting. The EC will be asked to select our representative for the upcoming VCM.

## **Proficiency Testing**

FAO has initiated a review of regional AI/ND proficiency tests across continents and proposed to make this an OFFLU document. The SC agreed that such initiative is useful and that a summary of the results should be posted on the OFFLU website. OFFLU's own proficiency testing technical activity led by Nichole Hines and Timm Harder is progressing well, with results from the first OFFLU global proficiency test expected in the coming months. The experts have developed a plan to sustain this project which will include rotating coordination between different OFFLU laboratories.

## **PCR and sequencing**

The first OFFLU-WHO teleconference to discuss potential collaboration between OFFLU laboratories and WHO GISN laboratories was a success. This was initiated thanks to Tamiko Hisanaga's (OFFLU expert, Winnipeg) participation in the WHO PCR working group. Several areas have been identified for collaboration and a follow up call will be organized after OFFLU receive results from the OFFLU PT.

FAO will develop SOPs for influenza sequence submission.

**Action:** FAO to submit the developed SOPs to the Applied Epi TA for OFFLU review

**Action OFFLU secretariat:** Arrange a teleconference for a presentation of the Empres-i genetic module to members of the Applied Epidemiology TA

## **OFFLU research agenda**

This has now been finalized. It should be updated every 2 years. DS remains scientific lead.

## **Swine influenza**

KH updated on progress of the OFFLU SIV group and acknowledged the significant contribution that experts are making towards delivering results. The group had agreed on objectives and a work plan at their first meeting in April 2011. The group has already met several of these objectives including making a set of advocacy slides and a study on targeting SIV surveillance globally, they are working on others. A second meeting is planned for March 2012. The success of the group reflects the expert leadership (Kristien Van Reeth and Amy Vincent). The group provides a platform for harmonization and coordination of global SIV surveillance and for sharing surveillance data.

Financial resources are needed to sustain SIV work and proposals have been submitted to the trilateral (WHO, FAO, FAO) USAID EPT+ programme, aimed at implementing sustainable global SIV surveillance through established channels within the SIV group. It will be

important to broaden the representation in the group to include key players in Asia and elsewhere. A clear governance strategy will be needed if serious donor money is to be channelled.

### **Actions for Executive Committee:**

- Select OFFLU Reference Lab expert for next round of WHO VCM (in consultation with SE)
- Ensure SIV group is structured and managed as an OFFLU TA including full participation of FAO and OIE, with agreement on TORs and governance. A small coordination group with core members of the present SIV group should address specific issues. Bureaucracy should be no more burdensome than is necessary for the purpose.
- EC to consider the future of the commercial kits TA, develop an exit policy or clear action points
- EC to consider the future direction for the Vaccination TA
- EC to consider a model lab management plan provided by AHVLA for possible distribution to the Training TA
- EC to develop a project initiation strategy that includes a communication plan
- EC to review the Biosafety document on the website in the light of outputs from the forthcoming OIE ad hoc group on this topic

### **Actions for code of conduct TA (PD):**

- Hold a TC before the CDC October meeting and prepare a statement
- Review from a veterinary laboratory/OFFLU perspective the WHO Framework for Virus Sharing developed as part of Pandemic Influenza Preparedness (PIP), particularly the 2 Annexes that are the MTAs for use within the Global Influenza Surveillance and Response System (GISRS) system sharing and between GISRS institutions and industry. Note also paragraph 4.3, the definition of an authorized laboratory. Review the possible implications for the animal health sector of having any material designated as PIP material.

### **Sharing Material and Information**

The Steering Committee agreed to maintain the OFFLU position that OFFLU collaborators should deposit sequence data into publicly available databases of their choice and that OFFLU does not endorse any one particular database.

GP and GD will be attending a GISAID meeting, 11-12 October 2011.

**Action GD:** Circulate to EC the OpenFlu list of molecular markers

### **Human Animal Interface**

**Action EC:** Consult with Hualan regarding China participation in the OFFLU VCM activities

**Action GD:** Seek Liz Mumford's advice about inclusion of H1 isolates in the OFFLU contributions to VCM

**Action KH:** Consult SIV group on potential to provide SIV data to WHO VCM

**Action MK/FC:** Draft a scientific paper on OFFLU contributions to VCM to date, after consulting on the idea with participating laboratories

**Action GP:** Refresh the table of TAs and projects to include new WHO focal point designations to be advised by LM

OFFLU input to human animal interface stream of the WHO influenza research agenda.

**Action KH:** To talk with David Swayne, to ask if he can draft a contribution from OFFLU for the WHO research agenda

## **Strategic Direction of OFFLU**

As agreed at the last meeting, SE had written to Drs Lubroth and Vallat emphasising the importance of sustainable support for OFFLU by FAO and OIE, including both the allocation of staff time and the active pursuit of donor funding for OFFLU initiatives. Both had replied positively.

SE also commented on the importance for all those involved in OFFLU to continually bear in mind the importance of inclusivity and respect for issues of concern to the two parent organisations.

Regional offices of OIE and FAO can promote OFFLU and their activities. The visibility of OFFLU should be increased wherever and whenever possible.

**Action GP:** Look into developing an OFFLU display for conferences and meetings

**Action GP:** Refresh the list of TAs on the Strategic Plan table

**Action GP/KH/GD:** Review and update TORs for the OFFLU Secretariat for next EC meeting

## **OFFLU Meetings**

**Action PD:** Approach convenors of the AI international symposium, UK, April 2012, about the possibility of holding the next annual OFFLU technical meeting in conjunction with the symposium

**Action DS:** Develop a plan for a vaccination international symposium

## **OFFLU website**

The new and improved OFFLU website, which has been developed by OIE, is due to be launched before the end of October 2011.

**Action GP:** To address the comments sent by FAO by the end of October 2011

## **Other business**

### **OFFLU labs, regional contacts**

**Action KH/GD/GP:** Develop TORs for OFFLU regional contacts. Update the list of laboratory and regional contacts, with special focus on recent requests such as KIMRON (Israel) and Ethiopia. Feedback should be regularly shared with contributors

### **Co-ordinating risk assessment initiatives (CDC, EFSA, One Flu, 4 way-linking) (PD/CZ/GD)**

EFSA: OFFLU SC was informed that FAO is participating as an associate partner (as is CDC) in an EFSA proposal coordinated by IZSVe and based on a consortium of EU partners. OIE had decided it could not be an active partner in the application because of possible conflicts of interest. However OIE remains willing to collaborate with the institutes involved in the successful application.

PD and CZ had been nominated as OFFLU experts in the EFSA scientific steering group for this initiative.

### **OFFLU links with private sector (GD)**

OFFLU needs to ensure that it is not put in a position where a perceived or real conflict of interest may emerge when inviting individual private companies to OFFLU meetings or when holding OFFLU meetings in conjunction with private sector meetings.

GD shared the minutes of an FAO-IFAH meeting.

OFFLU focal points to look into future possibilities of interaction between OFFLU and private partners.

The SC confirmed the importance of working with federations such as IFAH and EMVD rather than with individual companies. OIE already has a formal agreement with IFAH.

The next full OFFLU Steering Committee meeting will take place in one year. If required, a teleconference meeting can be arranged in 6 months time or when necessary.

No venue has yet been decided.