

Participatory impact assessment in Ethiopia: linking policy reform to field experiences

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Introduction

This paper describes how a national-level Participatory Impact Assessment Team (PIAT) was set up in Ethiopia to inform policy on the requirements for effective Community Animal Health Worker (CAHW) projects. There are two parts to the paper. First, we describe how the PIAT was set up, its terms of reference and how training was provided in participatory impact assessment. We then summarise two impact assessments in the field, which were the first attempts by the PIAT to use participatory approaches and methods.

There is an increasing body of evidence from participatory impact assessment to show how community-based animal health workers (CAHWs) have a positive impact on livestock-rearing communities (e.g. Catley, 1999; Nalitoleta and Allport, this issue). Improvements in basic animal health care provide more milk, meat, and livestock for sale. More protein-rich food means healthier people and extra cash buys clothes and schoolbooks. Despite this, very few countries have policies in place to support CAHW systems and lack of an appropriate 'policy environment' threatens the sustainability of such systems.

Policy reform can refer to various types of information, collected using different methods. While it is often assumed that objective, quantitative data is very important there are at least three constraints facing the collection and use of statis-

tically valid data in the areas where CAHWs tend to operate:

- by definition, these areas are remote and little baseline data is available to guide randomised survey design;
- the implementation of conventional surveys is logistically difficult, particularly in pastoralist areas where communities are widely dispersed and moving;
- survey tools like questionnaires easily miss key perceptions and opinions of local people, by asking the wrong questions.

In addition to these well-known problems, policy makers may dismiss even scientifically rigorous assessments if they feel isolated from the process or if work is conducted by people they don't know and trust.

The Ethiopian context

Ethiopia is characterised by a huge livestock population and rural communities who depend highly on animals for food, income, draught power and social interaction. In the lowlands, pastoralists can keep mixed herds of camels, cattle, sheep, goats, and donkeys. In the highlands, settled farming communities are also reliant on animals, particularly oxen for ploughing, donkeys for transport, and various uses of other animals. In both highlands and lowlands, the terrain is harsh, distances are long and infrastructure is poorly developed.

Table 1: Key veterinary agencies influencing policy change in Ethiopia

| Name | Features |
|--|---|
| Federal government veterinary team, including staff from PACE Ethiopia | Mandated to set national veterinary policy within the Ministry of Agriculture |
| Ethiopian Veterinary Association (EVA) | Professional membership organisation with more than 485 members; influences professional norms and behaviour, and lobbies for policy and legislative change |
| Faculty of Veterinary Medicine (FVM) | Trains most veterinarians in Ethiopia and influences professional norms and behaviour; conducts research |
| National Animal Health Research Centre (NAHRC) | Conducts research on animal diseases |
| NGOs | Close and often long experience of working with communities to run CAHW projects at field level |

During the last ten years or so, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have developed CAHW projects in Ethiopia, particularly in pastoral areas of the country. Despite this work, policy on CAHWs was poorly defined in Ethiopia and evidence of impact was limited. Veterinary professional bodies had different views on whether or not to support CAHWs, and how CAHW programmes should be developed.

Forming and training the PIAT Identifying the key stakeholders

The Pan African Programme for the Control of Epizootics¹ (PACE) assists countries to revise policies to support CAHWs. Within PACE, this work is led by the Community-based Animal Health and Participatory Epidemiology (CAPE) Unit. In terms of influencing the veterinary profession and policy makers in Ethiopia, the actors described in Table 1 were considered to be important by CAPE staff.

Nineteen veterinarians² representing the agencies listed in Table 1 attended the workshop, including vets from eight NGOs³ working directly with communities.

Forming the PIAT in a review and planning workshop

The agencies listed in Table 1 were approached by the CAPE Unit and invited to a two-day review and planning workshop. It was explained that CAPE wished to support a PIAT in Ethiopia with a view to using information derived from

impact assessment to inform policy debate. Furthermore, CAPE could assist the new PIAT by supporting:

- training in participatory impact assessment;
- impact assessment of CAHW projects in the field;
- presentation of findings to policy makers.

The letter of invitation to the workshop was followed up by personal visits from CAPE staff to the heads of the Federal Government Veterinary Team (FVM) and NAHRC, and the EVA secretariat. During these meetings, the proposed role and composition of the PIAT was discussed in detail. CAPE suggested that the people representing these agencies in the PIAT should be people who already had an interest or knowledge of participatory approaches, whose job description already covered issues such as CAHW delivery systems, and whose seniority within the agency allowed direct feedback to head of the agency.

Objectives

The review and planning workshop was designed to:

- introduce participatory approaches to impact assessment;
- identify all the key stakeholders who were in a position to influence policy reform and discuss their roles;
- review CAHW systems implemented in Ethiopia and identify key policy issues;
- understand the concept of monitoring and impact assessment of CAHWs;
- learn about experiences of participatory impact assessments conducted in other countries; and,
- agree the composition of the PIAT and plan a participatory impact assessment exercise in Ethiopia, including a training event and field assessments.

Methods

The workshop used various methods for critical analysis and sharing experiences of CAHW projects in Ethiopia. For example:

1 A programme of the African Union's Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU/IBAR)

2 From the Federal Veterinary Services Team, the head of the unit dealing with community-based animal health workers and veterinary privatisation; from the FVM, the coordinator of postgraduate training, who was also the research and publications officer for the faculty; from the EVA, a vet who was responsible for emergency preparedness and planning in the Ministry of Agriculture; from the NAHRC, a researcher who was already studying community-based delivery systems.

3 The NGOs were Save the Children UK, Save the Children US, Hararghe Catholic Secretariat, Action Contre la Faim, Pastoralists' Concern Association of Ethiopia, CARE Ethiopia, Action for Research and Development, and the Ethiopian Pastoralist Research and Development Association.

Table 2: The ideal and the actual roles played by the important and influential veterinary policy makers in Ethiopia

| Ideal role | Actual role |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating enabling environment to endorse and legalise the system; • Producing training guidelines; • Standardise the approach toward the CAHW system; • Implement, supervise, monitor and evaluate the system; • For the donor to fund the system and accept that the system needs longer funding periods. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No enabling environment was established in some of the regions; • It was only recently that efforts have made in the area of training guideline preparation by the federal MoA; • Little effort has been made to standardise the CAHW system so far; • MoA was not permitting some of the basic services to be included in the CAHW training courses (even though the needs assessments clearly indicated a demand for those services); • Donors have been restricting the implementation to short duration funding periods in some cases. |

- stakeholder analysis to determine who was important and influential within the CAHW systems;
- SWOT analysis⁴ for critically examining the effectiveness of animal health service delivery by CAHWs;
- group work, in numbers between four and five persons, to permit as wide a range of points of view and experiences to be shared amongst participants; and
- plenary and brainstorming sessions to summarise progress and keep participants focused.

The workshop was crucial in bringing veterinary professionals in the NGO, state, research, and education sectors together to learn, listen, and share experiences. Common understanding was reached on various issues related to CAHW projects, including assessment of the 'ideal' and 'actual' roles of policy makers at the current time (Table 2).

Key strengths and weaknesses of CAHW systems in Ethiopia were also identified, such as the non-standardisation of the CAHW system, the duration and content of training, weak institutional linkages, drug source and supply, inadequate supervision of CAHWs, poor reporting, misuse of revolving funds, and also that the system was not yet financially sustainable. Added to this was the high drop-out rate of CAHWs. Factors seen as threats were subsidised veterinary services (by government and NGOs), recurrent drought, insecurity and conflicts (intra and inter), donor influence and their short term funding horizons, the partial enabling environment, a lack of clear policy, and epidemic livestock diseases.

With these issues at the forefront of people's minds, they were able to describe how impact assessment of CAHW projects was linked to policy. Key linkages are summarised in Box 1.

At the end of the workshop, the dates and venue for a training course in participatory impact assessment plus two

sites for field assessment were agreed. Sixteen participants confirmed that they were available to form the PIAT, including vets from the EVA, Federal Veterinary Services Team, NAHRC and seven NGOs.

Training the PIAT in participatory impact assessment

Following the review and planning workshop, an eight-day course for the 16 participants of the PIAT was run with the following objectives:

- to introduce the principles of participatory approaches and sustainable development;
- to understand importance of community entry and the collection of background information;
- to improve understanding and practice of participatory tools;

Box 1: The need for linking project impact to policy reform for the future sustainability of animal health services in remote locations

1. Impact of CAHWs to be shown to doubting policy makers and veterinary professionals;
2. Assessments contribute to further harmonisation/standardisation of CAHWs;
3. Better impact assessment results will attract more donor funding;
4. Lessons learnt for future CAHW interventions;
5. Provide agencies such as IBAR with a greater justification in promoting CAHW systems;
6. Justifies the bottom-up participatory approach used by CAHWs;
7. Further enhances the surveillance and control of transboundary disease;
8. Identify weaknesses in the CAHW system and contribute to practical solutions for the service delivery agents;
9. Show the impact of the CAHWs on the veterinary service delivery system;
10. Positive impacts will convince policy makers to support more enabling environment for CAHWs;
11. Skill transfer to the veterinary profession will contribute to improved assessments in the future and 'better practice' in the design, planning and implementation of CAHWs.

4 SWOT – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Participatory impact assessment with communities in North Wollo



Participatory impact assessment with communities in Afar



- to understand how participatory assessments contribute to community action;
- to understand the value of participatory teamwork when interacting in the community; and,
- to organise the impact assessment field work.

The organisation of fieldwork included identification of two CAHW projects suitable for assessment. These projects were selected using criteria such as:

- areas that have well-established CAHW systems that have been running for around five years;
- ideally, a pastoral area;
- local partners who are willing to host the team, work with them and create awareness with the community before the team's arrival.

Using these criteria, a FARM Africa project in Afar region and a Save the Children UK project in North Wollo were selected for assessment. It was recognised that the assessment of these projects was part of the training process for the PIAT. The field-level work would be an opportunity to practice new methods while also generating information for policy makers.

Using participatory impact assessment with two communities in Afar and North Wollo

The impact assessments with communities followed on immediately after the training course for the PIAT. The methods used are summarised in Table 3.

Some findings

In North Wollo the CAHWs were especially successful but due to policy, their services are limited largely to the treatment of internal and external parasites. In Afar their service is limited as policy prevents them providing treatment for trypanosomiasis or to use injected antibiotics. In both locations, the regular supply of veterinary drugs remains a problem.

Therefore, some important policy-related issues were:

- there is a demand for services and a willingness to pay by poor, often remote, rural livestock keepers;
- with good training and follow up support, CAHWs can be very competent deliverers of the service;
- with a regular supply of veterinary inputs, funds collected under cost recovery can make the system financially viable;
- with a relaxing of governmental control the services of

Table 3: Participatory methods used in the impact assessment

| Type of information required | PRA tools used |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background about the community • Livelihood system • Livestock production system • Livestock production and constraints • Livestock diseases | SSI (semi-structured interviews) and mapping SSI, proportional piling SSI, mobility mapping SSI, proportional piling. SSI, ranking and matrix |
| Changes due to CAHW project | Before and after CAHWs |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In veterinary services (quality, accessibility, sources) • Morbidity and mortality • Livestock productivity and use of livestock products • Producers' welfare • Motivation of CAHWs • Community's general perceptions about the CAHW project | SSI, preference ranking Location Mapping SSI, scoring, proportional piling SSI, scoring, proportional piling SSI, scoring of income sources SSI |

Table 4: Impact on the animal health service delivery systems in the two communities

| | Afar (Telalok) | North Wollo (Sekota) |
|---------------------------------|---|---|
| Service indicators | <p>Before CAHW project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> clients travel 55km to access services; government interventions focus on vaccinations and disease outbreaks; use of traditional healers important. <p>After CAHW project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CAHWs make services more accessible and available; growing importance of modern veterinary treatments at the expense of traditional healers; CAHWs are technically competent and provide 50% of veterinary services; there is strong supervision and follow up of the CAHWs. | <p>Before CAHW project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> since 1991 Government services responding to outbreaks 75km away; since 1995 Government veterinary post in the community; importance of traditional healers in the past. <p>After CAHW project</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> declining importance of traditional healers and increasing importance of modern veterinary services; Woreda veterinary post provides antibiotics, diagnostic services, supervision of CAHWs and drug supply for CAHWs; CAHWs provide treatments for internal and external parasites in those more remote locations not accessed by the Government veterinary staff. |
| CAHW incomes and welfare | CAHWs are motivated to provide services due to their traditional obligations to clan and community; they lack business management skills and have low cash incentive, but gain from the 'free' treatment of their own animals and improved social status . | CAHWs are motivated (with significant additions to their monthly income of up to 110 birr per month), they have strong administrative skills (with excellent record keeping ability) and are technically competent (making their most significant impact on the health of goats through the use of acaricides). |
| Community welfare | <p>The priority is for communities to access milk.</p> <p>There have been few welfare gains perceived by the local people largely to do with outside factors such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the poor health of camels (due to increased migration) which provide milk for children; reduced cattle milk production as pastures declined, due to conflict; this results in the need to purchase powdered milk as Afar cannot live without milk; the increased sale of their animals in exchange for grain. <p>The price of livestock is however increasing relative to grain (improved terms of trade).</p> | <p>Oxen are especially important because of their draught power for ploughing.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> oxen draught power for ploughing has increased due to priority feeding strategy using crop residues and the CAHW treatment of internal parasites; weight gain of animals due to regular deworming services provided by CAHWs; increased added value of hides and skins due to the reduction of external parasites attributed again by the community to the service provided by the CAHWs; despite a general downward trend in milk yields (due to pasture shortage) the rate of this decline has been reduced due to the CAHW treatment of internal and external parasites. <p>The impacts of the CAHW services have been most visibly perceived by the community in the goat population and this has resulted in increased income earning opportunities from the sale of these small ruminants.</p> |

CAHWs can be improved to include vaccinations, the use of injected antibiotics, and other services;

- the benefits of improved animal health are only fully captured if linked to other initiatives such as conflict management and livestock marketing.

Lessons learnt

Using a participatory methodology is a way of linking communities with the more influential professionals or 'outsiders'. The approach involved multiple professional stakeholders, equipping them with powerful participatory methods and placing them face-to-face with livestock keepers. Using these methodologies is a way of bringing the important and powerful more into contact with the realities in the field by observing, listening, sharing, and learning from rural communities. It is essential to take professionals out of the office if they are to realise the

achievements and constraints of the CAHW projects to be assessed in remote and often harsh environments such as Afar and North Wollo.

We encouraged a methodology that looked in detail at the links between animal health and human livelihoods, rather than only measuring changes in the livestock disease situation. Therefore, we asked not only 'How did livestock health change?' but also, 'What was the impact of these changes to people's food, income or other measures of livelihood?' The approach also provided much scope for assessing the affect of external factors on the projects.

After the field assessments in Afar and North Wollo we asked the members of the PIAT to evaluate the process they'd been through, covering the initial review workshop, the training course and the impact assessments in the field. The three most commonly expressed constraints were from the field-work:

- Not enough time – there was a general feeling within the PIAT that three weeks was insufficient time to conduct two impact assessments in the field, and that in future, more time should be allocated to fieldwork.
- Too much information – this problem was associated with a methodology that on reflection was probably too ambitious. The information needs listed in Table 4 were very comprehensive. A balance has to be reached between the background information required on the project area in terms of livelihoods, and the specific assessment of the projects in question.
- Difficulties in analysis and presentation – this was partly due to the large amount of information collected by the team.

They had problems compiling the information into formats suitable for different audiences, and within the time available.

The findings from the impact assessments were presented at the Ethiopian Veterinary Association 16th Annual Conference in Addis Ababa in June 2002, and were well received. The PIAT is now developing a work plan to refine the impact assessment methodology and conduct further assessments of CAHW projects in representative areas of Ethiopia. A more realistic timeframe will be developed. The intention is to build a national-level picture of policy issues related to improved CAHW projects and involving livestock keepers.

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NOTES

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