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# **Beyond Avian Flu: Regional Collaboration on Infectious Disease Prevention and Control in CAREC**

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# Disease Surveillance

- Early detection of infectious threats
- A true regional public goods issue: benefits (and costs) indivisible, non-rival and non-exclusionary
- Mandated by International Health Regulations (WHO, 1995):
  - Countries are to develop "**standardized approaches for readiness and response to major epidemic-prone diseases**", including information-sharing measures

# Disease Surveillance and CAREC

- CAREC focuses on economic issues where regional cooperation can foster mutual benefit. Does this rule hold?
- Regional nature of infectious diseases
  - Regional in cause and effect
  - Significant regional economic effects: experience with SARS, Avian Flu
- ID surveillance as a regional public good

# Disease Surveillance in CAREC

- Significant variation in CAREC:
  - Case definitions and diagnostic procedures
  - Outbreak investigation methods
  - Regional and international reporting protocols
- Lack of standardization: increases risk of trans-border spread and leads to costly precautionary effects
- CAREC: a forum for standardization?

# What can CAREEC do?

- Proposal: "Harmonizing Infectious Disease Surveillance in CAREEC"
  - International Consultant prepares situation analysis, timeframe and harmonization matrix
  - CAREEC conference, WHO/CDC technical input
  - Focus on notifiable diseases, case definitions, diagnostic and reporting protocols etc.
- Build on Avian Influenza conference and existing regional HIV/AIDS collaboration



# Looking Forward

- Harmonization is the immediate goal
- Downstream work could involve
  - Joint training of public health officials
  - Joint training program for surveillance officers and laboratory specialists in ID diagnostics
  - Joint Annual Meetings to review and update agreed/harmonized definitions and discuss emerging infectious disease threats
- Would need additional/separate funding
  - Contemplate only if CAREC countries successfully harmonize basic surveillance architecture in compliance with IHR (2005)

# Starting Simple

- CAREC: economic issues where regional cooperation can foster mutual benefit
- True for ID surveillance:
  - Economic issue: SARS, Avian Influenza etc.
  - Regional cooperation: If your neighbor isn't prepared, neither are you (IHR 2005)
- CAREC Avian Flu conference: strong foundation for broadening to proposed "Harmonizing ID Surveillance in CAREC."