

Chapter 7: Republic of Korea

CJK Flufighter United 2008 - the Joint Table-top Exercise among China, Japan and Korea for Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response

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1. Introduction

The CJK Flufighter United is the title for a joint exercise conducted among the People's Republic of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea during 2008. The theme of CJK Flufighter United aimed to minimize the potential public health and socio-economic impact of a pandemic influenza by enhancing international cooperation and common efforts among three countries.

Since the CJK Flufighter United 2008 was the first joint activity among China, Japan and Korea for pandemic influenza preparedness and response, a table-top exercise was adopted as a method to understand differences, share information, discuss the best solutions, and build up systemic cooperation in the near future. The coordinating units were Ministry for Health, Welfare and Family Affairs (MHWAF), Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Korea CDC), Korea Society for Preventive Medicine, etc.

The objectives of the CJK Flufighter United 2008 were to compare and learn the current and future strategies of the three countries; to identify the main areas and strategies for a common response; to predict possible problems or conflicts during pre-pandemic/pandemic situations and produce solutions; and to draw an agreement on a common response, shared strategies, and joint action planning among the three countries.



Figure 1: A Joint Table-top Exercise among China, Japan, and Korea in Seoul, Korea, 16-17 October, 2008.

Figure 2: Steps of Table-top Exercise



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2. The Good Practice

2.1 Step 1: A Proposal (An Initiative)

China, Japan and Korea signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) on a Joint Response against pandemic influenza during the first Tripartite Health Ministers Meeting in Seoul, Korea in April 2007. All activities conducted under this MOC were entitled for personnel, resources, and appropriate funds.



Figure 3: *The first Tripartite Health Ministers Meeting in Seoul, Korea, April, 2007.*

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One month later, during the 7th Senior Offers Meeting (SOM) among the three countries held at Beijing in China, Korea suggested organizing a joint table-top exercise, and the other two countries agreed on it enthusiastically. Well begun is half done. Thus, one country took initiatives and made a start on collecting the ideas, identifying the needs and reaching agreements with other countries to cope with pandemic influenza jointly, and to identify plans for better cooperation system.

2.2 Step 2: Designing and Planning

The essence of a joint table-top exercise is having an interactive exercise with discussion topics guided by simulated outbreaks of pandemic influenza.

A working group to design virtual scenarios and questions for discussion and to plan for the exercise was set up in order to facilitate the progress of the exercise and to acquire specified outcomes.

Since communication via email or telephone has some limitations, working members should gather at least one time before the exercise as a workshop, seminar or conference to understand the exercise procedures and contents, and to work on the potential problems that might happen during the exercise.

Each country nominated five to seven experts as working group members who were responsible for development and revision of the guidelines for the joint table-top exercise. To deliver the message effectively, liaisons were designated by each country during May 2008.

Draft scenarios, related questions and guidelines were developed by Korea and sent to China and Japan for further revisions during May to August 2008.



Figure 4: *A Joint Workshop in Seoul, Korea, September, 2008.*

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During a joint workshop in September 2008, participants from Korea, China and Japan reflected additional ideas on guidelines and specified preparation plans for the joint table-top exercise.

Korea carried out plans and arranged for implementing the CJK Flufighter United in preparation for the exercise during September to October 2008. Breaking news, a video clip describing the simulated scenario, was prepared to attract the participants' attention and help better understanding of the situations. The three counties exchanged the lists of participants, and observers were invited from the WHO.

Upon receiving comments from China and Japan, Korea sent the completed guidelines to working group members to prepare the response plans, including answers for the questions provided in scenarios.

Working group members from each country prepared answers for each scenario and shared those on the same date prior to the exercise. Answers were compiled in one presentation file.

Korea also prepared a draft press release on the exercise. After revision by other countries, the three counties distributed the joint press release to the media on the same date during October 2008.

2.3 Step 3: Exercise Implementation

Participants involved actively in the exercise according to the guidelines which was helpful to expand cooperation areas.

In the light of each country's current plans and systems, the CJK Flufighter United exercise was held in Seoul, Korea from 16 to 17 October 2008, during which the questions from scenarios were responded, the differences were discussed, and cooperation area was built by deriving a joint action plan from the outcomes of the exercise.



Figure 5: Breaking news for a Joint Workshop

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Figure 6: Main Agenda Items

Main Agenda Item	Contents of Questions
Quarantine	Quarantine system, immigration-related issues, exit screening
Diagnosis and treatment	Patient management, diagnostic standards, strategies for antiviral agent and vaccine distribution, subsidy for treatment costs
Information-sharing and risk communication	Patient surveillance, information sharing among CJK, information sharing with the originating country, exchange of emergency documents, the scope of exchanged information, contact point, public relations on media report
Public health measures (isolation, containment, etc.)	Measures against nationals and foreigners, social containment (distancing), management of the deceased

2.4 Step 4: Outcome Reporting

To convert the outcomes from a table-top exercise into a substantive cooperation system, it is recommended that an approval should be received from the governments or related institutions to facilitate the implementation of the outcomes.

3. Benefits and Outcomes

On 2 November 2008, the processes and outcomes of the joint exercise were reported as a video clip at the second Tripartite Health Ministers Meeting held in Beijing, China. Thereupon, Joint Action Plan on Preparedness and Response against Pandemic Influenza was signed by Ministers of the three countries, which was an outcome document of the joint exercise.

Final report on whole process of exercise including its preparation and outcomes were published and shared with other countries.

< Contents of Joint Action Plan against Pandemic Influenza >

1. Focal points
2. Information sharing
3. Risk communication
4. Impartial intervention for rapid containment
5. Expansion of Cooperation

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4. Obstacles and Lessons

4.1 Obstacles

In order to overcome the barriers of geographical distance and time limitation among working group members, coordinators from each country were designated to deliver the messages and effective communication, rather than organizing frequent meetings.

4.2 Lessons

Lessons learned from the joint exercise were also distributed to strengthen the regional cooperation system for pandemic influenza preparedness and response.

5. Future Plans

If a pandemic spreads to our region (ASEAN+3) in the future, it could trigger a great socio-economic impact on the region. In this context, it is necessary to establish a cooperation mechanism among ASEAN plus three countries, especially through a seminar and study tour.

Hence, Korea has a plan to propose an international seminar and study tour in 2009 which include participants from the three countries and ASEAN member countries, under the auspices of WPRO.

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