
Communities, Commodities and Crazy Ideas: Changing Livestock Policies in Africa

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1 Introduction

In the late 1990s a review of aid-assisted livestock projects included an assessment of sustained impact on poorer producers (Ashley *et al.* 1998). The review looked back over 35 years and analysed documents from more than 800 livestock projects funded by major donors, including the Department for International Development (UK), the World Bank, the US Agency for International Development, the European Commission, DANIDA, the Netherlands Development Cooperation and the Swiss Development Cooperation. The majority of these projects were based on a technical transfer paradigm in which constraints facing poor livestock keepers were to be addressed by the development and uptake of technologies, including new methods to control animal diseases, improve livestock breeds or raise production through a variety of other means. However, the lack of sustained impact on the poor was dramatic. In many cases, technologies were developed which livestock keepers either did not want or could not access due to weak delivery systems. In other cases, the benefits of new technologies were captured by wealthier producers. Partly in response to these problems, a second broad category of livestock projects evolved which aimed to strengthen the capacity of organisations to develop and deliver novel technologies and services to the poor. These projects focused on government organisations (veterinary and extension services, research centres) and aimed to promote more client-focused and decentralised approaches. A key project activity was training middle-level managers, researchers and field-level technicians. Again, the sustained benefit of these “organisational projects”

was limited. New skills did not change the way organisations behaved, as the overriding institutional frameworks rarely provided incentives for addressing the specific needs of the poor.

Despite this rather gloomy picture a few projects did demonstrate substantial impact. These included new approaches to primary animal health care using privatised community-based animal health workers (CAHWs). Working in marginalised arid and semi-arid areas of East Africa, local problem analysis with communities led to the selection and training of CAHWs in areas where few veterinarians were willing to work. However, even these projects faced problems at a policy and institutional level – veterinary policies and legislation did not support CAHWs and were often vague or not implemented.

This article describes how workers at the African Union/InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU/IBAR) addressed policy constraints to CAHW services in the Horn and East Africa. The AU/IBAR team developed and applied a range of lobbying, advocacy, networking and learning methods within an overall strategy which recognised the overtly political nature of the policy process. Over time, the team also targeted global animal health standard-setting bodies and began to apply their experience of policy process to a broader range of livestock policies (see Wolmer and Scoones 2005).

2 Policy process in Africa: the case of community-based animal health care

In the late 1980s several non-governmental organisations (NGOs) began to apply the principles of community participation and rural development

Box 1: Methods and Tactics for Policy Change

Seeing is believing

Some policy-makers have never experienced the isolation, harsh environment and limited services in pastoralist areas. Nor had they worked with pastoralists or appreciated their knowledge on livestock health and management. The simple act of witnessing CAHWs in action and talking to them was sufficient to convince many sceptics and remove their fears about community-based approaches.

Impact assessment

CAPE supported the creation of multi-stakeholder teams comprising pro- and anti-CAHW actors, and with representation from official policy-making agencies. These teams conducted participatory impact assessments of CAHW projects. Learning arose not only from the interaction with communities, but also from conversations and debate between team members. Results were fed directly back to government departments (Hopkins and Short 2002).

Peer-to-peer learning

Chief Veterinary Officers (CVOs) are heavily influenced by each other and the international standard-setting bodies. Some CVOs in Africa were already supporting CAHW systems and these proponents were used to influence other CVOs and encourage international standard-setting bodies to review guidelines on para-professional workers (Sones and Catley 2003).

Aim high

Governments and international livestock agencies tend to be deeply bureaucratic with hierarchical power structures. Decisions can be made by a small, select few. CAPE directly targeted and influenced these actors.

Regional and international perspectives

Regional and international bodies have a strong influence on national-level policy-makers. New policies are less likely to appear at country level unless they “fit” the international frameworks – particularly if these new policies relate to international issues such as trade. CAPE worked simultaneously at national, regional and international levels.

Publicise and communicate

People cannot support good ideas if they don't know about them. Different policy actors require different levels and detail of information. CAPE presented new concepts, field realities and impact findings in diverse written and visual media, targeted at different audiences.

to primary animal health care systems, particularly in pastoralist areas of East Africa. Renewed interest in indigenous knowledge was coupled with participatory assessment to prioritise problems and identify solutions to better animal health care. Communities were involved in the selection and support of CAHWs and participative training techniques were used. Practical CAHW training lasted 10–14 days and was suitable for both illiterate and literate trainees.

Although CAHWs proved to be popular with communities in under-served areas, the reaction of the veterinary establishment was often negative. Following restructuring and decentralisation of national veterinary services, governments were often unable to respond to livestock keepers'

demands for clinical veterinary services. At a local level, government officers were predisposed to work alongside NGOs as they saw the advantages in terms of providing a much-needed service. However, there was resentment at central levels that NGOs were taking over the role of government and working independently to deliver animal health care. In addition, veterinarians raised numerous concerns such as the qualitative nature of participatory assessments for CAHW projects, the short duration of training and the training of illiterate people as CAHWs (Catley 2004). Retrenchment had also created large numbers of unemployed veterinarians and animal health assistants.¹ Re-employment of these workers by NGOs was often proposed as an alternative to CAHWs.

Part IV Policy and Policy Processes

In the early 1990s, vets and NGO workers started to present the results of CAHW projects in professional meetings and faced highly personalised attacks about their support to “non-professional” community-based work. This reaction stifled open debate and learning about CAHWs, and in many countries these workers were not recognised by veterinary authorities or national legislation. At the same time, evidence of the impact of CAHW projects was starting to emerge (Leyland 1996; Holden 1997; Catley *et al.* 1998; Odhiambo *et al.* 1998). Despite this impact, policy reform was largely paralysed by the dominant anti-CAHW narratives and the influence of veterinary professionals and policy-makers.

In December 2000 AU/IBAR established the Community-based Animal Health and Participatory Epidemiology (CAPE) Project to promote the creation of supportive policies and legislation for CAHWs in pastoralist areas of East Africa. The positioning of CAPE within AU/IBAR allowed the project to benefit from IBAR’s mandate to reform and harmonise livestock policies in Africa, and its close links to senior policy-makers. The project was supported by the Feinstein International Famine Center of Tufts University, whose Africa-based staff specialised in institutional and policy change.

From the onset CAPE focused on policy change. It developed specific policy change outputs and an output-orientated style of management which encouraged flexible activities and opportunistic responses to new policy spaces. Underlying this flexible management was an understanding that policy change was a political process, and that the concept of community-based approaches often prompted strong emotional and protective reactions from the veterinary establishment. An important strategy of the project was to recognise professional fears about CAHWs and design processes which provided new information and experiential learning and enabled informed debate between policy actors. In each country, we analysed the policy environment from an historical, technical and political perspective, and assessed the importance of different policy actors. Based on these analyses, different mixes of methods and tactics were used in different countries.

It was also recognised that the interpretation of data and information is a political event regardless of methodological rigour. Policy-makers’ reactions to objective or “scientific” studies depend on their pre-existing perceptions, both on the technical subject matter and on the political incentives of the

researchers and organisations involved. Different actors also want to access information in different ways. Whereas a Minister of Livestock would read a succinct two-page policy brief, an academic might prefer the same issues to be presented in a peer-reviewed journal.

After four years of focused policy change work in the area of community-based delivery systems it was evident that real institutional change was possible. For example, international standards in animal health are set by the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) under the umbrella of the World Trade Organization and the Sanitary and Phyto-Sanitary (SPS) Agreement. These standards are written and regularly updated as the OIE’s Terrestrial Animal Health Code (the “OIE Code”). The OIE is a membership organisation of states and each state is usually represented by its Chief Veterinary Officer. In September 2002 CAPE presented a paper at an OIE seminar which used the principles and structure of the OIE Code to show how CAHWs could strengthen what the OIE defined as “quality” national veterinary services (Leyland and Catley 2002). In October 2002 CAPE organised an international conference to bring together the OIE, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and senior veterinary policy-makers from around the world to discuss policy and institutional constraints to primary animal health care (Sones and Catley 2003). The project identified senior policy-makers and researchers from nine countries who had supported radical policy reform, and asked them to present their experiences. The conference recommendations included a call to the OIE to clarify the roles of the private sector and veterinary para-professionals in the OIE Code.

In February 2003 the OIE established an *ad hoc* group to examine how the code could better address privatisation and the roles of veterinary para-professionals. During the meetings of this group the concept of CAHWs as one cadre of veterinary para-professional was accepted. In May 2004 member states at the OIE General Assembly endorsed changes to the OIE code that defined veterinary para-professionals and guided national veterinary services on their use. These guidelines allow national veterinary services to recognise CAHWs, provided their tasks and training are recognised and regulated by a defined statutory veterinary body.

While the OIE was formulating new international

Table 1: Indicators and Progress for Institutionalising Community-based Animal Health Care in the Greater Horn of Africa, 2000–5

| Country or area | Before 2000 (pre-CAPE) | | | | | December 2004 (post-CAPE) | | | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|---|---|----------------------------------|--|
| | Support at field-level ¹ | CAHW standards and guidelines published | Specialised CAHW Unit established in central government | Written policy on CAHWs endorsed | Enactment of pro-CAHW legislation ⁷ | Support at field-level ¹ | CAHW standards and guidelines published | Specialised CAHW Unit established in central government | Written policy on CAHWs endorsed | Enactment of pro-CAHW legislation ⁷ |
| Kenya ² | +++ | + | - | + | - | ++++ | +++ | +++ | +++ | ++ |
| Ethiopia | +++ | - | ++ ³ | - | - | ++++ | +++ | ++++ | +++ | ++++ |
| Eritrea | +++++ | - | - | - | - | +++++ | - | - | - | +++ |
| Somalia ⁴ | na | - | - | - | - | na | +++ | na | na | na |
| Somaliand ⁵ | +++ | - | - | - | - | +++ | +++ | - | - | - |
| North Sudan | +++ | - | - | - | - | ++++ | - | ++++ | ++++ | +++ |
| South Sudan ⁶ | na | ++++ | na | na | na | ++++ | + | + | + | + |
| Tanzania | ++ | - | - | - | - | ++ | - | + | + | ++ |
| Uganda | ++ | - | - | - | - | ++ | +++ | ++++ | ++ | ++ |
| Africa (AU/IBAR) | ++++ | - | na | - | na | ++++ | +++ | na | ++++ | na |
| Global (OIE) | na | - | na | - | na | na | - | na | ++++ ⁸ | na |

Key: '-' no progress to '+++++' completed; na – not applicable

- Government officers may support or be actively involved in NGO projects at field level; this support is not always officially reported or acknowledged.
- CAPE's predecessor (the PARC-VAC Project) was heavily involved in supporting CAHW guidelines and policies with the Kenya Veterinary Board. CAPE continued this work in Kenya.
- A CAHW Unit was established in the MoA in Ethiopia as part of the Pan African Rinderpest Campaign (of IBAR). However, this unit was 'projectised' and not a formal part of the veterinary service structure; the unit was formalised with CAPE support in 2004.
- A Somalia government was not established until late 2004 and it continues to be based in Nairobi, Kenya. CAPE drafted the CAHW Code of Conduct for the Somali Aid Co-ordinating Body (SACB), endorsed by members. Some zonal-level veterinary associations had endorsed the use of CAHWs.
- CAPE worked with the Somaliand government, despite its lack of international recognition.
- Pre-CAPE, this refers to rebel-held areas of southern Sudan and the guidelines developed by the UNICEF-Operation Lifeline Sudan Livestock Programme. The signing of a peace agreement in January 2005 gives official status to the Secretariat for Agriculture and Animal Resources (SAAR) of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement. Post-CAPE indicators reflect SAAR support to CAH services as of January 2005.
- Post-CAPE, the OIE Code recognises CAHWs as a type of veterinary para-professional. An important principle of the Code is that all types of veterinary worker in a country should be licensed and governed by legislation.
- This refers to changes in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code, under the SPS Agreement of the WTO.

standards to enable veterinary para-professionals, CAPE was working with governments and statutory veterinary bodies to produce national guidelines for CAHWs. These guidelines included “standardised” training curricula comprising topics required by all CAHWs plus area-specific topics to cater for different livestock problems in different areas. The national guidelines also contained advice on topics such as community participation in CAHW systems, the need to address community concerns, and the need for official registration processes for CAHWs and the vets who supervise them. By 2004, the process of guideline and CAHW training course development was under way in Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Somalia and Ethiopia. Also, government veterinary services in four countries (Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda) had established new central units specifically for the promotion, coordination, privatisation and quality control of CAHWs (Table 1).

3 Policy process in Africa: the case of commodity-based livestock trade

For decades African countries and donors have invested huge effort and money into the eradication of livestock diseases. Apart from the dramatic impact of these diseases, another driving force behind eradication programmes was an overriding principle of the OIE Code: that absence of disease from a country or zone within a country is the best way to ensure safe trade in animals and animal products. Until recently the OIE Code included a list of the 15 most important animal diseases in the world, from the perspective of livestock trading. By late 2004, none of these diseases had been eradicated from Africa.

Based on experiences with animal disease eradication in Africa and the recent foot-and-mouth disease outbreak in the UK and Europe, workers at AU/IBAR began to reconsider options for livestock trade from a commodity-based perspective. It was already widely known that some livestock commodities, especially those subject to processing, posed no more than acceptable risk to importers.² Therefore, AU/IBAR argued that freedom from disease (in reality, freedom from infection) need not constitute an absolute requirement for safe trade in animal commodities (Thomson *et al.* 2004). As long as standards became available for specific commodities to ensure their safety in respect of

most trade-sensitive diseases, a way could be found to enable trade in livestock commodities that was not dependent on the areas of production and processing being free from these infections.

The new concept was circulated informally within AU/IBAR and international livestock agencies but was not universally welcomed (in some circles it was referred to as a “crazy idea”). However, CAPE and a small group of economists and epidemiologists within IBAR and its parent body – the AU’s Directorate for Rural Economy and Agriculture – quickly recognised the implications of the commodity-based concept in terms of improving Africa’s capacity to trade internationally. Through a series of workshop presentations, the concept was explained to African colleagues and partners, and support began to grow.

In September 2004 *The Veterinary Record* (the Journal of the British Veterinary Association) agreed to publish a paper which argued that commodity-based livestock trade offered a more feasible and equitable route to international markets for African countries than the current international standards (based on disease eradication) (Thomson *et al.* 2004). The OIE reacted to the paper by defending the *status quo*, although acknowledging its accord with OIE principles (Thiermann 2004). However, AU/IBAR had already achieved strong political support from African Regional Economic Communities and AU member states to lobby for changes to the OIE Code. At the time of writing the OIE has proposed an additional Annex to the Code, but over time, it seems likely that a major reworking may be required. These changes need to include specific guidelines for commonly traded commodities which are currently not available, in addition to traditional OIE guidance on disease eradication and certification of disease freedom. Continued collaboration between IBAR and interested parties has identified deficiencies in certification processes that will need to be addressed at both international and regional levels if the commodity-based approach is to flourish.

4 Building African capacity in policy process

This article has shown how substantial policy and institutional change is possible at national, regional and international levels in relatively short timeframes. More supportive policies for community-based animal health delivery systems

will help to ensure wider application and sustainability of CAHWs, and therefore improved access to basic animal health care for livestock keepers in marginalised areas. Better international guidelines on commodity-based livestock trade will ease access to international markets for African producers, including pastoralists. For example, recent experiences in southern Ethiopia show how pastoralists can supply livestock directly to formal export markets (Aklilu 2004).

During the policy change described above, CAPE staff became increasingly aware of the inter-relationships between improved animal health and a wide range of other livestock policies (e.g. marketing) and non-livestock policies (e.g. conflict, land tenure). At the same time, the strategies of the Directorate for Rural Economy and Agriculture of the African Union had emerged and highlighted the need for institutional and policy reform. As a result, CAPE evolved into the Institutional and Policy Support Team of AU/IBAR in August 2004. One of the team's first tasks was to consult senior African policy-makers about their perceptions of institutional and policy constraints and needs. The initial round of consultation covered five countries in the Horn of Africa, and included interviews with Ministers and Permanent Secretaries, donors, international agencies and government livestock personnel. The report noted that:

IBAR tapped into a rich core of concern among African legislators and senior policy-makers for the need to bring about change. Furthermore, this change must primarily be in policy process. Senior officials were frank about the dearth of policy in key areas affecting the livestock sub-sector, their frustration with the current institutional environment, their inability to formulate policy when events are rapidly changing, and the low level of awareness that appropriate policy formulation is a complex process that must involve various stakeholders. (AU/IBAR 2004: 7)

In the livestock sub-sector, many governments, donors and agencies are talking about policy change, but few people actually have the experience or knowledge of how to do it. The time is right for AU's Directorate for Rural Economy and Agriculture and IBAR to broaden its experience with community-based animal health and commodity-based trade policies, and to work with member states and Regional Economic Communities to address a wider range of policy issues. Based on CAPE's experiences, an important starting point would be to develop understanding and capacity in policy process in Regional Economic Communities and government departments, and then apply new skills to prioritised policy areas.

Notes

* In AU/IBAR the Community-based Animal Health and Participatory Epidemiology Project and its successor, the Institutional and Policy Support Team, were funded by the Department for International Development (UK) and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance and the Regional Economic Development Services Office, US Agency for International Development. Tim Leyland and Andy Catley were seconded to AU/IBAR from the Feinstein International Famine Center, School of Nutrition Science and Policy, Tufts University, USA. The Institutional and Policy Support Team is currently managed by Dr Berhanu Admassu and Dr Otieno Mtula under the supervision of the Director of AU/IBAR, Dr Modibo Tiémoko Traore.

1. Animal health assistants are diploma holders, trained in government institutions for about two years.
2. For example, the correct slaughter of cattle plus de-boning and removal of lymph glands from carcasses dramatically reduces the risk of meat transmitting foot-and-mouth disease virus.

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