

POLICY AND RESEARCH SERIES No. 5



From Grassroots to Government
FARM-Africa's experiences influencing policy
in sub-Saharan Africa

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Context and acknowledgements

"Improvement in relevant government policies that inhibit the uptake of good practice and prioritisation of agriculture in public sector expenditure and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)."

Outcome 2, FARM-Africa Strategy 2006

FARM-Africa's new strategy (2006) aims to scale-up the impact of FARM-Africa's work, bringing the benefits of its experience to thousands more farmers and their communities in Africa. This strategy includes a much more explicit policy focus, aiming to communicate evidence from its grassroots experience to policy makers in order to develop a more positive environment to support the uptake of FARM-Africa's models. This publication contributes to this outcome by presenting the results of a workshop (lessons learnt and experiences) hosted by the Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in London, June 2005, at which FARM-Africa staff presented examples of projects where policy change was effected. It is co-published by FARM-Africa and ODI. For further information on FARM-Africa's strategy, see www.farmafrica.org.uk/documents/187.PDF

ODI's Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme aims to improve the use of research in development policy and practice through improved knowledge about research-policy links; improved knowledge management and learning systems; improved communication; and improved awareness of the importance of research. Further information about the programme is available at www.odi.org.uk/rapid.

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Contents

Executive summary	1
1. Introduction	3
2. Research framework and approach	5
Rural development: policy and projects	
Conceptual approach: evidence and policy change	
Methodology	
3. Case studies	13
Land reform in South Africa	
Veterinary services in Tanzania	
Forestry in Ethiopia	
Livestock in Kenya	
4. Policy influence: theory and practice	43
Analysis of the case studies using the RAPID framework	
Themes from the case studies	
The role of projects in policy processes	
5. Conclusion	49
References	51

Executive summary

In the dynamic world of international development aid, NGOs are becoming increasingly active in policy debates. The drivers for this change come from donors and supporters alike, and a key question emerging from this new focus is whether NGOs can effectively influence the policy agenda.

This publication presents four FARM-Africa projects from Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa and describes how they approached influencing national policy in the natural resources sector. The case studies explain the diverse political contexts in which the projects operated and describe how this influenced the relationships that FARM-Africa staff managed to develop with decision makers.

The importance of evidence in the policy influencing process is emphasised. The four projects used a variety of data. For example, while the South African project generated statistically rigorous data, other projects relied on data sets generated by other organisations as well as drawing on their own field observations over many years of experience. The Overseas Development Institute's 'Research and Policy in Development' (RAPID) framework was used to analyse the experiences of the four case studies. The RAPID programme aims to improve the use of research and evidence in development policy and practice through providing research, advice and generating debate. In its study of research-policy links, the RAPID programme looks at a fundamental issue: *Why are some ideas that have been generated by research taken up and used by policy makers, while others are ignored and disappear?* The case studies in this publication make some valuable contributions to this debate and demonstrate that NGO projects can influence national policy agendas in Africa.

The South African case study describes how FARM-Africa tried to influence the shape of the government's Land Reform programme. The case study demonstrates how important it is for agencies to be aware of how their proposals will affect the achievement of national policy targets as well as being able to gauge accurately their political importance.

Structural adjustment policies in the 1980s and 1990s had had a significant impact on the context in which the Tanzanian project was operating. In many rural parts of Tanzania this meant that veterinary services were only sporadic. This case study describes how a locally-devised solution – Community-based Animal Health Workers – could not be adopted due to outdated colonial legislation and explains how FARM-Africa and other stakeholders successfully argued for and achieved change that accommodated this innovation.

In Ethiopia, the case study focuses on the forestry sector. This is an interesting experience as policy making in Ethiopia has traditionally been developed with little input from civil society. This case study provides some valuable insights into how, against all the odds, policy change can be achieved.

Finally, the example from Kenya demonstrates the need for organisations to understand other stakeholders' agendas. This case study demonstrates that without this type of knowledge significant advances can be reversed in a relatively short period of time.

The RAPID framework is used to analyse the case studies in order to gain a deeper understanding of how these projects engaged with the policy process. This provides considerable reflection on those areas where FARM-Africa did well and the areas that were more challenging, allowing lessons for future work to be drawn.

The rich experience of FARM-Africa in this area provides some crucial lessons for other organisations who wish to maximise their impact in the policy environment. The publication also demonstrates that NGO projects can make considerable contributions to policy debates which, if scaled-up, have the potential to generate significant improvements to poor people's lives.

I. Introduction

In the dynamic world of international development aid, NGOs are becoming increasingly active in policy debates. The drivers for this change come from donors and supporters alike. One key question that emerges from this new focus is whether NGOs can effectively influence the policy agenda. In this publication we examine four of FARM-Africa's projects and we hope to show that relatively small-scale, NGO-led projects can indeed be an important factor in shaping pro-poor, evidence-based policy in the development arena.

FARM-Africa

FARM-Africa is an international NGO that has been designing, financing and implementing rural development projects in eastern and southern Africa since the mid-1980s. Its founding principle is the support of the poorest and most marginalised rural communities to enable them to achieve sustainable livelihoods, through participatory techniques and working closely with local civil society, private and public sector partners. Currently FARM-Africa works in Ethiopia, Kenya, Southern Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda. Its key themes are Pastoral Development, Community Forest Management, Smallholder Development, and Land Reform.

Since the early 2000s, influencing national and international development policies has been a key strategic aim for FARM-Africa. This publication sets out to examine four FARM-Africa projects in Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania and South Africa, exploring how they have influenced both policy and practice across a range of agricultural sectors.

The Overseas Development Institute

The Overseas Development Institute (ODI) is one of the organisations concerned with the question of how to improve the use of research and evidence in development policy and practice. Its Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme has been carrying out research in this area since 2002 (for more information see www.odi.org.uk/rapid).

In June 2005 FARM-Africa and ODI held a joint one-day workshop to focus on some of FARM-Africa's projects to examine the ways in which they had used results from field-based research and project experiences to influence policy and practice. These case studies form the basis of this publication. Using a framework developed by RAPID (Crewe and Young, 2002), the projects are analysed to deepen understanding of the role of different actors and the various actions that resulted in their effectiveness.

Key questions

This publication has two main purposes. First, it aims to demonstrate how NGO projects can and do influence both policy and practice; and second, it seeks to identify ways to improve the likelihood of evidence from NGO projects influencing policy.

A key question, therefore, is how best to promote project evidence and its influence in the policy process. Policy making is known to be a complex and often opaque affair, and evidence does not always carry the weight it should. As mentioned above, there has been much research in recent years to improve understanding of how research, and the evidence it produces, contributes – or fails to contribute – to policy. With better understanding of policy processes, it becomes possible to optimise the chances of evidence influencing policy.

This publication seeks to highlight the important role that NGO projects can play in informing national policy debates. The developing and testing of innovative technologies by users at the grassroots level, in a transparent and accountable project system, can provide sound evidence of immense value to policy makers. Further, NGO projects can be a cost-effective way of learning about how policy actually works in practice and about the changes that may help improve its effectiveness.

Overview of the paper

The study is first placed within a research framework, in which the key questions are presented and their importance discussed within the current development context. The current thinking on links between research and policy is also presented. A brief section describes the case study methodology and the case studies themselves are then presented. Each begins with a description of the current policy situation within the relevant sector along with a brief description of the context leading up to those policy changes. The work of FARM-Africa and how it contributed to those changes is then described, with particular attention paid to approaches to influencing policy. The experiences of project staff have provided some interesting and useful lessons, which end each case study. The final sections analyse the case studies and their impact on policy, and present some themes and issues arising from the case studies.

2. Research framework and approach

Rural development: policy and projects

What is the role of NGO action-research projects in relation to policy processes that aim to reduce rural poverty? This is the key question that this publication explores, focusing on four case studies from sub-Saharan Africa.

Rural poverty in sub-Saharan Africa

There are many factors influencing rural poverty in sub-Saharan Africa, making it a complex area for intervention. Strengthening rural income strategies, including agriculture, is however central to poverty reduction. In the mid-1990s, 70 per cent of the population south of the Sahara lived in rural areas and an estimated 70 per cent of the economically active population depended primarily on farming (Wiggins, 2000, citing data from FAO). Even with more recent urbanisation trends, agriculture remains crucial.

African farming is typically small-scale and carried out by peasant households with low levels of purchased external inputs and little equipment (Wiggins, 2000). As a result, the productivity of subsistence farming has remained relatively low. No great advances have been made in this sector that can be compared to the Green Revolution in Asia. The Green Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s consisted of a series of technological discoveries that created high-yielding varieties of rice, wheat and maize. The combined efforts of national and international actors produced spectacular gains, mainly in Asia, in both agricultural productivity and poverty reduction. Where these crops are grown, food production has increased significantly.

Such successes proved more elusive in Africa. Attempts to transfer Green Revolution technologies to African agriculture largely failed because of the very different social, economic, political and environmental factors on that continent. Very little rice and wheat is grown in sub-Saharan Africa; maize, sorghum, millet and root crops are more common.

Spreading risk through diversity

The cropping environment in Africa is also more risk-prone. Households most commonly cope with this through diversification, for example diversity in the cropping system, multiple crops, different varieties of crops, or a range of cultivation practices, as well as parallel investment in non-agricultural income generation. Studies in the 1990s showed that in general between 30 and 50 per cent of rural household income in sub-Saharan Africa was derived from non-farm sources and in some areas the proportion reached 80–90 per cent (Ellis, 2000).

The links that exist to urban areas have an effect on rural development, for example because of seasonal migration, transport and market routes (Evans and Ngau, 1991). The choices that are made by rural households are also in part determined by these links, or by their access to markets, physical infrastructure, credit and advice (Wiggins, 2000). Smallholder farmers may also have more choice and a greater chance of reducing vulnerability, if they are able to draw on local institutions such as community associations, co-operatives or religious organisations (Hilhorst and Toulmin, 2000). In addition, in these choices they will be influenced by prevailing conceptions surrounding for example gender roles, appropriate kinship obligations, or community rituals. Thus smallholders make many and intricate choices, which are influenced by many factors (Mortimore, 1998).

Approaches to reducing rural poverty

Against this background, it quickly becomes apparent that working in such diverse systems to try to improve overall productivity or to bring about overall poverty reduction is very challenging. The interrelationship between environmental, agricultural, cultural, political and social factors makes it difficult to assess the impact that a change in one element might have on the other elements. It seems certain that there is no single, generic policy solution that can be universally applied to reduce rural poverty in sub-Saharan Africa. In some cases, the traditional 'agriculture first' model may still be credible. In this model, the small farm is seen as the main platform for poverty reduction, facilitated through technological progress and increased market access. In other cases, rural–urban relations may provide new opportunities. Livelihood diversification that focuses on both on-farm and off-farm income, including migration, may turn out to be a key to poverty reduction.

Whichever policy option is chosen, however, the aim is generally the same: smallholder farmers would like to reduce risk and vulnerability, alleviate poverty, and manage sustainable livelihoods, as described by Scoones (1998): "A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base".

National government policies vary in their capacity to effectively address rural livelihoods and rural poverty. In fact, government policies may both foster and hinder rural poverty reduction. For example, the outcome of political decentralisation policies may strengthen already viable local institutions, such as farming cooperatives, but at the same time a decentralisation process may be monopolised by powerful groups who do not necessarily act on behalf of the rural poor (Hilhorst and Toulmin, 2000). This is just one example of how many difficulties are involved in laying out a national government policy on rural development. It also raises the question of what the optimum balance is between national-level strategies on the one hand and local initiatives on the other.

The changing face of donor aid

The issue of balance between national and local level also arises in relation to donor aid. Over the past decade, donor agencies have restructured the ways in which they channel

their resources to recipient countries. From the 1970s to the early 1990s, the popular funding model for rural development was project funding. Resources were generally channelled into large-scale bilateral projects, implemented by the government – often with expatriate advisers and a high degree of autonomy – and often collaborating with international or local NGOs. By the 1990s, however, this type of funding was being criticised. Projects were seen to undermine national systems by attracting the most skilled local staff, thus inadvertently diminishing the human resources available elsewhere. Also, the piecemeal nature of project funding was, critics argued, unlikely to foster substantive positive change in the way the national governments operated. As a result, the emerging consensus was that donor agencies should broaden their funding strategies to include direct budget support, whereby funds are provided directly to a government to support its poverty-reduction programmes. The Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) initiative, launched by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in 1999, provided the financial structure for direct budget support.

In line with this, more and more donors are withdrawing from field-based activities and consequently are becoming increasingly remote from the rural poor, leaving local and international NGOs as the main actors at the local level. Ironically this is happening as rural sub-Saharan Africa undergoes some major socio-economic changes, as a result of globalisation and PRSPs. These changes – coupled with the effects of previous policies such as structural adjustment programmes – are influencing the ways in which both rural and urban households construct their livelihoods. For example, these changes have had a fundamental effect on the contribution that agriculture makes to many rural-based livelihoods.

Current approaches emphasise support to governments to develop and implement national policies. At the same time, the role of agriculture in rural development is being promoted: the latest donor thinking on the importance of agricultural policy can be seen in recent strategy papers from the World Bank (World Bank, 2003) and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID, 2005). In addition, the African Union's Maputo declaration of 2003 urged all African governments to allocate 10 per cent of their national budgets to agriculture.

Why projects are vital

In the four case studies that follow (Chapter 3) we explore some of the intricacies of projects, their role in practice among poor rural communities and their potential role in developing pro-poor rural policy. We argue that it is important to understand both the weaknesses and the strengths of investment in project funding to maximise the benefits that such funding can ultimately bring to the rural poor in sub-Saharan Africa.

In the Analysis section of this publication (Chapter 4), we will return to the overall context and present our argument, based on the four case studies. In sum, we will argue that projects have an important role to play in policy processes. As international donors and national governments grapple with the best way to tackle rural poverty, we will argue that the role

of field-level action-research projects has been sidelined too soon and that the findings that result from these projects may be of immense value to policy makers who are willing to listen. In particular, projects provide a means by which policy makers can assess how effective their efforts are at reducing poverty in a world that is being reshaped by global social and economic forces. The case studies demonstrate how projects teach us about the day-to-day constraints that affect the rural poor, as well as highlighting shortcomings in policy and practice that hinder the ability of poor people to create their own pathways out of poverty.

Conceptual approach: evidence and policy change

In the international development field, policy makers are charged with developing pro-poor policies. In an ideal world, these policies are based on evidence that demonstrates their value and effectiveness. However in reality the link between evidence and policy is far from simple. Indeed, policy making is often a complex and opaque process with many, and diverse, influences, in which evidence may play only a small part.

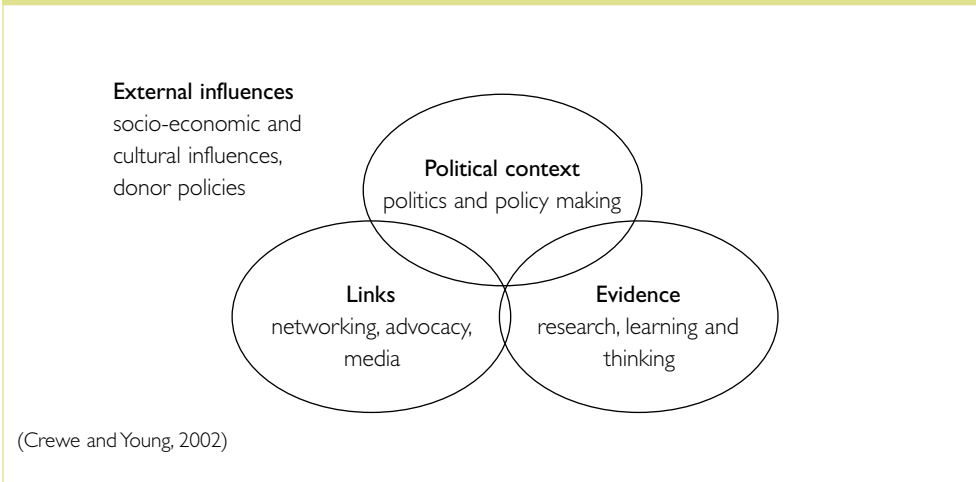
Both policy makers and researchers are beginning to recognise the missed opportunities that this situation represents. Therefore, in recent years there have been concerted efforts to increase understanding of the links between research and policy in the hope of improving them. This section briefly describes current theory in this field and, in particular, work from ODI's RAPID programme. Established in 2002, RAPID aims to improve the use of research and evidence in development policy and practice through research, advice and debate. An important output from this work is a framework that can be used to help understand research-policy links. This framework is described here and then used in Chapter 4 to examine the case studies in order to increase understanding of how FARM-Africa's work has influenced policy.

The RAPID framework

Research has shown that, even where policy-relevant evidence exists, it often fails to reach and inform policy makers and influence policies. This has led to the fundamental question that drives the work of RAPID's Bridging Research and Policy Project: Why are some of the ideas generated by research taken up and used by policy makers, while others are ignored and disappear?

In trying to find answers to this question, the RAPID group has carried out theoretical, case study and practical work, and has identified a wide range of interrelated factors which determine whether research-based and other forms of evidence, like that generated by projects similar to the four case studies that follow, are likely to be adopted by policy makers and practitioners. These factors can broadly be divided into three overlapping areas: the political context, the evidence, and the links between policy and research communities. A fourth set of factors is also recognised: the external context. Figure 1 shows the interplay of these four areas. In different situations, the overlap between the different spheres will vary considerably.

Figure 1. The RAPID framework



The political context

The political context affects whether and to what extent research and other evidence are taken up in policy processes. The policy process and the production of research are in themselves political processes. Political contestation, institutional pressures and vested interests matter greatly. So too, the attitudes and incentives among officials, their room for manoeuvre, power relations and history greatly influence policy implementation. In some cases the political strategies and power relations are obvious; in others they may be less visible.

The political context appears to be the most important arena affecting the uptake of research and other evidence into policy. In certain political contexts, for example, research may be completely ignored. Policy maker demand for policy-relevant research, on the other hand, makes the research much more likely to have impact.

The evidence and communication

The quality of the research is an important factor in whether it goes on to influence policy. The key dimensions seem to be relevance, credibility and providing solutions. The way it is communicated is also vital.

Research appears to have a much greater impact when it is topically relevant. For an impact in the near term, research needs to relate to the policy issue of the day. Credibility includes analytic rigour and the reputation of the person or group doing the research. The operational usefulness of an idea is also important: it helps if a new approach has been piloted and its value clearly demonstrated. Research that provides a solution to a problem is also more likely to be taken up.

How findings are communicated is crucial. A good communication strategy is interactive, and continuous. It involves thoughtful packaging of evidence so that it will be palatable to policy makers. The sources and conveyors of information are also influential; for example, people accept information more readily from those they trust.

Links

Links between researchers and policy makers are the third element of the RAPID framework. Communities, networks and intermediaries – such as the media and advocacy groups – are important here. The aim is for feedback, dialogue and collaboration between researchers and policy makers, all of which contribute to trust and legitimacy.

The links arena is particularly complex. But it is clear that actions to improve links – both formal and informal – will enhance the chances of evidence impacting on policy.

External influences

The RAPID framework also considers the impact of external forces on research–policy interactions. These forces may include international politics and processes, and current trends towards democratisation and liberalisation. Researchers and research groups cannot expect to influence these external forces any more than they can directly influence the political context, but an awareness of their possible impact on attempts to influence policy is useful.

When does evidence influence policy?

To summarise, the RAPID work suggests that research-based and other forms of evidence are more likely to contribute to policy if:

- The evidence fits with the political and institutional limits and pressures of policy makers, and resonates with their assumptions, or sufficient pressure is exerted to challenge them;
- The evidence is credible and convincing, provides practical solutions to pressing policy problems, and is packaged to attract policy makers' interest;
- Researchers and policy makers share common networks, trust each other, and communicate effectively.

It is also recognised that, although research may not have direct impact on specific policies, the production of research may still exert a powerful indirect influence through introducing new terms and shaping the policy discourse. This has been described as a process of 'percolation', in which research findings and concepts are gradually filtered through various policy networks (Weiss, 1977).

Applying the RAPID framework to FARM-Africa's work

The next chapter looks at four of FARM-Africa's projects and the impact they have had on policy and practice. To gain a deeper understanding of how these projects engaged

with the policy process, the projects are then examined using the RAPID framework, that is, from the perspectives of context, evidence and links. This allows reflection on the areas where FARM-Africa did well and the areas that were more challenging. Lessons for future work are then drawn.

Methodology

We have used a case study approach, focusing on four cases that provide interesting and illustrative insights into the nature of small-scale project work and its relation to policy processes. This approach allows us to examine and reflect on a particular case in greater depth than would be possible from a survey, for example. Such reflection means that more factors can be taken into account when considering the specific situation of the case. The four cases that we examine (written up by four different teams) are:

1. Land reform in South Africa
2. Veterinary policy in Tanzania
3. Forestry policy in Ethiopia
4. Livestock policy in Kenya

In the South Africa case study, the lead author was Dr Alastair Bradstock, who undertook a formal research study related to the FARM-Africa project. The other project experiences were not part of such a research programme. Together with his team, he ran focus group workshops to try to understand the livelihoods of land reform beneficiaries, the organisational factors that were constraining them from developing their land, their different sources of income, as well as the importance to their livelihoods of growing crops and managing livestock. The team then carried out a short household survey to try to understand how much the groups knew about their farms and how they were run (for example, names of members of the executive committee, size of the farm, its potential, distance from where people live to the farm, whether they had ever visited the farm, and so on). Building on this, they carried out a much bigger household survey with two land reform groups, in which 100 households were interviewed at each site with the aim of exploring their assets and income sources. Dr Bradstock was also able to consult and use literature that he had studied as part of his PhD when writing up the present case study.

In the other cases, we have less formal information. Here the case study process has been informed by the basic tenet of action research, namely ongoing reflection and learning from events as they have unfolded within a project. Each case study has been written up by a team including those directly involved with implementing the project and observing their effects. They have drawn on individual and collective memories of project events, and reflected together with others on their sequencing and implications.

In the Tanzania case study, the main author is Dr Jaribu Sultan, who was supported by George Odhiambo. In the Ethiopia case study, the lead author is Sally Crafter, who was supported by Zelalem Temesgen and Ben Irvin. In the Kenya case study, reports were

written by a team of two: Dr Kaberia Boniface (lead author) and Helen Altshul. They consulted informally with two of their colleagues, Camillus Ahuya and Ali Hassan.

Details of the evidence and the conclusions which can be drawn are given in the following chapter.

3. Case studies

This section presents the four case studies, demonstrating challenges and issues relating to policy implementation using evidence generated through grassroots projects. A brief summary of each case study is presented, followed by more in-depth analysis.

Land reform in South Africa

At the time of the 1994 elections in South Africa, white commercial farmers owned nearly 90 per cent of the country's agricultural land. African National Congress land policy demonstrated a desire to fundamentally change this land ownership pattern. This case study is particularly relevant as land reform, a technically and politically challenging approach, begins to re-emerge on the international development agenda. One of the key lessons learned from this intervention was how important it is to ensure that project teams have dedicated staff who can give policy issues the time and attention they require. Moreover, organisations involved in policy work must be aware of how their work and research findings relate to the national context, and how they can best contribute to national policy debates.

Veterinary services in Tanzania

One of the outcomes of structural adjustment in Tanzania was the considerable scaling back of the government's veterinary service to a degree where many rural farmers no longer had access to the service. In this case study, a locally-devised solution – Community-based Animal Health Workers – could not be widely adopted due to prohibitive legislation. The study charts how FARM-Africa engaged with policy makers and, after presenting research results and project experiences gained over a ten-year period, was eventually able to influence the policy process. The outcome of the lobbying work carried out by FARM-Africa and other NGOs was a change to national legislation that accommodated this innovation.

Forestry in Ethiopia

The Ethiopian case study focuses on the forestry sector. Ethiopia has traditionally developed policy with little input from civil society. This case study provides insights into how, against the odds, it is possible to achieve policy changes. One of the key lessons learned from this case study was how attitudes towards new technology shifted dramatically once policy makers had witnessed successful examples working elsewhere on the African continent and in Asia.

Livestock in Kenya

How to address the many failings of the livestock sector was the subject of FARM-Africa's initiative in Kenya. This case study emphasises the complex nature of attempting to influence policy and demonstrates the importance of having sufficient human and financial resources to meet the many challenges that arise during the process. In addition, this example

demonstrates the key role that good quality research played in enhancing FARM-Africa's professional reputation with policy makers and, in turn, its ability to engage in meaningful policy discussions.

Land reform in South Africa

Since the 1994 elections, a land reform programme has been under way in South Africa. This aims to restore land to people who were displaced under apartheid, to redistribute land to the landless poor and to reform land tenure systems. While it is generally agreed that the policy framework relating to land reform is good, there have been significant difficulties in translating policy into practice and the programme has been slow in delivering land.

FARM-Africa has been working in South Africa since 1991, helping people and communities to address the huge challenges involved in the land reform programme. In recent years, it has become more involved in the policy making arena and, while it has not effected any significant changes to South African land policy, it is now acknowledged as one of the main actors in the land sector. However during its early years in South Africa, despite the fact that its work was generating relevant and credible evidence, the lack of focused advocacy work prevented this evidence from reaching policy makers. This case study looks at how FARM-Africa changed its approach to advocacy over the years and how this changed its visibility in the policy arena.

The land reform programme

The African National Congress was elected to power in South Africa in 1994 and embarked on a land reform programme to right the injustices of land ownership and distribution that had been perpetrated by the previous apartheid regime. At that time, 90 per cent of agricultural land was controlled by approximately 50,000 white commercial farmers (Mbongwa et al., 1996).

The land reform programme has three components.

- The restitution programme aims to restore land to those people who were displaced as a consequence of such acts as the Native Lands Act of 1913 and the Native Trust and Land Act of 1936
- The land redistribution programme aims to redistribute land to the landless poor, farm workers and emerging farmers for residential and productive uses
- The tenure reform programme aims to help people to obtain stronger rights to land, through new systems of land holding, land rights and forms of ownership; however this programme has been much disputed and remains to be implemented.

In 2001, the Minister of Agriculture and Land Affairs introduced a new sub-programme called Land Redistribution for Agricultural Development (LRAD). The key objectives of LRAD include the redistribution of 30 per cent of the country's agricultural land by

2014; improving nutrition and incomes of the rural poor who want to farm on any scale; decongesting overcrowded former homeland areas; and expanding opportunities for women and young people who stay in rural areas.

It is generally agreed that the policy framework relating to land reform is good, but there have been significant difficulties in translating this policy into practice (Adams, 2000). The main problems arise from the fact that, during apartheid, it was almost impossible for black households to farm other than on small home plots. The white commercial farming sector owned much larger and more sophisticated farms that were heavily subsidised. Therefore, when groups of emerging black farmers acquire previously white-owned commercial farms, they usually do not have the skills and resources to exploit the potential of the farms (Bradstock, 2005a).

FARM-Africa, through its research and field work, has identified key factors that have constrained land beneficiaries from realising the potential of their farms (Bradstock, 2005a).

□ Skills and resources

Land reform communities often do not have access to the resources and skills needed to develop large farms. These include finance, technical agricultural skills, farm management and administration skills, and marketing skills.

□ Distance

One of the most significant problems is the distance between where land reform beneficiaries live and where their farms are located. Some have to travel up to 300 kilometres to reach their farms. This is due to the government failing to acknowledge that many people have left the area where their parents and grandparents used to live and where they are entitled to land.

□ The size of government grants for land acquisition and cost of land

Because land is relatively costly and grants are relatively small, people wishing to acquire land have to form themselves into groups. These groups often have to be large in order to raise sufficient money to purchase farms; and individuals within the group may have diverse views on the farm and farming options. Large groups therefore often become unmanageable.

□ The management capacity of executive committees

Each land reform group is legally obliged to democratically elect an executive committee to manage the group's affairs. However, group members often do not have the skills and experience to manage a large disparate group of people who may have competing, and sometimes conflicting, objectives.

□ Land reform groups and their constitutions

Before a group takes possession of its land, it is legally bound to draw up a constitution

that describes, amongst other things, the purpose of the group, the rules and regulations of the group and the duties of the office bearers. As many group members are illiterate, government officials or consultants often develop the constitutions with minimal participation from the land reform groups. Even members who can read often experience difficulties understanding the contents which are usually written in complicated and inaccessible legal language.

□ Government policies

South Africa has one of the most liberalised agricultural markets in the world. This means that nations that subsidise their agricultural sectors, such as Europe and the USA, can often sell their products in the country at or below South African producer prices. In theory, those farmers with sufficient assets (technical and managerial skills, and access to capital) should be able to diversify their businesses and may therefore be better able to exploit economic opportunities and manage the negative consequences of price fluctuations. In reality, however, emerging black South African farmers who are poor and resource-constrained are unable to compete in this macro-environment. It is too optimistic to expect them to be able to cope with these conditions in their early years when they are mastering the skills and techniques of farm management.

FARM-Africa's Northern Cape Land Reform Programme

In South Africa, FARM-Africa focuses on helping land reform groups to manage their newly acquired land. Working in collaboration with the National and Provincial Departments of Land Affairs and Agriculture, it trains land owners in crop and livestock production, farm management, and irrigation techniques to increase the productivity of their land.

FARM-Africa first began working in South Africa in 1991, providing assistance and agricultural capacity-building inputs to land reform communities. The Northern Cape Land Reform Programme began in 1999 when FARM-Africa began working, in close collaboration with the Departments of Agriculture and Land Affairs, to develop the agricultural, management and administrative capacity of eight groups that had received land in the Northern Cape region through the government's land reform programme (Figure 2). Since then, over 750 landowners from the eight groups have received training.

As well as providing agricultural training to the land reform groups, the programme helps community members secure government grants to buy equipment such as tractors, water troughs and wind pumps. A credit scheme, set up by FARM-Africa but managed by the community, helps farmers increase their assets, for example by buying more animals. FARM-Africa also helps communities to draw up long-term plans to develop their farms, using a participatory land use planning tool. This approach enables groups to work jointly through a sequence of steps to create and implement their plans, encouraging a sense of ownership and commitment to the work.

Figure 2. FARM-Africa's projects in South Africa



FARM-Africa's main partners in the programme are the South African Government (Departments of Agriculture, Land Affairs and Local Government and Housing), a local NGO called the Legal Resources Centre (LRC), the Surplus People's Project and the University of Western Cape.

Over the last five years the programme has provided extensive training in various participatory techniques – for example, wealth ranking, running a semi-structured interview, and pair-wise ranking – to agricultural extension agents and officials from the Departments of Social Services and Local Government and Housing. The training specifically aims to facilitate implementation of FARM-Africa's Participatory Planning Method, an eight-step planning process that results in a plan that land reform groups can use to develop and manage their farms. It is too early yet to determine whether this training has changed

practice at the field level, although a recent positive development was that the Departments of Agriculture and Local Government and Housing agreed to cover half the cost of the training, signalling their commitment to this capacity-building initiative.

The programme moved into its second phase in 2004, with a shift in focus towards providing training to government staff so they can implement the project, aiming to scale-up the lessons learned in the first phase. To widen the potential impact that FARM-Africa can make on changing government practice, FARM-Africa is in the process of seeking official accreditation as a training organisation. Government policy restricts the amount of training that departments can source from non-accredited organisations, so if FARM-Africa can succeed in this, there is scope for it to change practice not only in the Northern Cape but also elsewhere in the country.

Approaches to influencing policy

In the early stages of its work in South Africa, FARM-Africa had a limited understanding of how to engage in the policy making process. It had neither the skills nor the knowledge to develop and implement an advocacy strategy. Also at this time, because of its isolation from the policy making process, the project team was unable to judge whether it had generated sufficient information to engage in advocacy work. Paradoxically, it was generating highly relevant and original information about how the land reform programme was performing and the factors constraining its progress.

Thus in the early years of the project, FARM-Africa reacted to invitations from other NGOs and government departments to describe its experiences. It did not understand the political process in the province and was unaware of how the committee responsible for monitoring the land reform programme – the Portfolio Committee on Agriculture and Land Reform – operated. When it arranged meetings to describe its experiences, its focus was limited to government officials and it did not include key politicians such as the member of the Provincial Executive Committee who has the Land and Agriculture portfolio.

Since the start of the second phase of its programme, FARM-Africa has approached advocacy in a more structured manner. It has now recruited an advocacy officer and it has developed an advocacy action plan aiming to convince the government that in implementing its land reform policies, the following should be considered.

- The pre-designation phase of the process should be more participatory and comprehensive
- A more targeted service should be provided to land reform groups in the post-transfer phase of the programme
- Failing communal property institutions should be supported in a process of restructuring
- A land reform forum should be established in the Northern Cape province.

In the advocacy action plan, it has outlined a number of specific advocacy research tasks to improve its understanding of the policy making process in the province and at the national level.

- To understand the political processes at municipal, provincial and national levels with regard to policy formulation especially for the land reform programme.
- To identify those individuals and organisations that are FARM-Africa's potential allies and foes in the land reform sector.
- To understand how the land and agricultural portfolio committee works at provincial and national levels.
- To list the names of the members of the national and provincial land and agricultural portfolio committee as well as their interests and areas of concern in the land reform programme.
- To understand the land reform process in its entirety. What are the different stages in the process? To identify the roles played by different departments, what committees exist and what decisions they take. To describe where national governments fit into this process.
- To identify possible collaborators for FARM-Africa's advocacy programme.
- To understand how the Comprehensive Agricultural Support Programme (CASP) operates.
- To analyse the recommendations of a report produced in 2005 by the South African Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) on communal property institutions.

In April 2003, FARM-Africa convened a workshop with senior staff from the provincial Department of Agriculture to explore ways to improve the implementation of the land reform programme. The outcome of this workshop was the development of a road map that addressed many of the issues that FARM-Africa had identified as constraining the progress of the programme. One of the most significant changes was the much greater emphasis on the pre-designation phase of the process and the need to spend more time and resources briefing beneficiaries about the challenges of farming (Bradstock, 2004, 2005a, 2005b).

While FARM-Africa has not effected any significant changes to written policy documents in the South African land sector, it has become acknowledged as one of the main actors in the land policy arena. Now in its second phase, the programme is in a strong position to make a much more significant impact upon land policy than in its first phase. It has published three reports describing the key problems that affect the land reform programme as well as possible solutions to them (Bradstock, 2005a). It has developed a strong working relationship with the Departments of Agriculture and Land Affairs at national and provincial levels. For example, it has been consulted frequently by the Department of Land Affairs about the land reform programme and it was invited to participate in a government-funded consultancy that examined the effectiveness of communal property institutions, which are the legal entities that land reform groups use to hold land. It also made contributions to a government-funded review of the commonage (common land) sub-programme that is part of the redistribution

component. It is often invited to share its expertise at national fora. Multilateral and bilateral donors also recognise FARM-Africa's achievements in the sector.

Lessons from project experiences

The most important lesson from this project was that FARM-Africa did not initially have the necessary skills to plan and implement an effective advocacy programme. This had a fundamental effect on the project's ability to bring its research findings and experience to influence policy makers. Some of the issues are as follows.

- FARM-Africa had a very limited understanding of the policy context at the municipal, provincial and national levels
- No contact was made with some of the significant land reform policy actors
- No contact was made with the local or national press and there was no strategy to provide them with stories from the case study groups
- While FARM-Africa was involved in ten land reform projects, it did not use them as a tool to promote its policy objectives. Arrangements could have been made for politicians to visit them and they could have been used to illustrate some of the practical problems beneficiaries were experiencing on the ground
- Because understanding of how to do advocacy was poor, FARM-Africa did not know when to start the process and lack of knowledge of the work of other NGOs in the land reform field made FARM-Africa unable to gauge whether its experiences of land reform were novel.

Veterinary policy in Tanzania

Livestock is an important resource in Tanzania, particularly for poor people living in rural areas. However there are limited veterinary services available to these groups and this forms a significant threat to their livelihoods. Disease surveillance and reporting, vital to effective disease control, are also largely inadequate in Tanzania.

As part of the structural adjustment programme, the government withdrew its provision of animal health services in the 1980s, with the intention that private practitioners would step in to provide these services. However there were too few trained vets and they mostly preferred to set up practice in urban areas, so that veterinary services began to fail in rural areas.

One solution to this problem, promoted by FARM-Africa, has been the training of Community-Based Animal Health Workers (CAHWs) and community-based service provision. CAHWs are trained in basic veterinary skills, including disease identification and good animal husbandry practices. They work at the village level and are supervised and supported by village extension officers and district livestock officers.

At first, the government did not recognise CAHWs, but following awareness raising and demonstration of the success of the approach, the government decided to recognise CAHWs as a 'stop-gap' measure until it was able to provide full services. This was formalised in the Veterinary Act 2003 and the Diseases Act 2003, which allow exemption from the requirement that all practising animal health care workers be registered veterinarians. The more recent Veterinary Act (Provision of Animal Health Services in Underserved Areas Regulation, 2005) also allows CAHWs to practice in underserved areas. The CAHWs' Association (CHAWABA) has also been registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

This change of policy, along with improved disease surveillance and reporting, is largely due to the evidence and advocacy work of FARM-Africa and its partners in Tanzania. Some of the processes that led to this policy change are described below.

Veterinary services in Tanzania

With an estimated 17 million cattle, Tanzania has the third largest cattle population in Africa after Ethiopia and Sudan (Tanzania Veterinary Association, 1999). Other important animals are goats, sheep, chickens, donkeys and pigs. Livestock outputs include traction, manure, milk, meat, eggs, hides and skins.

Small-scale livestock keeping is mainly an activity of poor people in rural areas. However productivity is low and poverty is high in these regions. One of the main reasons for low productivity is animal disease and the lack of effective animal health services to manage or treat these.

This situation is largely due to the withdrawal of government veterinary services in the late 1980s. This followed a recommendation made by the World Bank, as part of Tanzania's structural adjustment programme, that veterinary services be privatised. It was intended that previously government-employed veterinarians would set up as private practitioners and provide services (Sherman, 2000). However there were too few qualified vets and of those, few were willing to practice in rural areas, preferring to work in high income potential areas. Animal health services in rural areas diminished as a result, for example, regular dipping and other preventative treatments were no longer available and disease incidence in these areas increased dramatically. In the absence of vets, unqualified people began treating animals and livestock keepers would frequently treat their own animals, often incorrectly.

In Babati District for example, livestock numbers based on the 1988 census were estimated to be in excess of 224,000 cattle and 212,000 goats and sheep (1998 rinderpest vaccination figures suggest much higher numbers). Yet in 2000 there was only one fully qualified private veterinarian in the district.

Similarly, disease surveillance and reporting was inadequate, with insufficient staff, poor coordination and no central database (Nsiima, 2002).

The following have been identified, through stakeholder workshops, as the main problems related to the livestock sector in Tanzania.

- An increased incidence of the major animal diseases
- A lack of control, and poor supply, of most imported drugs
- Most of the qualified animal health providers are found practising in the cities and large towns, and almost none work in the rural areas
- There is poor information exchange relating to livestock disease between the farmers and livestock keepers on the one hand and higher level authorities on the other
- There is unregulated livestock movement by livestock keepers (pastoralists) which has increased as a result of a decline in pasture and increased incidence of drought
- Insufficient government funding is available for training and employing new veterinarians
- Insufficient extension staff are employed by the local government
- Lack of investment and difficulties accessing credit prevent the expansion and commercialisation of the livestock industry.

In its Livestock Sector Development Strategy Analysis of April 2001, the government acknowledged that effective control and frequent monitoring of animal disease incidence are necessary to increase production in the livestock sector and decrease risks for livestock owners. However, poverty and the diminishing animal health delivery system in rural areas are still the main factors limiting livestock production in the country.

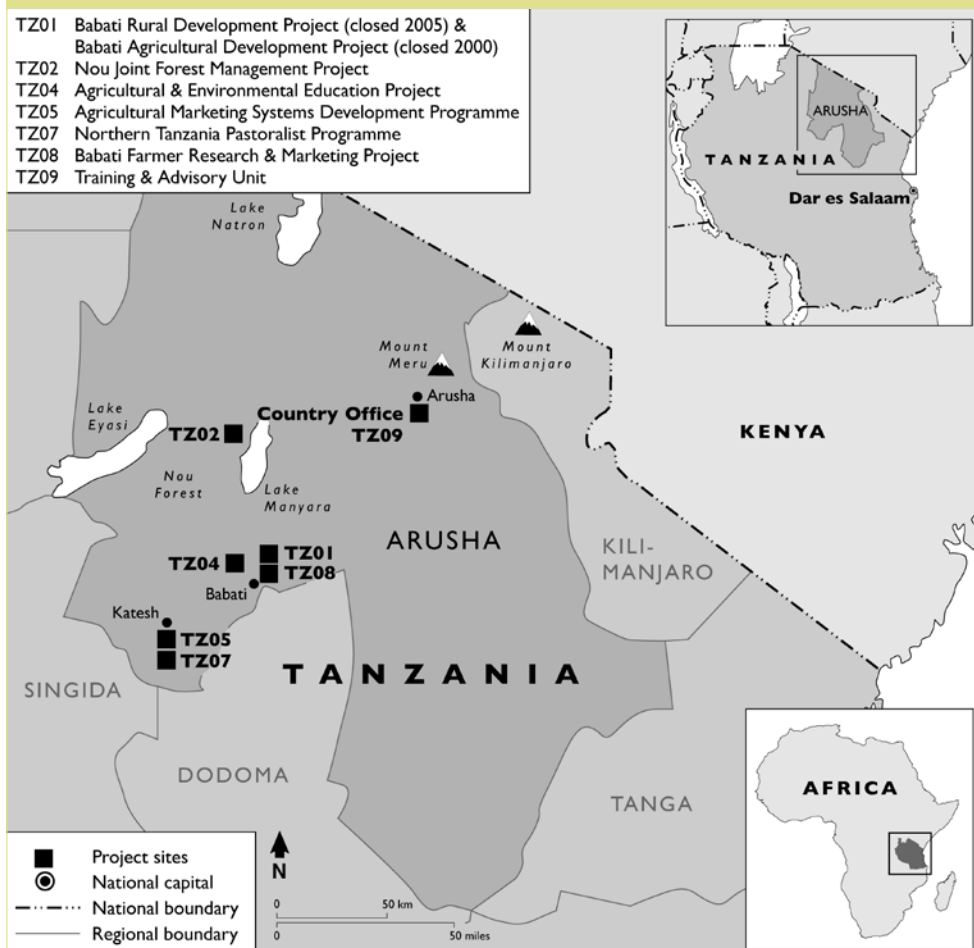
FARM-Africa's work to improve animal health services in Tanzania

FARM-Africa began working in Tanzania in 1990 in Babati district and now has a range of projects across the Babati and Mbulu districts of Manyara Region. FARM-Africa's main animal health work has been under two projects; the Babati Agricultural Development Project (BADP) and the Babati Rural Development Project (BRDP) (see Figure 3).

The BADP ran from 1991 to 2000. The project focused on community-based goat breeding, a credit system for provision of oxen and ploughs, soil and water conservation, capacity-building, and education, as well as animal health care. The BRDP began in 2000 and continued some of the activities that had started under the BADP.

At a preliminary stage, baseline studies were carried out to establish the animal health delivery situation and diseases prevalent in the district. The studies showed a gap in animal health delivery services, the presence of epidemic diseases in most villages, failure of dipping procedures, and diminishing communal grazing land due to the encroachment of settlements and agricultural activities. In the 82 villages in the district, with a total livestock population of over 224,000, there was only one qualified private veterinary surgeon. There were 42 government village extension officers, meaning that 40 villages were without a village extension officer and the overall average was one extension officer to over 5000 animals. Forty-seven CAHWs were situated in one division (22 villages). There were eight drug stores in the district, most of which were in Babati town.

Figure 3. FARM-Africa's projects in Tanzania



Activities under both projects related to animal health care included:

- Development of a training programme and materials for CAHWs;
- Training of CAHWs;
- Production of training manuals and their dissemination to CAHWs, NGOs, CBOs and staff of the Ministry of Water and Livestock Development;
- Establishing links between CAHWs and the private sector, for example private companies in Arusha, to ensure supply chains for essential drugs to rural areas;
- Setting up eight drug stores in the district, run by CAHWs. Drugs were provided by the private sector;
- Incorporation of CAHWs into the district disease monitoring systems and establishing them as the first point of contact regarding disease surveillance;
- Promoting good animal husbandry practices and construction of cattle water troughs and dip tanks.

Currently, trained CAHWs provide services in 74 of the 82 villages in the district, i.e. 90 per cent coverage. They are under the supervision of a private practice veterinarian and monitored and supervised by the village government and government extension workers. An impact study carried out in the region has shown that access to CAHWs significantly reduces livestock loss from disease. For example, villages with CAHWs had an annual cattle mortality rate of 9 per cent, compared with 15 per cent in those villages without a CAHW.

FARM-Africa's training course and accompanying manual have been revised with input from stakeholders including relevant NGOs and government departments. They are now accepted as standards for training CAHWs by the Ministry of Water and Livestock Development and the Veterinary Council of Tanzania. Training is conducted by NGOs.

Since 2003, CAHWs have been incorporated into Tanzania's system for disease surveillance and reporting. This is still at the trial stage in three districts. Working at the village level, they report monthly from the village and district to the Zonal Veterinary Investigation Centre, from where the report is sent to the Ministry of Water and Livestock Development. This has been set in place in collaboration with the NGO VETAID and the Ministry, as recommended by the Community-based Animal Health and Participatory Epidemiology Unit (CAPE), the African Union/Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) and the Pan African Programme for Control of Epizootics (PACE). Furthermore, this disease reporting system has been endorsed by the Veterinary Council of Tanzania.

A legal framework working group has also been formed to look at the legal aspects of changing the old Veterinary Surgeon Act to include other animal health providers, such as para-veterinarians and CAHWs. The group comprises representatives from all stakeholders including livestock keepers, CAHWs, NGOs/CBOs, ministries and the private sector.

Approaches to influencing policy

Initially CAHWs were not recognised by the state. The law prohibited anyone not registered as a veterinarian from practicing animal health care provision. This changed in 2002 when the government decided to recognise CAHWs as a 'stop-gap' measure to provide animal health services in the rural areas. This is intended to be until the government is in a position to provide full services again. The Veterinary Act 2003 and the Diseases Act 2003 provided the legal framework for this, allowing exemption from the prohibitive law, permitting CAHWs to legally operate if exempted.

The government also now allows training of CAHWs. CHAWABA has been recognised and registered by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

FARM-Africa has played a significant role in this policy development, having conducted targeted policy work to support CAHWs since 1998. CHAWABA also includes lobbying as one of its key activities.

Meetings with stakeholders proved a useful tactic. For example, as a result of a meeting with village leaders, government village extension staff, the district agricultural and livestock development officer, and FARM-Africa personnel to discuss the role of CAHWs and the need for collaboration between stakeholder groups, a Memorandum Of Understanding was agreed and signed in September 1999 under the Babati Agricultural Development Project.

The UK's Department for International Development (DFID) was also promoting CAHW programmes in Tanzania through its Animal Health Services Project. DFID and FARM-Africa worked together to advocate the CAHW approach, jointly coordinating in 2000 a high-profile workshop titled 'A workshop to formulate a legal framework for the provision of animal health services by the CAHWs and other para-veterinary personnel in Tanzania'. All relevant stakeholders, including government policy makers, were invited to participate. FARM-Africa presented a paper on 'The Provision of Animal Health Services by CAHWs in Babati District', which described experiences from the Babati Agricultural Development Project and the Babati Rural Development Project.

Case studies of project work with CAHWs have also been presented at other relevant fora, including the Tanzania Veterinary Association annual meetings, in addition to meetings with other NGOs and ministry officials.

A policy working group comprising NGOs and CBOs involved in the training of CAHWs in Tanzania has been formed. This acts as a forum for presentation of evidence and lobbying the Ministry of Water and Livestock Development on the role of CAHWs. FARM-Africa and other NGOs are represented in the working group by VETAID.

Lessons from project experiences

At the outset of the project, there was no analysis of either the policy context in which the training of CAHWs would be conducted or of the key policy constraints that this work would face. It is important that this understanding and knowledge be available at the outset of a project through a policy review process.

The project did not set out any clear policy objectives during the implementation process, nor were there any policy-related activities at that stage. The policy work was conducted through project dissemination activities. It is important to have clear policy objectives and outputs, and activities designed to achieve these.

Clear policy objectives would have supported the development of publications aimed specifically at influencing policy. There tended to be an over-reliance on papers and presentations prepared for meetings and a lack of publications targeting a policy making audience.

This experience has shown that partnerships, particularly collaboration with research institutions, are key to developing effective policy-influencing strategies. For example,

AU/IBAR evidence relating to CAHWs monitoring and reporting livestock diseases was used to demonstrate the strong and effective role that CAHWs could have in disease surveillance.

Forestry in Ethiopia

Unsustainable forest management and deforestation have been a feature in Ethiopia for many years. Though the government recognises this, it has failed to establish effective long-term planning for sustainable forests (Bekele, 2003). Forests continue to be over-exploited, jeopardising both the forests and the livelihoods of those who depend on them.

FARM-Africa has been promoting Participatory Forest Management (PFM) in Ethiopia since the mid-1990s, together with the German development agency GTZ and the NGO SOS Sahel Ethiopia. In this approach, communities and government services work together to define rights of forest use, to share management responsibilities and to share forest benefits. PFM is gaining recognition in many countries as an approach that can achieve forest conservation through securing the rights and livelihoods of local people who use the forest. It is believed that this approach has the potential to lead to sustainable management of forests in Ethiopia.

Since 2003, 15 community groups have signed Forest Management Agreements with the Ethiopian Government. Projects are expanding, and awareness of the value of participatory management is spreading, particularly in the Oromiya and Southern Nations Regions where FARM-Africa's pilot PFM projects are located. There has been increasing interest from local government in these regions, shown by a number of requests to expand the projects to new areas. In Oromiya the government forest department working adjacent to FARM-Africa's Chilimo Project has started developing PFM in the Jibat Priority Forest Area.

Today in Ethiopia there are 58 designated Forest Priority Areas and in eight of these, PFM is being trialled. Two of these are FARM-Africa projects, two are run by SOS Sahel Ethiopia, one by GTZ, one by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, and two are under government management.

Current policy on forest management in Ethiopia remains unclear; however there are indications that PFM is becoming accepted and may be included in future policy. The policy formulation process in Ethiopia is closed and direct influence is not possible. However demonstrations of improved practice may be having gradual impact on policy makers. A Forest Proclamation for Oromiya issued in 2002 supports PFM but the federal forest policy remains in draft form and appears to be less explicit on this issue.

PFM has become central to the discussion among stakeholders on forest management in Ethiopia. At a workshop titled 'Enhancing the role of trees, woodlands and forests in poverty alleviation in Ethiopia', held by the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) in December 2005, many of the presentations and discussions centred around PFM. Those present at the workshop included foresters, forestry organisations and government forestry department staff.

The forestry sector in Ethiopia

In Ethiopia radical changes in forest ownership over recent decades have led to uncertainty about rights, contributing to practices that are causing destruction of forest resources.

Forest and forestlands used to be controlled by local administrators under landlords claiming forest ownership. Various community-based organisations also had roles in forest management. But the rights of these individuals and institutions were removed by the Derg regime under the Land Reform Proclamation of 1975. Forests were divided for the purposes of control and management into state forests – under the control of the state forest department – and community forests – under the control of peasant associations. People living in and around state-claimed forests were removed without compensation. Control of these forest resources was placed in the hands of political officials who had little knowledge of former local resource management systems. Any benefit sharing from forests took place only through illegal encroachment, livestock trespass and extraction of products by evading the forest guards.

When the Derg regime fell in 1992, forest destruction escalated because new government structures and controls were not yet in place and the former community-based institutions, suppressed by the Derg, no longer functioned. Forests became open access; in combination with population growth, a worsening economic situation and communities' retaliation against the Derg's restrictions, this led to rapid uncontrolled forest destruction.

The current government has expressed concern about deforestation and the intention to halt forest destruction, but clearance for agriculture has continued and activities known to be illegal and destructive, such as charcoal making and timber extraction, continue with little effective action to halt them. There is confusion about people's rights to use forests and trees. Although there are no exact figures on the decline of forests in Ethiopia, it is evident that forest cover has been significantly reduced by unsustainable activities.

Deforestation has implications at both local and national level, as well as globally. At the local level, forests provide products for use and sale, which are essential parts of the local livelihood systems, especially for the poorest households. Destruction of forests clearly threatens these livelihoods, but also has implications for watershed conservation and rainfall, especially important in a country where food security is so vulnerable to small changes in rainfall patterns.

The principle behind PFM is that people will conserve forests if they own rights to the resource, if they gain more benefit by retaining the forest than by removing it, and if that benefit is linked directly to the existence of the forest. Therefore PFM aims to develop systems of rights and sustainable forest use, whereby the forest itself generates products for use and sale to support directly the livelihoods of the local households involved in managing the forest.

PFM fits with current approaches to decentralised natural resource management which many governments are trying to implement. These encourage greater participation in natural resource management and economic development, while the government provides an enabling framework. PFM is often based on traditional natural resource management systems which gave equitable access and rights to forest users.

The Government of Ethiopia has acknowledged the potential of PFM in sustainable forest management; however, explicit policy supporting PFM is not currently in place. A forestry proclamation passed in 1994 set the groundwork for participatory approaches by stating "the sustainable utilisation of the country's forest resources is possible through the participation of the people and benefit sharing by the concerned communities". A draft forestry policy was written at the same time and has since been rewritten and revised several times, but has not been passed into legislation. The current version, produced in 2003 and titled Forest Development, Utilization and Protection Policy and Strategy does not explicitly back up PFM practice.

The Rural Development Policies, Strategies and Methods was issued by the Government in 2001. This document outlines the government's vision, policy directions and strategies to improve the rural economy. However, forestry is given less than ten lines in a document of 290 pages and is considered only as an agro-forestry intervention.

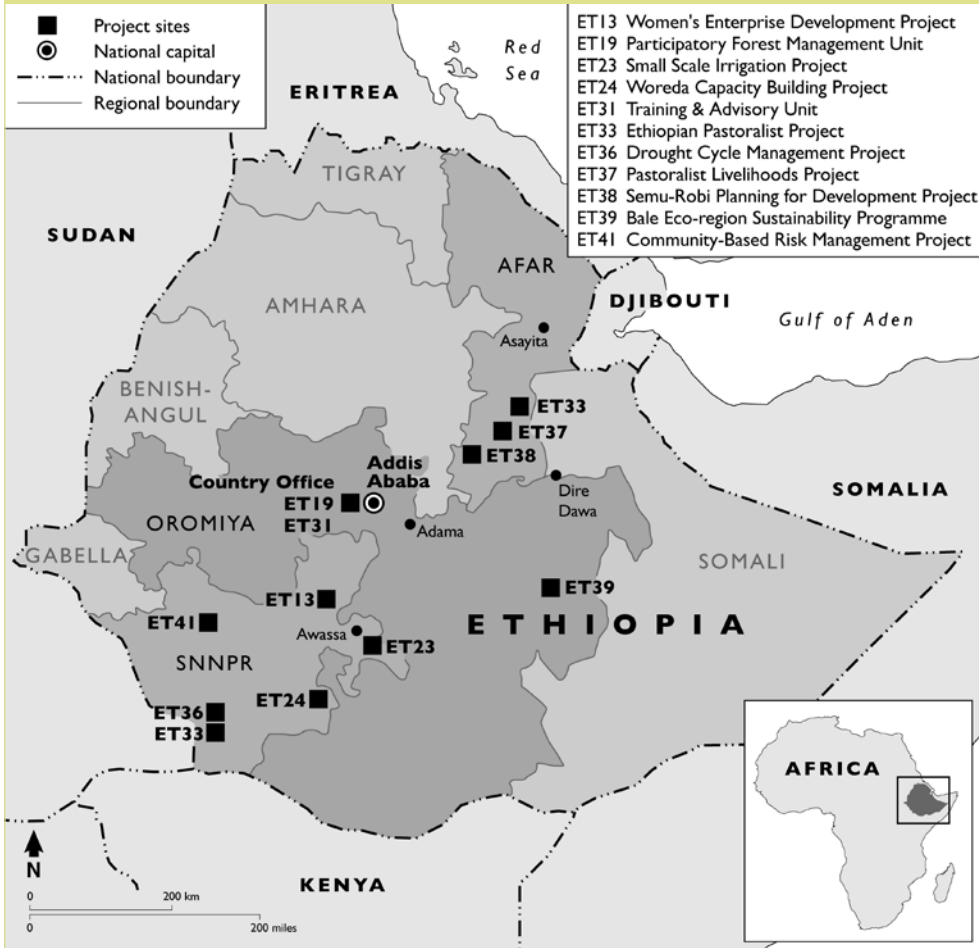
FARM-Africa's forestry projects in Ethiopia

FARM-Africa has been involved in the forestry sector in Ethiopia since 1992, when it began implementing a land use and farm forestry project that aimed to develop the capacity of local communities to manage their community forest resources sustainably. The government showed interest in this project and, following a tour to demonstrate PFM in action, FARM-Africa was asked to develop two participatory forest projects for state forests. These were at Bonga in the Southern Nations Region and at Chilimo in the Oromiya Region (see Figure 4) and this became the Bonga and Chilimo Participatory Forest Management Project, which began in 1997.

In 2002, FARM-Africa joined forces with the NGO SOS Sahel (a British development organisation established in 1985 that works with poor communities in the semi-arid lands of the Sahel and the Horn of Africa) to set up a Participatory Forest Management Programme in Ethiopia and Tanzania. In Ethiopia the programme brought together FARM-Africa's Bonga and Chilimo PFM Project and a similar SOS Sahel project in Borana, also in the Oromiya Region.

The objective of the programme is to shift forest management to the community through PFM, with the government providing technical support and an enabling environment. This involves a legal transfer of responsibility through a Forest Management Agreement, which details the negotiated duties, rights and responsibilities of the community and the government. Forest Management Plans are also drawn up, which describe the management

Figure 4. FARM-Africa's projects in Ethiopia



actions to be taken by the community, such as forest protection, harvesting and monitoring. The PFM approach requires an effective partnership between the community and the government and both groups have to undertake new activities and new roles. Capacity-building for both community and government is therefore an integral part of the approach.

Most of the communities depend heavily on the forests for income. To reduce this dependency, the programme is helping them to develop alternative income-generating activities such as poultry and beekeeping. The project in Bonga also has a reproductive health component, providing education on reproduction and population issues, and supplying contraception in the area.

The community living around Wacha Forest in the Bonga Forest project site became the first forest management cooperative in Ethiopia to take control of managing its forest. The cooperative signed a Forest Management Agreement with the local Ethiopian Government

offices in October 2003. By June 2004 five forest communities in the Bonga and Chilimo forest project sites had signed Forest Management Agreements with the government. In 2005 a further four forest user groups in Chilimo were handed control of more than 2000 hectares of forest. To date, a total of 15 Forest Management Agreements have been signed, accounting for approximately 15,000 hectares of forest. A total of 50,000 hectares is targeted for PFM in Ethiopia by FARM-Africa and its partners.

FARM-Africa's approaches to changing forestry policy

It is not easy to influence policy in Ethiopia. Policy development invites very little involvement or negotiation with stakeholders; the central government generally develops policy behind closed doors and passes it with little debate. Influence over policy can often only be attempted through policy revision. Changing attitudes towards forests and their management has proved particularly difficult, since the forestry sector is conservative, and has been slow to take up innovations.

The influence of FARM-Africa's participatory forest work on the government has been cumulative and incremental, through demonstration of the benefits of PFM.

Exposure

In its first move to promote PFM in Ethiopia, in 1996 FARM-Africa facilitated a study tour for key Ethiopian government officials from the Federal Ministry of Agriculture and Oromiya and Southern Nations Regions to see PFM in action. The tour visited India, Zimbabwe and Mozambique, and presented a range of approaches and experience. This opened the eyes of key people within the forestry sector to different ways of managing forests. Following the study tour, the government invited FARM-Africa to set up the PFM projects in Bonga and Chilimo.

This success prompted FARM-Africa to continue to use the strategy of exposure to promote awareness and understanding of PFM. Further visits have allowed Ethiopian foresters to witness PFM in other countries, particularly in Africa. For example, FARM-Africa took project and government foresters to see PFM projects in Ghana, and SOS Sahel Ethiopia has taken foresters to similar projects in Niger. There have also been exchange visits to Tanzania, with Tanzanian foresters making return visits and establishing mutual learning relationships with Ethiopian counterparts. As the pilot projects have expanded in Ethiopia, local learning opportunities have also been increasingly available and exploited.

Forestry education

FARM-Africa has worked to influence forestry education in Ethiopia, so that PFM becomes more widely known and understood. Most forestry training in Ethiopia takes place in Wondo Genet College of Forestry. Influencing the thinking of both academics and students at Wondo Genet has been a major focus in recent years. Wondo Genet staff, in line with the whole sector, have been slow in taking up PFM. Despite visits, discussions and invitations to workshops and experience-sharing events, little impression was made at first. Therefore

FARM-Africa built a training centre at the Chilimo project site, which was then handed over to Wondo Genet, to allow them to bring students and academics into a PFM community, to see the innovative approaches first hand, to use them as practical teaching resources, and to feed experience from the field into curriculum development. The area has now become a centre for action research to fine-tune the PFM approach.

Students from Wondo Genet have also been exposed to PFM through work experience in PFM areas. SOS Sahel Ethiopia has arranged for student teams to become involved in participatory resource assessments, a key activity in developing a PFM plan. All project sites regularly host BSc and MSc students for their research and vocational placements. A number of these students have joined the project implementation teams after graduation.

Wondo Genet lecturers have also been invited to contribute to the evaluation of PFM projects, allowing them to review and reflect on PFM benefits.

As a result of this effort focused upon Wondo Genet, new natural resource management courses have been developed for PFM. FARM-Africa and SOS Sahel Ethiopia have helped to develop the curriculum and have contributed to planning and delivering lectures.

FARM-Africa, GTZ and SOS Sahel Ethiopia have all supported, and continue to support, higher education of foresters in Ethiopia. For example, the government-seconded team leader of the Bonga PFM project was helped in gaining an MSc in Forestry Extension: Participatory Forest Management at Reading University in the UK. Fifteen government foresters are currently being assisted in their forestry BSc studies.

Joint implementation

Another key strategy used to promote the institutionalisation of participatory management in the forestry sector is joint implementation. Government forestry staff are included in project implementation teams and work in partnership with NGO staff, learning skills for PFM alongside the community. Training similarly includes both community members and government staff.

Strategic partnerships

The PFM partnership between FARM-Africa and SOS Sahel Ethiopia allowed the two NGOs to establish a common approach to PFM, to pool technical expertise and logistical resources, to raise the profile of the work through the joining forces of two respected NGOs, and to strengthen the PFM process and lobbying. This has largely been a success, as described in the Mid-Term Review (MTR): “While there are some stresses and weaknesses in the partnership...it is the view of the MTR that these are minor compared to the benefits to Ethiopia in particular of having two leading agencies pool their resources and develop (and lobby for) one best practice approach to PFM” (Gronow et al., 2004).

PFM working groups

In 2000, FARM-Africa and GTZ worked together to form a federal-level PFM Working Group. With the Head of the Forestry, Land Use and Soil Conservation Department of the Ministry of Agriculture as the Chair, the Working Group was well placed to influence policy. The group worked on draft forest policies and lobbied for the inclusion of PFM as a key sector within policy. Unfortunately the closure of the GTZ forest policy support project ended this opportunity for federal-level support. Currently FARM-Africa, SOS Sahel Ethiopia and GTZ support regional-, zonal- and woreda (district)-level PFM working groups as a practical way to establish and support implementation. The working groups are led and owned by government, and have the role of monitoring PFM projects.

Institutional influence

FARM-Africa has built links with the Ethiopian Foresters Association (EFA), a key forestry sector institution which although it has more than 300 members does not currently have any power to lobby. FARM-Africa part-sponsors the annual meetings of the EFA and the FARM-Africa PFM Programme Manager is on the EFA executive committee. At the EFA General Annual Assembly in 2004, PFM experts were elected to key positions in the organisation and the meeting concluded with the commitment to make the EFA a dynamic and effective lobby group for forestry and PFM in Ethiopia. This ambition is currently constrained by a lack of time and other resources, as all EFA positions are voluntary. FARM-Africa is seeking funds to overcome this constraint, to support a basic office set up and staffing.

Public awareness and documenting evidence

FARM-Africa and SOS Sahel Ethiopia have extensively documented experiences in PFM in Ethiopia and made these available through the programme website (see www.pfmp-farmsos.org).

The PFM programme employs an Information Officer to ensure information flow within and out of the programme. Nine issues of a PFM newsletter have been published and circulated to stakeholders since November 2003. Press releases and articles in local newspapers appear regularly. Academic and conference papers are presented when opportunities arise. The programme also engages in discussion forums, both locally and internationally.

The programme organised an international PFM conference in Ethiopia in 2007, to share experiences and distil lessons on PFM in East Africa. A secondary aim of the conference was to raise the profile of PFM in Ethiopia.

The programme is in the process of developing PFM implementation manuals based on experiences in Ethiopia. The manuals are aimed at government forest departments and foresters, to enable them to implement PFM on a wider scale.

Consolidating and promoting lessons

The lessons learned over the years of PFM pilot projects in Ethiopia have been incorporated into subsequent projects, strengthening these considerably. For example, support

to communities for tree planting has been dropped as it became clear that it was unsustainable. The emerging PFM systems now share core principles and approaches, such as participation and community decision making. As PFM evolves into a well-defined model, it is becoming more visible and adoptable. This appears to be supported by new work that is picking up on PFM learning and experience: for example, a project for sustainable natural resource management and biodiversity conservation in the Bale Mountains eco-region is building on the experiences of the PFM programme.

Lessons from project experiences

The whole process of establishing PFM in Ethiopia has been a learning experience for FARM-Africa. The following are key lessons learned by project staff relating to efforts to influence policy. In some cases the lessons were learned as a result of omitting an action or process, and realising in retrospect that it would have been useful.

- Policy makers and practitioners understand a new process if they can see it being implemented in the field by government staff and community members. The exchange visits to countries with successful PFM programmes were a crucial first step in the acceptance of PFM in Ethiopia
- Involvement in policy debates is important when working with innovative new approaches. The different approaches taken by FARM-Africa and described above show that there are ways of influencing policy, even without having been explicitly invited to do so.
- It is important to include policy research in forestry projects and to work closely with forestry networks, policy lobbying groups and stakeholders. This is a lesson from a gap in project design, the need for which emerged from not having done it
- Influencing professionals and in particular encouraging them to learn new skills is a sensitive issue. A variety of learning opportunities should be offered, such as exchange visits, field-based training and providing information, and a greater understanding of how people learn is needed. Adult-to-adult and counterpart-to-counterpart learning through exchange visits are good positive examples of how professionals learn.
- Seemingly negative policy or policy blocks – for example in this case the closed policy process – can be seen as challenges requiring a dynamic and inventive policy strategy. For example, indirect approaches may be used when direct approaches are not feasible, such as publicising projects through the mass media.
- Projects would benefit from developing a policy and advocacy strategy at the design stage. Again this is a lesson learned from a failure to include this in the current project: through the ad hoc approach, energy was wasted and opportunities were missed.

Livestock policy in Kenya

Many of Kenya's people rely on livestock for their livelihoods, yet support for this sector has been largely inadequate over recent years, reflected in stagnant animal populations and productivity, and poverty among livestock farmers. The change of government in 2003 signalled hope for livestock and other farmers, with the new government's commitment to

the National Agriculture and Livestock Extension Programme (NALEP). The programme promises to improve extension services, to promote appropriate technologies, to strengthen private sector involvement, and to address cross-cutting issues such as HIV/AIDS and gender. It contributes to the objectives of the government's main policy document, the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation.

The Livestock Marketing Division of the Ministry of Agriculture prepared a proposal for a six-year Livestock Development Programme in 2004. If accepted, this aims to develop clear policies on milk production, processing and marketing; improve animal health by expanding dipping, breeding and clinical services; promote dairy goats as a source of milk; develop facilities for milk handling; and encourage the private sector and local authorities to set up meat-processing facilities.

In addition, a draft Animal Health Bill has been produced. At time of writing, (June 2006) this Bill was in circulation for comments by stakeholders.

FARM-Africa contributed significantly to these recent policy documents. Since beginning work in Kenya in 1985, it has actively engaged with the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development, and its expertise in livestock issues is recognised. This case study describes FARM-Africa's work in the livestock sector in Kenya, and the impact this has had on both practice and policy.

The livestock sector in Kenya

The livestock sector is economically important in Kenya, contributing about 12 per cent of the country's GDP (FAO, 2005). Livestock includes sheep and goats, cattle, camels, pigs and poultry; they provide meat, milk and eggs, as well as hides and wool.

Those working in the livestock sector in Kenya are mainly small-scale farmers and pastoralists in the arid and semi-arid parts of the country. In these areas, up to 95 per cent of family incomes come from livestock (FAO, 2005). But this region is very poor, with the highest incidence of poverty in the country. Natural resources are deteriorating and there is often conflict over declining common property resources. Infrastructure and other basic services are generally lacking.

For the last two decades, both livestock populations and productivity have been stagnant (FAO, 2005). A contributory factor has been limited animal health care provision in the key livestock areas of the arid and semi-arid lands. This situation arose largely because of the privatisation of veterinary services in the mid-1980s under the structural readjustment programme. As government services were withdrawn, incentives proved insufficient for vets to set up practice in the poor arid and semi-arid areas.

The Kenya Rural Development Strategy lists the key constraints to livestock as the following.

- Poor governance in key agricultural institutions, particularly the cooperative sector

- Lack of a comprehensive legal framework to guide policy formulation
- Lack of capacity by the private sector to take over functions previously performed by the state
- Incomplete markets and weak marketing systems
- Poor access to land and to farm credit, high cost of farm inputs and heavy taxation of farmers through local authority taxes and levies
- High prevalence of HIV/AIDS affecting agricultural productivity
- Low levels of public funding and inefficient use of public resources resulting in inadequate rural infrastructure
- Inappropriate technology and inadequate funding for research and extension services.

Two workshops organised by FARM-Africa in 2003 brought together stakeholders in Kenya's livestock sector to identify additional constraints to production and productivity (FARM-Africa 2003). The following are the key problems that were mentioned.

- **Animal genetic resources and their improvement**
The main problems here are poor quality stock; lack of access to improved stock; lack of appropriate policies and regulations in the privatisation of livestock improvements; lack of reliable data on livestock populations in the country; and lack of involvement of livestock keepers in animal breeding programmes.
- **Animal health delivery services**
Problems here include lack of effective disease control because of limited access to veterinarians; high cost of vaccines, or vaccines not being readily available; poor quality veterinary drugs; lack of a regulatory framework for private artificial insemination and clinical service provision; lack of legal recognition for animal health practitioners other than veterinarians; and the undefined role of the Department of Veterinary Services and the Kenya Veterinary Board (KVB) since the privatisation of animal health services.
- **Markets and marketing**
Constraints to successful marketing include restrictions on trade; a lack of market information; the absence of farmer-based marketing associations – which would allow small-scale farmers to pool their produce and strengthen their market position; restrictions on livestock movement; an ineffective livestock marketing council – which should provide market information to livestock keepers; a shortage of abattoirs; a lack of quality control; and poor infrastructure.
- **Animal husbandry (production systems)**
Production systems are limited by water availability in the arid and semi-arid lands; the poor quality of animal feed; inappropriate land tenure systems; and the lack of a regulatory framework for establishing producer organisations.

President Kibaki's government, which came to power in 2003, has recognised both the importance of the livestock sector to the Kenyan economy and the current constraints. Its

Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation puts particular emphasis on revitalising agriculture through NALEP.

The current National Development Plan (2002–2008) also recognises the importance of the livestock industry in the Kenyan economy. The Plan commits the Government to:

- Support surveillance of veterinary drugs, pesticides and contaminant residues in food;
- Improve quality control capacity to match the proliferation of veterinary drug suppliers after liberalisation;
- Review and amend the animal health service delivery legal framework in order to improve service delivery; and
- Enhance private sector participation in the provision of breeding and animal services.

FARM-Africa's livestock projects in Kenya

FARM-Africa's activities in Africa began in Kenya in 1985. Its first project, the Kenya Pastoralist Development Project, was launched in 1986. FARM-Africa Kenya's livestock work focuses on pastoralist development, dairy goat development and community-based animal health. Three main projects form the basis of this case study: the Northern Kenya Pastoralist Development Project, the Meru Dairy Goat and Animal Healthcare Project (1996-2005), and the Community Animal Health Network (CAHNET). In addition, FARM-Africa Kenya also manages a new dairy goat initiative in Kitui and Mwingi districts – the Dairy Goat and Capacity Building Project – which draws heavily on experiences from the Meru Dairy Goat and Animal Healthcare Project.

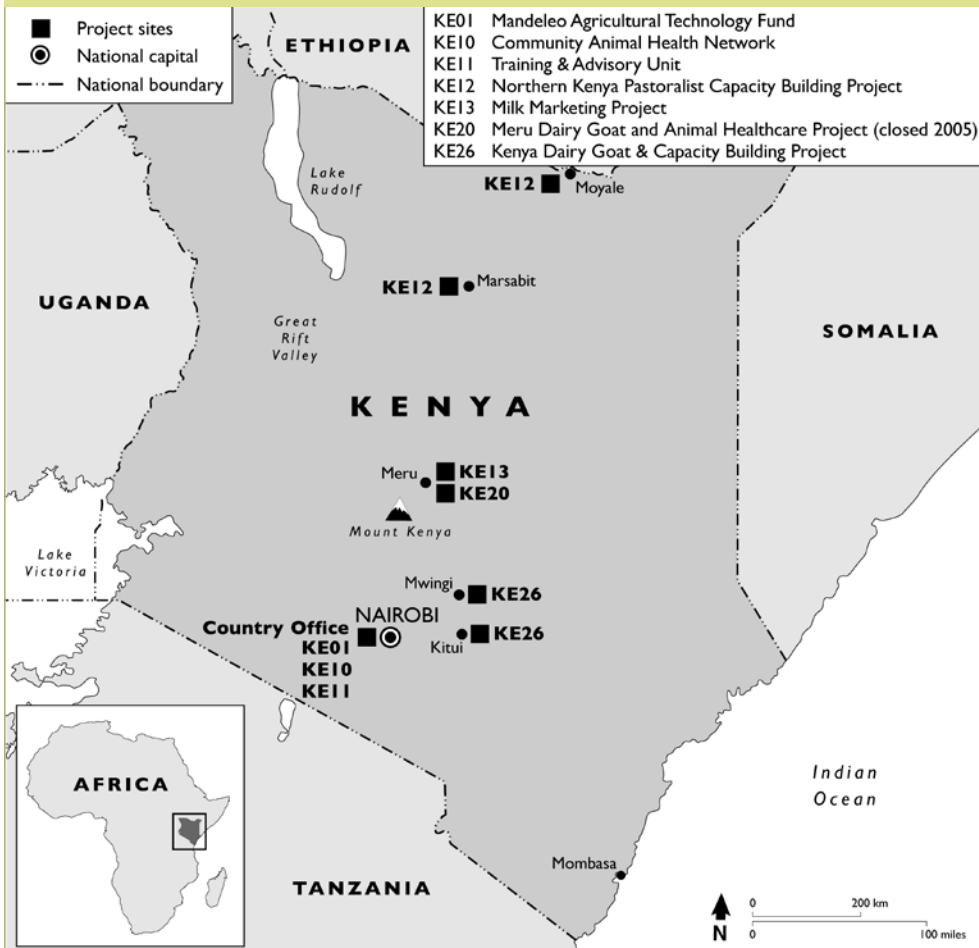
As well as practical project work, dissemination of evidence, networking and advocacy are prominent features of FARM-Africa's work in Kenya. These activities are now centralised under the Training and Advisory Unit (TAU), which was set up in 2004.

The Northern Kenya Pastoralist Development Project

This project has worked with pastoralist communities in the Moyale and Marsabit Districts in central northern Kenya since the mid-1980s. More recently, at the request of local government and pastoralist groups, it extended activities to Isiolo District (see Figure 5). The project areas are very vulnerable to drought and there is frequent conflict over scarce natural resources, which are deteriorating, partly due to the erosion of traditional management systems. This region also has very poor infrastructure. The majority of the people are nomadic livestock keepers, most of whom own mixed herds of cattle, camels, sheep and goats, in order to diversify risk and maximise use of grazing resources.

The project aims to help these groups develop their skills to plan and manage their natural resources, improve their livestock, gain better access to markets and strengthen their ability to influence policy and practice in pastoralist areas. Project partners include two local NGOs – Community Initiative Facilitation and Assistance (CIFA) and Friends of Nomads International (FONI) – in addition to the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development,

Figure 5. FARM-Africa's projects in Kenya



through the Department of Livestock Production, and the Department of Veterinary Services, the District Authorities of Moyale, Marsabit and Isiolo, and local community leaders. The project has also built strong links with the Kenya Livestock Marketing Council. The project has set up development committees and provided training in group management, financial management, and lobbying and advocacy skills. These committees support small community-based development projects run by local groups, which help increase incomes and protect natural resources. Community-based Animal Health Worker (CAHW) groups have also been set up.

The Meru Dairy Goat and Animal Healthcare Project

FARM-Africa implemented the Meru Dairy Goat and Animal Healthcare Project in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MOARD) from 1996 to 2005. The project was based in the Eastern province of Kenya, operating in two districts – Meru South and Meru Central. The project’s two main components are goat breeding and

community-based animal health care. It has successfully established systems of community-based goat improvement along with a decentralised and privatised animal health delivery system. It is estimated that 30,000 people are currently benefiting from these services.

Two community groups have been formed under the project: the Meru Goat Breeders' Association (MGBA) and the Meru Animal Health Workers' Group (MAHWG). The MGBA, formed in 1997 and registered in 2002, is a community-based farmer-led organisation formed to coordinate goat breeding and animal health delivery activities in a sustainable way. MAHWG's main objective is to bring together vets, Animal Health Assistants (AHAs) and CAHWs into one forum to address issues of common interest such as veterinary drug supply, training of CAHWs and lobbying for recognition by the government.

Community Animal Health Network (CAHNET)

Both the two projects above have significant community-based animal health components, which aim to address the gap left by inadequate government and private animal health care provision. To complement this work, the Community Animal Health Network (CAHNET) was established in 2001 by a collaborative partnership comprising FARM-Africa, the Institutional and Policy Support Team (IPST) of AU/IBAR, Intermediate Technology Development Group (ITDG; now Practical Action)'s Community Livestock Initiatives Programme (CLIP), and the PACT-MWENGO Institutional Strengthening and Grant Management Programme (ISGM). Based in Kenya, and also operating in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Uganda, CAHNET provides a regional forum for information exchange to maximise the impact of community animal health approaches. By 2003 CAHNET had recruited over 60 member organisations in Eastern Africa. CAHNET maintains a website (www.cah-net.net), produces quarterly newsletters, holds workshops and has built a contacts database of community animal health stakeholders.

FARM-Africa's work to influence livestock policy

Before the establishment of the TAU in 2004, FARM-Africa's work aimed at influencing policy was addressed within projects and, to some extent, in an ad hoc manner. The role of the TAU is to maximise FARM-Africa's impact using three key strategies: training, advising and documenting FARM-Africa experience. It promotes the cross-transfer of experience, knowledge and skills internally within the organisation as well as disseminating proven methodologies and strategies, identified as FARM-Africa models, to other development actors.

FARM-Africa's first engagement with policy in Kenya was linked to the Meru Dairy Goat and Animal Healthcare Project, concerning the issue of community-based animal health care. Since 1980, when the first decentralised animal health scheme was established in Kenya, this idea had proved successful and had spread in the arid and semi-arid areas. Several groups were supporting this approach, notably the NGO ITDG, which began work in Kenya in 1986. However, CAHWs were not legally recognised in Kenya, meaning that they were neither considered within the existing livestock policy nor regarded as a "recognised method of delivering services to livestock owners in Kenya" (Director of Veterinary Services, personal

communication, 2006). Therefore the Kenya Veterinary Board (KVB) and the Kenya Veterinary Association (KVA) opposed this approach, seeing it as a threat to the veterinary profession.

In the second year of the Meru Dairy Goat and Animal Healthcare Project, FARM-Africa developed a model for the community animal health component which involved establishing private vets to work with Animal Health Assistants (AHAs), who would then support CAHWs working at the village level. However, this proposal sparked an open dispute between the promoters of the CAHW approach and the KVB. In response, FARM-Africa and partners, namely the African Union/Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources Community-based Animal Health and Participatory Epidemiology Unit (AU/IBAR CAPE), ITDG, and the Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV), developed an advocacy strategy to have CAHWs legally recognised. They provided evidence of the success of the approach in Kenya and elsewhere, which was collated and compiled into papers and presented to relevant policy makers and stakeholders. Workshops were also held to increase awareness of the approach and its benefits. The debate continued, but some opposition remained. And even today, CAHWs are still not legally recognised in Kenya.

However, this advocacy work succeeded in making the government appreciate the need for CAHWs. Their acknowledgement of the approach was indicated when they expressed concern with the quality and standards of training of CAHWs provided by different NGOs. Therefore the KVB appointed a steering committee to look into ways of standardising training. The committee commissioned Dr Kaberia of FARM-Africa and Dr Rwambo (then KVA Representative) to develop a training curriculum for CAHWs.

Since then, FARM-Africa Kenya has been engaged in policy advocacy work in other areas of the livestock sector. For example, the Northern Kenya Pastoralist Capacity Building Project has played an active role in the development and review of livestock policy. In 2003, FARM-Africa and the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development together organised livestock development policy review workshops in Machakos and Nakuru. The main objectives of the workshops were to capture and articulate stakeholder policy concerns, identify weaknesses in existing policy and suggest possible improvements. Communities were involved through visits and discussions with participants.

In 2004, FARM-Africa joined forces with ActionAid, Oxfam and the Kenya Livestock Marketing Council to lobby parliamentarians from the pastoralist areas of Kenya in order to build support for a new livestock policy. FARM-Africa staff attended several meetings with representatives from the Departments of Animal Production and Veterinary Services of the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development to discuss how to bring the two separate draft policy documents (one for animal production; one for animal health) into a single comprehensive livestock policy for Kenya. FARM-Africa identified a consultant for this process and also contributed some funds towards the consultancy fees. A draft was produced, but as of June 2006, the process seemed to have stalled.

FARM-Africa has taken a pro-active approach to policy engagement and has reacted quickly to requests from government to support policy development. For example, in 2002 FARM-Africa responded to a request to help develop a standard guide for trainers of community-based animal health workers, making both financial and technical contributions. In 2006 FARM-Africa responded to a request to assist in the development of an agricultural extension and research policy framework ,which is currently ongoing. FARM-Africa was also approached by the Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development to assist in developing a national strategy for small stock development. This resulted in the Livestock Development Programme proposal, which includes the promotion of dairy goats as an emerging source of milk. The Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries Development also asked FARM-Africa to collaborate in the community-based livestock improvement programme currently being funded by the African Development Bank (ADB). FARM-Africa was specifically invited to provide input on community-based dairy goat improvement.

Various public awareness efforts have raised the profile of livestock issues. For example, in 2004 FARM-Africa and partners – Oxfam, ActionAid, Centre for Minority Rights, Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, SNV, Pastoralist Parliamentary Group and Community Initiatives Facilitation Assistance – organised a trek from Moyale to Nairobi to raise awareness of the need for the government to tarmac the road, which has been a major hindrance to the economic growth of the region. Sixty-eight pastoralists walked the 536 kilometres from Moyale to Isiolo in 22 days. The trek was publicised through T-shirts, newspaper supplements and media coverage. As a result, the Minister for Roads agreed and made budget provision to tarmac at least part of the road in 2006.

Evidence

Prior to the formation of the TAU, individual projects documented their experiences and lessons learned through a series of publications developed in partnership with a private communication company, Mediae (Pastoralist Development Project Best Practices Series, 2002¹). Impact assessments and evaluations were also carried out and were written up and presented as papers at a number of workshops and meetings, such as the Eighth Decentralised Animal Health Workshop in 1999 and the Ninth Decentralised Animal Health Workshop in 2000.

Extension and training materials produced by the Meru Dairy Goat and Animal Healthcare Project have been distributed widely to the Government of Kenya, as well as to NGO and CBO partners. These have contributed to an increasing demand for training received by the TAU.

FARM-Africa has also worked with the mass media to broadly publicise its work. The Meru Dairy Goat and Animal Healthcare Project invited the media to participate in all its events and circulated regular press releases. In addition, the project invited journalists to visit the project and write features based on field visits. This publicity is believed to have contributed

1. Available on the FARM-Africa website - www.farmafrica.org.uk/view_publications.cfm?DocTypeID=13

to farmers' heightened interest in keeping goats, demonstrated by increased numbers of farmers approaching livestock departments requesting information and advice.

Since the TAU was set up, FARM-Africa has approached policy work in Kenya in a more structured manner. One of the mandates of the TAU is to identify relevant issues with policy implications from FARM-Africa's experiences, prepare policy extracts and assist project staff teams to develop policy and advocacy plans. It also documents evidence and lessons learned from the different projects for the purposes of sharing experiences and using them to influence policy.

Based on practical experiences over the years and learning about what works best, FARM-Africa has developed four main strategies for its advocacy work.

□ Coalition building

FARM-Africa forms lobbying groups with organisations that are working on similar policy issues; for example to build support for CAHWs under the Meru Dairy Goat and Animal Healthcare Project. Coalition activities include jointly funding workshops and field visits aimed at bringing together stakeholders – including policy makers – sharing experiences and constraints, and planning a way forward.

□ Networking

Formation of networks has been one of FARM-Africa's key activities. These serve to share knowledge and experiences needed in the lobbying groups and allow FARM-Africa to access information beyond its own experience. As well as CAHNET, FARM-Africa also contributed to the formation of the East Africa Goat Development Network (EAGODEN) and the Kenya Goat Development Network (KEGODEN).

□ Institution building

FARM-Africa supports formal and informal farmer and pastoralist organisations to organise and lobby for policies and legislation that take into account their needs and priorities. These groups – which include MGBA and MAHWG (Meru Dairy Goat and Animal Healthcare Project), Location Development Committees (Northern Kenya Pastoralist Capacity Building Project) and others (Kitui/Mwingi Goat Project) – are advised on their role and rights in production and marketing, linked to relevant government departments, and assisted in their interactions.

□ Raising public awareness

Through documenting and disseminating evidence, and working with the mass media.

Lessons from project experiences

The staff of FARM-Africa in Kenya have identified the following lessons from their experiences in trying to influence livestock policy.

- The reality of the policy advocacy process has often been frustrating for staff. It involves protracted interactions and often seemingly insurmountable obstructions. Success has required dedication and consistency for FARM-Africa staff to keep the process on track.
- Evidence of impact on livelihoods and the suitability of the strategy being advocated is crucial for success of policy initiatives: this was provided through impact assessments of projects.
- Engagement in policy processes requires dynamism, time, resources, flexibility and tolerance. Lack of resource flexibility could halt the process at critical moments, delaying any gains made during the policy engagement.
- The advocacy process can be intimidating and demoralising for FARM-Africa staff. Because projects supported farmers and NGOs, individual members of staff felt that they might be viewed as a threat by the Kenya Veterinary Board and could face deregistration as a result.
- The formation of small, manageable coalitions comprising key reputable NGOs increases the chances of successful advocacy. For example, in the animal health advocacy, FARM-Africa formed coalitions with ITDG, CAPE and SNV.
- The advocacy strategy should be sufficiently flexible to allow for dynamism and should also be aligned to the organisation's communication strategy to avoid sending out conflicting signals. For example, at the point when it seemed that CAHWs would finally be accepted, the KVA suddenly raised strong new objections. A change of communication strategy will therefore now be needed to address these concerns.
- Where advocacy is project based, limited communication among projects can result in 'reinventing the wheel' and high overall organisational transaction costs of engagement. For example, the Northern Kenya Capacity Building Project and the Meru Dairy Goat and Animal Healthcare Project both conducted advocacy work under their animal health components, but failure to harmonise these efforts gave some conflicting messages to stakeholders.
- Community involvement and participation are important. Communities were involved in the advocacy workshops through visits and discussions with participants so that their problems were understood by all stakeholders.

4. Policy influence: theory and practice

Analysis of the case studies using the RAPID framework

The case studies describe FARM-Africa's engagement with the policy process and resulting influence on policy. For a deeper understanding of how the different actors and their actions effected changes, we now look at the case studies from the perspectives of context, evidence and links. This will allow us to identify areas in which FARM-Africa's work was particularly successful and those where the main challenges arose. From this, we may develop better ways to approach these challenges in future policy work.

Context

Of the three 'arenas' that affect policy influence, past case studies indicate that the political context is the most important (Court and Young, 2003). If the political context does not allow evidence to be received, then however credible and relevant the evidence, it will fail to have impact.

To some extent, each of the four project countries presents difficult political contexts for policy influence. In Ethiopia, policy is traditionally developed 'behind closed doors', with little input from civil society. However, demonstrating participatory forest management to key policy makers changed attitudes at the highest level, which paved the way for the 'percolation' of these methods into practice and draft policy.

In Kenya, the government indicated its willingness to improve livestock policy by its commitment to the National Agricultural and Livestock Extension Programme. It invited FARM-Africa to participate in developing new policy documents. But while these actions indicate a supportive political context, other pressing political concerns – for example, debate over a new constitution – moved agriculture and livestock down the political agenda. Another challenge was the lack of support by the Kenya Veterinary Association, which is opposed to Community-based Animal Health Workers (CAHWs).

The Tanzanian Government acknowledged the need for effective animal disease control, but its legislation initially prevented a potential solution from being implemented. Despite this unfavourable legal framework, FARM-Africa and its partners have been able to engage in dialogue with high-profile policy makers, the CAHWs have formed their own association which can also act as a platform for lobbying, and a policy working group of NGOs and CBOs has been formed as a forum for presentation of evidence to the Ministry of Water and Livestock Development on the role of CAHWs. The projects, along with the various spin-off processes that have resulted from them, seem to have been able to find ways of entering the policy space despite a sometimes unfavourable legal context.

The South African project, on the other hand, worked within perhaps the most conducive political context. Policy on land reform was generally good and FARM-Africa's work contributed to better practice within this policy framework. However, opportunities for influencing policy are limited in South Africa. While official structures exist for civil society organisations to engage with government in policy dialogue, the reality is frequently different. The government is particularly sensitive to criticism even when it is intended to contribute to the improvement of policy and practice. Likewise, many provincial directors of land affairs have demanding land targets to meet and their primary aim is to achieve them. This focus on delivering land coupled with a lack of human capacity within the department can reduce the time available to support land reform groups over the course of their development.

It is particularly interesting to note that in all the cases, the projects seem to have been able to enter policy spaces despite contexts that appear unfavourable. This tells us something about the unique function that projects can have in the policy process, which appears to be due to two distinct project characteristics. First, projects are able to enter policy arenas as 'pilots' or 'field site' experimentation. Thus they may seem to pose little threat to political stakeholders. They are not launched as alternative national policy solutions (at least not initially), and so policy makers are free to glean information from them without feeling directly challenged from the start. Policy makers can then incorporate this information into their own policy suggestions. Second, projects offer something very tangible in a world of policy that may otherwise be somewhat abstract. When policy makers see projects, they see a concrete example that works in a specific location – and, so often, seeing is believing. This is one of the particular strengths of (pilot) projects that is not easily replaced by larger scale funding mechanisms.

Evidence

For evidence to influence policy, theory states that it should be seen to be credible, relevant, and offering a solution to a problem. It also needs to be communicated effectively.

Evidence played a large part in attempts to influence policy in each of the case study projects. In each country, FARM-Africa has built a high profile and good reputation, both among policy makers and widely among stakeholders in the respective sectors. This gives credibility to its work and the evidence it presents. Forming alliances with other respected groups, for example with SOS Sahel in Ethiopia and with ActionAid and Oxfam in Kenya, added to credibility for all groups. Evidence of FARM-Africa's credibility with policy makers is clear from requests for FARM-Africa to contribute to policy documents and to co-host workshops with the government in the Kenya case study, for example. Similarly, the South African Government has asked FARM-Africa to contribute to policy reviews.

The field-based and participatory nature of FARM-Africa's project work ensures its relevance to pro-poor policy and practice. In the South African case, for example, project staff were able to base their policy-influencing work directly on the information they received from the poor communities they were working with. This has two distinct advantages. First, it

lends substantive credibility to their information, and project staff can thus feel confident when voicing their thoughts to policy makers. Second, it increases the pressure on the policy maker to pay attention to the information given. NGOs who can point to a clear and unbroken chain down to grassroots concerns have an important point of leverage.

It is also interesting to note that each project provided a practical solution to an acknowledged problem. Further, the projects provided evidence of the appropriateness and workability of the solution, through its successful implementation with user groups in the projects. This is a particularly important point, as it seems to have opened doors for the projects that would not otherwise have been opened. In Tanzania, for example, policy makers would probably not have recognised CAHWs if they had not 'seen', through projects, that CAHWs could actually work. The same practical application can be seen in all four cases presented here. Again, 'seeing is believing'. The projects were able to show policy makers a solution, instead of simply telling them (as researchers often do). In this regard, small-scale projects have a unique characteristic that serves them well when engaging in policy processes.

Finally, FARM-Africa used a variety of ways to communicate evidence to the target groups. Direct exposure through field visits proved a powerful way to present evidence, and provided a significant 'tipping point' in the forestry work in Ethiopia. Workshops, conferences and similar fora are also important opportunities for presenting evidence and these featured in all projects. These fora also enhance the credibility of the evidence and allow targeted delivery of the message to key actors in the sector, including policy makers.

Each project also documented and shared experiences and best practices through publications, which were disseminated both as printed copies and electronically via the internet. In South Africa, for example, the perception of FARM-Africa's work was enhanced in early 2005 when it published three reports² describing its experiences and the practical solutions to address some of the problems it had encountered in the field.

Links

Each project made a major effort to build links between stakeholders and in particular to include policy makers. In the Ethiopia project, for example, policy makers were invited to join working groups, which enhanced links and built trust and understanding. In Kenya, FARM-Africa facilitated several networks for stakeholders in the livestock sector. These usually served an information dissemination purpose, but also contributed to improving links, particularly as memberships grew and more policy makers were included. Similarly workshops served a dual purpose of both presenting evidence as well as building links between researchers and policy makers.

2. These are also available on the FARM-Africa website. See www.farmafrica.org.uk/view_publications.cfm?DocTypeID=14.

Themes from the case studies

Beyond the above analysis, the case studies raised a number of issues that might inform similar organisations in their own policy work.

The RAPID framework emphasises the role that the political context plays in determining how and whether research evidence reaches and impacts upon decision makers. However the case studies raised an additional and important dimension to the political context that focuses on the willingness and ability of governments to allow organisations to pilot initiatives that do not necessarily fit with current policy. While the projects in Ethiopia, Kenya and Tanzania found 'political space' for their innovations – in other words, the respective governments were open to the innovations because they supported their policy goals – the project in South Africa did not, and it made little progress in gaining approval for its innovations. The lesson here is that it is important to establish early on in the process whether such political space exists for innovative ideas to be piloted. How the initiative is likely to affect the achievement of policy targets should also be considered at this stage, as this may have profound implications on whether a government is willing and able to scale it up.

A similar consideration is the political and economic importance of the sector in which the project is working. The Kenyan project, for example, was able to develop a strong relationship with the Kenyan Government, partly due to the fact that Kenya was trying to raise the productivity of the livestock sector, which makes a large contribution to GDP. The Ethiopian project was less successful in developing its relationship with the Ethiopian Government, perhaps because the forestry sector has less economic importance in that country.

The Kenya project did however come up against an unanticipated problem, when the Veterinary Board strongly opposed the proposed changes. The project had underestimated the influence of the Board with policy makers and, despite initial support from the government, this influence effectively halted the process. This illustrates the need to engage stakeholders early in the process to resolve contentious issues.

Despite more favourable political contexts in some of the case studies, none of the case study innovations has been widely scaled-up. There are many reasons why innovations may not be scaled-up, for example a lack of political will, a shortage of human and financial resources, and concerns about the likely impact of the innovation. Another important factor, common to these cases, is a lack of data to support the impact the innovation is likely to have on poverty reduction (agricultural productivity or livelihoods, for example). There was also no information describing what costs either farmers or agencies would incur if they were to adopt or to replicate the technology. Thus, while a project may have anecdotal evidence about the impact of its innovation, more robust data is needed before decision makers can be expected to make substantial resource allocation decisions in support of the innovation.

While legislative changes may be necessary to realise significant improvements to people's livelihoods, often they may not be sufficient. Frequently, new skills will be needed to implement the innovation. All of the case studies invested considerable effort in developing training materials, in collaboration with governments as well as other stakeholders, in order to develop the human capital of mainly field-based staff so that they could apply the new techniques.

The role of projects in policy processes

In sum, the case studies examined here demonstrate that field-level projects still have an important role to play in testing new approaches – providing a reality check for policies aiming to reduce poverty. It is important that the move towards direct budget support does not crowd out the innovative, policy research type projects that NGOs have the capacity and opportunity to do. If such projects are indeed crowded out, a valuable source of information will be lost or considerably reduced – concerning not only the effectiveness of policies, but also ways to devise new technologies to help poor households construct their own pathways out of poverty.

Against this background, we believe the role of local-level projects, both in rural poverty reduction and in the development of national-level agricultural strategies, needs further clarification. This publication contributes to the ongoing debate, demonstrating how NGO projects in some instances can influence both policy and practice towards more pro-poor outcomes. This is not to argue that small-scale projects should replace work on national-level strategies. Clearly, some aspects of project funding, such as the danger of a piecemeal and ad hoc approach, need to be countered through the development of a coherent government stance. However, projects present distinct and unique opportunities that policy makers and donors might use more strategically in such policy processes.

The four case studies that have been presented here highlight the fact that rural development projects are complex, as is the reality in which they are operating. Projects are able to bring together and address different factors that affect the lives of poor smallholders. They are able to provide arenas for action research and demonstration and on this basis, they can be used to pilot policy options, to encourage policy innovation or to open up policy debates. Projects can provide spaces for local capacity development and platforms from which local civil society organisations can make their voices heard in government policy processes. They can serve as points of knowledge sharing between rural communities and policy makers, thus presenting evidence on the lives of the poor which could be used to devise more pro-poor policies. And projects can enable links to form between practitioners, local organisations and policy makers, and can thus potentially have a substantial impact on how future policy processes develop.

In conclusion, the case studies demonstrate how we can learn from projects about the day-to-day constraints that affect the rural poor, as well as highlighting policy and practice shortcomings that hinder the ability of poor people to create their own pathways out of poverty.

5. Conclusion

This publication described in depth FARM-Africa's experiences of using grassroots projects in four sub-Saharan African countries as a way of piloting innovations that aim to improve the way in which smallholders manage their natural resources. Then it examined how these four initiatives had used their experiences to try to shape government policy. In conclusion, a few succinct but crucial lessons can be drawn out.

Lesson 1: Policy work must be properly resourced

An important lesson that emerges from these case studies is that policy work must be properly resourced. Policy engagement is a complex, long-term process and sufficient investment is needed for any chance of success. NGOs that do not appreciate this and that treat trying to influence policy as an adjunct to existing project activities are unlikely to succeed and risk wasting the resources they do commit.

Lesson 2: Policy influencing requires a new set of skills

Policy influencing requires a different set of skills to those NGOs traditionally rely upon. If these skills are not acquired or developed within the organisation, then progress in this new area is unlikely to be successful. The FARM-Africa case studies showed quite clearly that all of the programmes had suffered due to a lack of appropriate human resources.

Lesson 3: Think before you dive in

In the light of the above, we return to the question that was asked at the beginning of this paper: Do NGO action research projects have a role to play in influencing policy? While the simple answer is yes, the more thoughtful answer comes with a number of qualifications. Small to medium-sized NGOs may not have the human and financial resources to undertake this work to the level of sophistication that is required to make a persuasive case for change. Moreover, relatively resource constrained NGOs experience difficulties in attracting people with the necessary technical skills to work for them.

Lesson 4: Forge partnerships

One solution may be for NGOs to forge partnerships with other groups that can complement their work. For example, by collaborating with a research institute, an NGO can access the research skills it lacks, as well as raising its credibility (through co-authored reports) and thus increase its impact on decision makers. Such partnerships do however need to be carefully planned and developed so that they address the needs of all the partners.

Lesson 5: Plan properly

Whilst being involved in policy matters is extremely appealing, where organisations fail to plan properly and allocate sufficient resources it can become an expensive distraction. NGOs need to acknowledge their weaknesses and identify ways of overcoming them to make sure that the resources they allocate to this area make a significant difference to the lives of poor people.

Next steps for FARM-Africa

FARM-Africa is currently addressing these issues, having recently realigned its strategy to include policy engagement as one of its priority activities. It has acknowledged that up to now most of its projects have lacked this element. So its new projects are designed to provide specific evidence in order to influence policy and are allocated resources for this purpose. There remain the challenges of developing the more sophisticated set of skills which will be needed and of transforming the organisation's culture so that projects are seen as a means to an end rather than an end in themselves.

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FARM-Africa's mission is to reduce poverty by enabling marginal African farmers and herders to improve their well being through more effective and sustainable management of their natural resources. FARM-Africa was established in Kenya in 1985 and now operates in six African countries: Ethiopia, Kenya, South Africa, Southern Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda. FARM-Africa's Policy and Research series takes evidence from grassroots model work and communicates it to policy makers, policy research and academic organisations in order to improve relevant government policies that inhibit the uptake of good practice and prioritisation of agriculture in public sector expenditure and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

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