



Animal Health Workers in Andhra Pradesh: Service Delivery, Supplies, Support & Supervision

N.S.R. Sastry and S. Ramalinga Raju

1. Introduction

To provide support to the PPLPI-CALPI supported *Livestock Service Delivery Reform Process*, a comprehensive study of para-veterinary training programs and ground operations was carried out. The first report entitled '*Para-veterinary Training Programmes in Andhra Pradesh*' covered various aspects of training of para-veterinarians and of different categories of 'Animal Health Workers' (40 to 180 days courses, to prepare candidates for placing as community based self-supporting animal health workers) in Andhra Pradesh.

This second report covers results of field research and discussion on the various ground level issues in Service Delivery by the community based Animal Health Workers (AHWs) including the support and supervision available to them for service delivery.

2. Methods

This study was conducted in 4 districts of Andhra Pradesh where 409 farmers, 113 AHWs of different types and 78 local officials and elected people's representatives concerned with the day to day work of the AHWs were interviewed using appropriately designed questionnaires. In addition, data obtained in a 2004 study in the three north coastal Andhra districts covering 400 Gopalamitras and their Supervisors was also analysed.

All the issues covered in this report were analysed from the perspective of farmers, the service providing AHWs and those concerned with the supply, support and supervision of the AHWs at the ground level.

This study did not cover the Veterinary Assistants and Technicians employed by the government of Andhra Pradesh due their very different job profile, training, and available support structure.

3. Results

Characteristics of Animal Health Workers

Profile: The average age of the AHW working the field was 29 years with a range from 19 to 43 years. The bulk of them had studied up to 10th Class, about 30% up to 12th Class and about 8% either were in their graduate classes or had actually graduated. Almost all of them were well conversant with the local language. On average, AHWs had a working experience of about 4 years and covered about 5 villages.

Placement & Residence: Seventy-six percent of the AHWs reside in one of the villages they work in. Also, almost all of them stayed and work in the same Mandal¹.

Mobility: Nearly 76% of the Gopalamitras, all the NGO AHWs but none of the Small Ruminant Extension Workers and Tribal AHWs owned or used a two wheeler for service delivery. On average, the AHWs travelled about 124 kilometres per week spending Rs. 294 for the same.

Service Delivery

Outreach of AHWs: Gopalamitras and the AHWs supported by the NGOs BAIF and JK Trust are the primarily providers of AI service at the doorstep, but they also provide other basic services. AHWs of RASS are unique in that they provide all services in addition to helping women Self-Help Groups organise livestock production and marketing, albeit in a limited area. Unfortunately, the Sanghamitras and Women Poultry Extension Workers trained for Velugu (Andhra Pradesh Livelihood Project of the World Bank) are said to have mostly gone out of business due to lack of patronage.

Views of Farmers: Among the services provided by AHWs, three categories emerged in terms of perceived quality:

- 'AI', 'First Aid', Vaccination' and 'Deworming' whose quality was felt to be mostly reasonable by the farmers;
- 'Livestock Management Advice', 'Fodder Development', 'Castration' and 'Use of Local Medicines' whose quality was felt to be inferior by the farmers; and

¹ Administrative unit comprising a cluster of villages

- 'Organisation of Health Camps' brought up by the farmers themselves under 'Other' and for which they felt that the AHWs are not up to the task.

A very high percentage of farmers of the 'very low' livestock potential Mandal (hilly, tribal area) opined that either the AHWs have 'not provided' any service or the quality of the services provided was 'not good'. 'Low' livestock potential Mandals turn out to be the most successful terrain for AHWs, the animals being more important to the perhaps financially not so well endowed. Farmers of the 'medium' and 'high' livestock potential Mandals are, in general, next best satisfied with the services of AHWs.

The majority of the scheduled castes are 'wage labourers', who opined that 'AI' (68%) and 'deworming' (55%) were either 'not done' or 'not good'; the other services being even more unsatisfactory to them. This trend is manifest for all the services provided by the AHWs. This neglect of the wage earning scheduled caste households with respect to provision of livestock services is definite and disturbing.

In hilly tribal areas, perhaps due to lower density of AHWs or their (im)mobility or (in)ability or a combination of all three factors coupled with the low intensity of livestock production and greater poverty in this difficult region almost all the services were 'not done' as per the opinion of more than 70% (64 to 88%) of the farmers.

Unfortunately, the 'not done' and 'not good' responses of farmers for all the services were highest (60 to 80%) in the case of landless livestock keepers (who are generally the poorest) and decreased as the land holding size of the farmers increased. As high as 65% (40 to 85%) of the small ruminant holdings, who are invariably traditional shepherds felt that the services were either not provided ('not done') by AHWs or they were 'not good'. With regards to vaccination of birds kept in backyard units delivery is very poor. The farmers said that just 5% of backyard poultry are vaccinated.

Though every one - farmers, local concerned persons, working AHWs - feels that organisation of health camps is an important service to the farmers' animals, such camps are not very frequent.

Views of Mandal/APLDA Level Concerned Persons (LCPs): The order of satisfaction with the various individual services being provided by the AHWs in the field as per the opinion of the above mentioned local concerned persons can be grouped as follows:

- Top Half (only around 5% saying 'not done' or 'not well' done) services in descending order of delivery quality were vaccination, deworming, AI and first aid, which may be considered as the services in which the AHWs are quite skillful and doing a satisfactory job.

- Bottom Half (as many as 20 to 40% saying 'not done' or 'not well' done) services in descending order of delivery quality were fodder development, castrations, livestock management advice (extension), use of local medicines and organisation of health camps.

Most of the AHWs, especially the Gopalamitras actually do undertake 'treatment' of animals (as against provision of 'first aid'). This is a case of over-reach by them as they are indulging in use of antibiotics, use of analgesic/anti-allergy, doing injections, using uterine pessaries, and surgical procedures. 'Over-reach' by AHWs, ie engaging in activities for which they are not 'qualified', was the main error of commission perpetuated by the AHWs in the opinion of the Local Concerned Persons'.

Support and Supervision

Extent of Supervision: For every 25 to 30 Gopalamitras there is one supervisor. The VAS (Veterinary Assistant Surgeons - professional field veterinarians employed by the government) nearest to the Gopalamitra village is assigned the task of support and supervision. But given that this is just one of the many technical and non-technical tasks that are routinely assigned to the VAS, support is minimal at best. In case of AHWs supported by NGOS such as BAIF and JK Trust on the other hand, there are specific personnel attending to support and supervision function of AHWs as their sole task.

Quality of Support and Supervision: The proportion of AHWs reporting that their support and supervision was not satisfactory was: 100% of Tribal AHWs, 80% of Small Ruminant Extension Workers, 50% of the NGO JK Trust and 17% of Gopalamitras.

Supply of AI related inputs has been very good according to almost all of the AHWs, but only some 30 to 40% of AHWs say that supply has been good when it comes to vaccines and deworming medicines. A creditable exception to this are the Small Ruminant Extension Workers, all of whom felt that the supply of vaccines and deworming medicines was good.

As many as 95% of the AHWs, irrespective of the organisation, said that the supervision as well as quality of the services provided by their supervisors has been 'good' and 'very good'. More or less similar was their opinion with regards to follow-up of two other crucial activities, namely, pregnancy diagnosis and stock identification.

According to the farmers, all attention with regards to support and supervision was being paid to AI, first aid and vaccination services being provided by the AHWs with 89% of the responding farmers saying that it was 'good' and even 'very good'. The proportion of farmers satisfied with support to AHWs was about 40% (range 37 to 50%) for other services.

4. Conclusions

The general impression emerging from this study and discussions with field staff including the AHWs themselves is that they are left on their own in the field. Unfortunately, Gopalamitras, the strongest AHW cadre in Andhra Pradesh with about 2,000 individuals in the field, seem to be 'no body's baby' at present.

The farmers have consistently suggested the Animal Husbandry Department (AHD) and village Panchayat as the organisations that can support and sustain AHWs in future and improve their utility to the farmers. The advantage with AHD and Andhra Pradesh Livestock Development Agency (APLDA) is that they can act as a sound base for technical support, supplies, supervision and quality control of services using judiciously paid stipends and incentives.

The study also revealed that the supervisors need regular refresher training to improve their work vis-à-vis support and supervision of the Gopalamitras on management of human and financial resources.

It appears that Gopalamitras are lagging behind the AHWs of NGOs such as BAIF and JK Trust although they were showing a trend of improvement over the years. However, this difference has to be seen in comparison to the conditions, under which the three types of AHWs operate; the Gopalamitra is very much disadvantaged in terms of working conditions and work incentives vis-à-vis the other two.

5. Recommendations

Gopalamitras have firmly established themselves and are contributing to service provision in increasing numbers year by year. The study team recommends that Gopalamitras be further nurtured as they can become effective means of providing affordable services to remote areas and disadvantaged communities.

Some of the steps suggested would perhaps help in further development of the contribution of Gopalamitras to the livestock farmers. In the interest of providing satisfactory livestock services to the farmers it is necessary to have some uniformity across AHW programs. In other words, whether Gopalamitra or AHWs of NGOs, it is imperative that all have a comprehensive broad-based training. Therefore:

- It is suggested that a new AHW training course of 6 months duration (including 2 months internship) be developed to comprehensively cover an agreed set of subjects and topics. This could be a uniform state-wide basic training programme.

- The AHD's one-year and the State Agricultural University's two year training programmes be combined in one comprehensive programme to be offered after 10th Class.

The following steps are suggested to be taken for improving service delivery by AHWs, Gopalamitras, and their support and supervision:

- Attaching the AHWs to an organisation (ideally with a farmer organisation) for streamlining supplies and supervision and for quality control.
- Training the supervisors to impart to them people-related management extension skills.
- Provide a monthly stipend of Rs. 1,500 per trained and placed AHW for a period of one year so that he/she can establish him/her self. This stipend should be for a period of two years in case of three categories of AHWs trained and placed for working – i) among landless wage earning SC large ruminant keepers, ii) among medium and large flock owning traditional shepherds, and iii) in marginalised hilly tribal areas.
- After proper scrutiny by an appropriate committee of farmers and LCPs, payment of financial incentives for – i) AI calves born, ii) reduction in disease incidence/outbreak, iii) cash awards for best AHW at Mandal, district and state level.
- AHWs should be used to enhance the vaccination and deworming coverage of small ruminants, pigs (now totally neglected) and village chicken.

6. Contacts and Further Information

This research report is an excerpt from the full report submitted to PPLPI-SA and CALPI. For additional information, please contact:

Vinod Ahuja

Indian Institute of Management
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad-380 015, India
Email: ahuja@iimahd.ernet.in

Abraham K Joseph

Capitalization of Livestock Programme India (CALPI)
Sarvodaya Enclave, New Delhi, India
Email: lcindia.calpi@spectranet.com