

GENDER AND SOCIAL INCLUSION TRAINING FOR VET AND ANIMAL HEALTH SERVICE PROVIDERS

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Image 1. A community animal health worker is sharing his experience of integrating gender responsive approaches in animal health delivery at the community level in Tapac, Moroto District, Uganda

Gender and social inclusion training for vet and animal health service providers

Executive Summary

In Uganda, the majority of rural households are engaged in livestock rearing. Livestock is reared by both men and women, and in some pastoral communities, sick animals are left in the care of women while men take healthy animals for grazing. Research shows that gender and attitudes of animal health service providers can affect their veterinary practice and quality of care. Developing an understanding of how gender and perceptions of it can influence veterinary practices is essential to improve the reach and quality of service delivery. However, veterinarians, animal husbandry officers, and community animal health workers, referred to as animal health service providers in this brief, often receive limited and inconsistent training. Moreover, the training does not integrate gender responsive communication and entrepreneurship skills to help animal health service providers deliver gender equitable and inclusive services.

Key messages

1. Both academic and vocational veterinary and animal production trainings should include content on gender, and gender responsive communication skills, which are essential to enforce and implement the existing gender policies of The Ministry of Agriculture, Animal Industry and Fisheries (MAAIF).
2. Women and members of marginalized groups need supportive working environments to be successful animal health service providers.
3. Training for community animal health workers (CAHWs) in Karamoja should include modules on gender, gender responsive communication, community development, and entrepreneurship skills.

Introduction

The importance of vaccinations for disease prevention is well understood by veterinarians and animal health service providers. Often, however, whose animals are being vaccinated, who is doing the vaccinations, and who knows about the vaccinations is much less clear. For the most part, vets and animal health service providers are missing key pieces of information that would make their vaccination efforts more equitable, effective and cost-efficient. Not knowing about and not participating in vaccination campaigns can have a serious impact on women livestock owners. Not being able to get their animals vaccinated means these animals are likely to become ill and possibly die, due to which the women lose both the food and income derived from them.

In Uganda, women are often left out of agricultural extension services and technical support. MAAIF and other government agencies attempt to address this through the development of gender inclusive policies, however, the country is still in early transition to gender mainstreaming and the agricultural sector is one of the last sectors to embrace it. In particular, the Ministry's policies on animal health, are largely gender blind. In livestock vaccine value chains (LVVC), women and other marginalized groups (such as minority ethnic groups, the elderly and disabled) have less access than men to key inputs such as vaccines, as well as limited ability to influence decision-making on vaccination and animal health within households. Addressing the needs of women livestock owners requires a better understanding of the gendered and socio-cultural context in which animal health services are delivered. The Livestock Vaccine Innovation Fund (LVIF) supports the development of affordable livestock vaccines, targeting diseases that impact women and men livestock smallholders, and facilitates their access and use along the vaccine value chain. A set of participatory action research projects within LVIF are addressing the barriers faced by women in livestock vaccine systems and generating new evidence on how they can better benefit from and participate in these systems.

The University of Florida (UF) in collaboration with Makerere University in Uganda, conducted action research in four districts of Karamoja, by evaluating how gender and intersectionality influences women's involvement in the LVVCs. The intervention used gender transformative approaches to build the capacity of key stakeholders and service providers to increase women's engagement in, and benefit from, LVVCs.

Why was this research needed?

The unvaccinated animals of women and other marginalized groups are at higher risk of infection and of spreading it to other livestock. This, consequently, undermines community-level and global disease control interventions, such as eradication of the peste des petits ruminants (PPR) by 2030. The broad purpose of the UF research was to understand the

different factors that prevent women's livestock from being vaccinated. For this it looked at curriculum development and content, and decision-making of district officials, veterinary officers, and community leaders related to animal vaccination campaigns.

Intersectionality

Is a term that describes the interconnected nature of multiple social identities (e.g., gender, class, age, ethnicity, etc.) that influence the power of an individual. When these identities intersect, they can be empowering or marginalizing.

We learned that the current veterinary curriculum in Uganda is set by the National Council for Higher Education and must meet the World Organization for Animal Health standards for veterinarians or para-veterinarians. It focuses primarily on scientific and technical knowledge or the "hard skills" but has little to no space for "soft skills" such as gender responsive communication, empathic listening, effective communication, and community engagement. Furthermore, gender concepts are not taught as part of the training, and Makerere University is the only university that offers a course on gender as an integral part of its curriculum. While gender is listed in the CAHW training curriculum used in Karamoja (the only region where CAHWs are still active), it is not taught in practice. Finally, refresher courses and workshops for vets and other animal health service providers rarely include gender as a topic. Even if there is a gender course, it does not cover gender transformative approaches that challenge discriminatory gender norms, roles, and relations. We observed that animal health service providers often go to the field with little understanding, other than their own experiences and expectations, of how best to reach women and other marginalized livestock owners.

Insights from research

Addressing the above gaps in curriculum, the UF intervention included training courses for animal health service providers in Karamoja on gender, group-facilitation, empathic listening, effective communication, conflict management, and entrepreneurship development, to improve their service delivery to local target groups.

District and sub county veterinary officers who participated in the Gendered Intersectional Transformative Approach (GITA) training were quick to recognize that the training was different from previous gender training they had taken as it opened their eyes to their own perceptions and behaviours. They acknowledged that they automatically target men - the village leaders, the livestock owners - believing that any information given to men would reach women in the households. When they learned knowledge transfer from husbands to wives

is highly unlikely, they recognized that they would need to change their recruitment approach to ensure that women and other marginalized populations would directly participate in, and benefit from training and outreach. They also understood the different reasons why women do not attend training, related to their household and childcare responsibilities, and inconvenient timing and location of trainings. They realized that women have agency but if they are not given the information or allowed to participate in trainings where important livestock information is being shared, then they are unfairly being denied an opportunity given to men.

“I have attended a gender training before but never a training like the Gendered Intersectional Transformative Approach (GITA) training, which was comprehensive from gender standpoint and integrated aspects of community engagement, empathic listening, and intercultural communication,”
a veterinary officer at the GITA training in September 2020.

The UF study observed that veterinary students have little opportunity to put their technical skills into practice in different social and cultural contexts until they become practicing veterinarians. Currently, they usually rely on the dominant patterns, norms, and practices of others already in the field, which tend to be male-biased. This points to two areas of potential change: in the veterinary curriculum and in professional development activities for those who are already certified to be animal health service providers .

What is GITA training?

GITA training is based on the premise that the context in which animal vaccination takes place is as important as animal health factors. Often it is not simply gender that prevent owners from getting their animals vaccinated but its intersection with other social factors such as class, ethnicity, disability, or age that create barriers for them. Therefore, GITA training emphasizes the integration of “soft skills” in animal health training to equip animal health providers with knowledge on gender, communication, and other skills. Using GITA thus enables livestock programs to be gender responsive and socially inclusive.

Providing gender and other soft skills training to veterinarians and other animal health service providers including CAHWs can be transformative. Those who participated in the GITA training began applying gender considerations such as offering flexible options for the time and location of trainings, and including topics of interest to women. They also identified more women who could be trained as CAHWs and recognized the need to offer inclusive and gender responsive training programs.

In Karamoja, cattle are the predominant species in terms of preference and income and are primarily owned by men. Thus, when a vaccination campaign targets other livestock such as small ruminants or poultry, the assumption of male ownership and management persists in the minds of animal health service providers. However, it is mostly women who own and manage small stock and cattle in the kraals and home compounds. Gender bias about male ownership of livestock prevents animal health service providers from reaching these women. Training to alleviate such forms of gender blindness can lead to behaviour change of agents involved in animal disease prevention and treatment programs. CAHWs play an important role in animal health and vaccination campaigns. By introducing a blended curriculum, through the intervention, which integrated both hard and soft skills content in the animal health training, CAHWs were able to successfully deliver community sensitization activities, reaching more than 1388 women livestock owners in selected communities of Karamoja.



Image 2. Women and men making salt bricks for livestock during community sensitization in Kotido

Policy recommendations

1. Invest in integrating gender knowledge and communication skills into training and curriculum for veterinarians and animal service providers.

Work with curriculum certification committees to ensure gender, empathic listening, effective communication, and other social aspects of service delivery are integral components of veterinary and animal production courses in all university and tertiary professional programs.

2. Encourage women and marginalized groups to become animal health service providers.

Create opportunities to recruit women into the veterinary and animal production professions early on, during formative school years. Community leaders should encourage girls to attend school and complete schooling. Additionally, promote the veterinary and CAHW profession as a suitable and successful career option among women and marginalized groups.

3. Ensure CAHW technical trainings follow a competence-based learning framework, enriched with gender and soft skills modules and offered as refresher courses.

Both hard and soft skills are important for the quality and efficacy of the services of CAHWs. A one-off training is not sufficient to prepare CAHWs to provide a viable animal health service. They need refresher trainings on technical aspects as well as to understand the gendered and socio-cultural backgrounds of livestock owners.

About this brief

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Photo credit

Image 1. Nargiza Ludgate (University of Florida)

Image 2. Constantine Ogwang (Kotido Sub County Animal Husbandry Office)

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