



COMMUNITY ANIMAL HEALTH WORKERS

The drylands of Ethiopia's South Omo zone and Uganda's Karamoja sub-region are home to thousands of pastoralists who migrate with their livestock in search of pasture. In both locations, disease, drought and degraded grasslands have cut the size of herds, so although goat rearing is common it is unproductive. Farm Africa is working with pastoralist women living in these regions, supporting them to set up sustainable, small-scale goat-rearing enterprises that will help them generate an income and provide their families with a more nutritious diet.

Declining animal health services, due in part to reduced government capacity, exacerbate the challenge of increasing goat productivity. The project baseline study showed that 37.4% of the pastoralists sampled across both regions did not access any livestock services and only 5.9% and 27.4% of the pastoralists who accessed the services in South Omo and Karamoja respectively were satisfied with the services offered.

To change this, the project is creating and strengthening a network of community animal health workers (CAHWs) linked to agro-input dealers to enhance pastoralists' access to quality animal health services. Expanding livestock health services has a crucial role in reducing livestock mortality and maintaining healthy and highly productive livestock herds, meaning the project's beneficiaries will have assets they can sell when in need of cash. The network also creates business and income earning opportunities for the CAHWs and agro-dealers who are members of the community too.

Through complementary training, the project is developing women's business skills and financial literacy and strengthening women's understanding of nutrition, ensuring that improved goat production translates into the consumption of nutritious foods for their households.



Livestock for Livelihoods

Farm Africa's Livestock for Livelihoods project is helping Ugandan and Ethiopian pastoralist women set up sustainable, small-scale goat-rearing enterprises that improve nutrition amongst women and children and lift families out of poverty.

This booklet is one of a series focusing on the project's key components:

1. Revolving goat fund
2. Improved goat breeds
3. Community animal health workers

The project runs from 2 March 2018 to 31 March 2022. This booklet was written in April 2020. Further results and lessons are expected at the end of the project and will be published then.

Project budget:

£5,060,000, of which £3,765,000 is provided by UK aid from the UK government.

THE APPROACH



Animal health services in Ethiopia and Uganda are primarily delivered through agro-dealers. These are private veterinary shop operators selling veterinary supplies and other agricultural inputs such as seeds and fertilisers. In some cases they also offer advisory services to farmers and pastoralists.

The agro-dealers link to pastoralists through CAHWs, who act as veterinary extension agents at the village level. CAHWs live in or near the villages where the pastoralists live and can provide a continuous supply of the vet drugs and services required to keep the goats healthy.

Farm Africa conducted a vet supply chain and capacity assessment of the agro-dealers in both countries. Findings from these assessments indicated that most agro-dealers are located in town centres far away from pastoralist villages and as a result the linkage between the agro-dealers and CAHWs was weak. As a result, many CAHWs were inactive as they had no reliable source of vet supplies to replenish their stocks. The assessment also showed that the agro-dealers and CAHWs lacked business focus and skills, and were not keeping any meaningful business records to aid in the assessment of their businesses.

Farm Africa has strengthened the network of animal health service providers by linking the CAHWs with existing agro-dealers and to the recognised local government structures so that they can access supplies and technical support. In Uganda this was easier as there was a number of agro-dealers in Karamoja distributed across the project locations. In South Omo however, the government controls the vet drug supply systems, consequently Farm Africa has been working out a hybrid private-public partnership animal health service delivery model with the government and the few private agro-dealers working there.

Identification and selection of the CAHWs

In Karamoja, the district veterinary department maintains a database of all CAHWs trained and working in the communities. Farm Africa worked with the sub-county vets and community members to identify the CAHWs within the project areas able to support the women's livestock groups (WLGs).

In South Omo CAHWs are selected with the involvement of the kebele steering committee and livestock department of the woreda. The selection criteria for choosing new CAHWs included the need for them to primarily reside in a project kebele and have a willingness to serve the community. Existing CAHWs with a track record in providing good support were also selected.

Role of the CAHWs

Both countries have an elaborate curriculum for training CAHWs and most of the CAHWs identified by the project had already been trained at some point using this curriculum. Their technical capacity on goat breeding however remained limited, as a result the project added this into their training to enable them to offer technical breeding and goat management advice to the WLGs they were working with. The common services rendered by the CAHWs include deworming, and the spraying and treatment of sick goats and cattle thus helping to reduce livestock mortality.

The CAHWs' literacy levels were low in both countries so the project designed pictorial training and record templates to be used by the CAHWs to record the number of animal health services offered to the community.

Farm Africa trained existing CAHWs and local government staff to enhance their practical and technical goat husbandry skills and to ensure uniformity of content delivered to the WLGs. They were also equipped with vet supplies and goat routine management equipment like hoof trimmers and burdizzos.

Farm Africa facilitated the CAHWs to deliver four days of practical training to the WLGs on how to control disease, manage inbreeding, construct shelters, castrate and feed their goats (for increased kidding rates and milk production). Each training session lasted for one to two hours every morning to allow women enough time to engage in other productive duties. Training time and location were agreed upon between the trainer and the WLG members; mainly under trees in central locations accessible to most of the groups' members. Because of the limited literacy amongst the beneficiaries, the project used practical hands-on skills training with visual aids.

Each CAHW was linked to four WLGs to offer routine goat health and management services. By linking the WLGs to specific CAHWs who travel to the villages women do not have to walk long distances to town centres to purchase vet drugs for their goats and access livestock services.

Supporting systems

Access to animal health services is reliant on access to finance. To address this issue Farm Africa encouraged women in Uganda and Ethiopia to mobilise savings through Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs). VSLAs play a critical role in bringing financial services to rural areas where access to formal financial services are limited. These VSLAs are functioning well and the women are saving and lending to each other. Some groups have created a goat health and insurance fund within their VSLAs and are using the fund to collectively buy vet drugs and pay for animal health services. The WLGs were also linked to field agents and government extension officers to support them with fodder development activities, another critical component in increasing goat productivity.

RESULTS

At the halfway mark of the project, Farm Africa is engaging 51 CAHWs who are linked to 200 women's livestock groups as well as providing services to the pastoralists across the project area.

Results from the annual household survey conducted in both countries in March 2020 indicate that more pastoralists are accessing animal health services from the CAHWs. Additionally, overall vet service user satisfaction has increased two-fold in Karamoja from 27.4% at the baseline to 54.2%.

The enhanced animal health service delivery systems have contributed to the reduction of deaths in goats and their kids. At baseline in 2018, goat mortality rates were 26.3% in South Omo and 38.4% in Karamoja. Results from the annual household survey conducted in March 2020 indicated that goat mortality rates have reduced to 15.1% in South Omo and 2% in Karamoja. Goat kid mortality rates have also reduced in both countries from 40.7% (meaning that four out of 10 kids born died before reaching the age of four months) at baseline in 2018, to 30% and 20% in Karamoja and South Omo respectively in 2020. It is hoped that this figure will reduce further in the coming years with enhanced animal health service delivery.



LESSONS

Understanding existing community structures and strengthening them was key for streamlining access to and ensuring the quality of animal health services. An in-depth analysis of animal health provision demonstrated that linkages between CAHWS and agro-dealers were weak and that CAHWS wanted to be trained in simple business and financial management skills. The findings allowed the project to target these areas and to re-design the animal health service delivery and breed improvement strategy.

In Uganda, after consultations with the government and other NGOs in the area, it was agreed to identify and work with CAHWs who were not already engaged with other NGOs and to combine resources to train the CAHWs. In Ethiopia, the animal health service delivery was tailored in line with the local context, focusing on creating stronger links between the CAHWs and private vet services and drug suppliers.

Consulting and implementing activities in collaboration with other actors in the region meant the project avoided duplication of effort. For example the project worked with CRS to map out and train CAHWs and WLGs on VSLAs to ensure efficient use of resources.

Similarly, the project recognised the importance of working with registered agro-dealers, and linking them to quality vet drug suppliers and government regulatory authorities to address issues of poor quality vet drugs that are being sold in the market.

Through discussions and interviews in Ethiopia, it was realised that major factors impacting the motivation of CAHWs were; lack of refresher training on animal health, low supplies of vet drugs and equipment, small number of trained CAHWs and lack of supervision and monitoring. As a result, the project supervised CAHWs' performance frequently to continuously monitor them. In Karamoja CAHWs will continue to be supervised by the sub-county veterinarians after the project phases out. In South Omo the livestock and fishery resource development and livestock health department offer a supervisory and monitoring role.

Strengthening private vet services is challenging in both countries in part due to the volume of free and/or subsidised vet drugs, vaccines and services periodically being offered to the communities by the government and NGOs. This has discouraged private agro-dealers and only a few operate in the pastoral areas. It is essential that handouts are reduced and public-private partnerships are developed to deliver high quality vet drugs and vaccines in order to create an enabling operating environment. The project is advocating to the government that communities pay small fees during mass disease control programmes to ensure communities get use to paying for services.

Aligned with this, the project brought together the CAHWs, agro-dealers and WLG representatives and agreed on service charges for each of the essential animal health services like spraying, deworming and antibiotics to ensure services are affordable.

In some areas, beneficiaries are reporting that CAHWs can take too long to respond when called upon or don't show up at all. Livestock have been lost as a result of this. In response, the project is training the WLGs' leaders on basic animal health disease control measures such as spraying and there are plans to equip them with small sprayer pumps so they can spray their group members' livestock at the same intervals at a small fee to address economies of scale.

Beneficiary feedback highlighted the community was concerned about the continuity of the CAHWs and their ability to offer livestock health services after the project ends. Farm Africa is working with partners such as Mercy Corps, CRS, local governments, USAID-ICAN and Care to incentivise the CAHWs to continue by creating service delivery business streams that will generate additional income and encourage women to save funds in the VSLAs to pay for animal health services.

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Photos: Chris de
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We are carrying out this work in partnership with the Africa Innovations Institute, the Mothers and Children Multisectoral Development Organisation, an NGO that works to improve the lives of disadvantaged mothers and children. This project is funded with UK aid from the UK government and Jersey Overseas Aid, however the views expressed do not necessarily reflect the UK and Jersey government's official policies.

