

# ESSENTIAL MESSAGES

Each country will need to develop its own key messages, based upon the pandemic influenza circumstances in that country. However, health officials from the World Health Organization, UNICEF, Red Cross, and other agencies have identified some broad messages that may be useful to use as a starting point. Countries would need to review these to decide whether they are appropriate to their situation and also pre-test them to determine the precise wording. To be effective, messages must be easy to understand, acceptable, and describe actions that are feasible for people to carry out.

## **General messages to the community - to disseminate widely as soon as there is a triggering event:**

- Pandemic influenza is a serious illness, even though it may not look serious at first. The symptoms are: fever, muscle aches and pains, fatigue, headache, sneezing, runny or stuffy nose, cough/sore throat, and sometimes nausea, vomiting, abdominal cramps, diarrhea (although intestinal symptoms never occur without the other symptoms and should not be confused with a “stomach flu”)
- To prevent the rapid spread of pandemic flu, stay put and keep your distance:
  - Avoid crowds, such as social or family gatherings, or religious services
  - Avoid traveling, even back to your home village
  - Consider sending just one family member to the market or for shopping
  - Consider keeping children home from school (depending on decisions by local authorities)
  - Work from home if possible
- Seek information about the situation from reliable, trusted sources.

## **Messages for caregivers for sick family members:**

- To protect yourself and your family, everyone should cough and sneeze into their arm
- Keep sick family members away (separated) from other people
- Care for sick people at home and seek medical care only if they are extremely ill
- Provide basic care – rest, quiet, fluids, food
- Wash your hands frequently