

Assessment of Veterinary Service Delivery in Shebedino District of Sidama Zone, Southern Ethiopia Sinshaw Mulugeta, Solomon Yokamo and Hayimanot Hayiso

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Abstract

Inefficient veterinary services remain one of the major challenges to the expansion of livestock sub-sector in Ethiopia. A survey was done, from November 2016 to April 2017, in Shebedino district of Sidama zone, south Ethiopia. The core objectives of the research were; to evaluate the delivery of veterinary services in compliance with the OIE recommendations; and to recommend feasible solutions which could help to improve the performance of veterinary services. A multi-stage random sampling technique was employed to select three peasant associations (PAs) for the study. A total of 100 households (livestock owners and community representatives) and 26 veterinary officers and administrative bodies were selected for the survey. appropriate data were collected through structured questionnaire, interviews, focus group discussions, and review of desk documents. The findings of the research revealed that the livestock resource in Shebedino district has been impeded by a wide range of rampant animal diseases. The majority of livestock owners (78%) preferred public veterinary services to combat the deleterious effects of animal health problems, professional skill, fairness of service charges and sustainability of veterinary services being the major determinants for service preference. On the contrary, private veterinary institutions were preferred and commanded due to the availability of relevant drugs and timeliness of veterinary services. Nonetheless, the findings disclosed the high cost of service, poor quality and limited sustainability of services as the major weaknesses of the private sector. Similarly, the public veterinary services were hampered most importantly by persistent limitation of financial resources to carry out routine clinical activities, livestock emergencies and epidemiological surveillance. Furthermore, considerable external influence on technical decisions; weak chain of command; limited interaction among concerned stakeholders; and the absence of public awareness about animal welfare were the identified weaknesses to effective administration of veterinary services in the study area. Based on the present findings, it is recommended that public veterinary services should maintain their technical freedom, acquire sufficient physical and financial resources to assume their responsibilities. Finally, privatization should be encouraged to create competitive environment for effective veterinary services.

Keywords: Private and Public Institutions; Shebedino district; Veterinary services; Privatization

The development of veterinary services in Ethiopia:

It is believed that the traditional veterinary service has been around for a long time in Ethiopia, but it is difficult to indicate the exact date of its commencement. Traditional healers (Wegeshas) treated human and animal patients by soaking herbal medicines, cutting and cauterizing abscesses and wounds with sharp objects and hot metals, repairing fractures and rehabilitating dislocations. Such practices still exist in some parts of the country. Modern veterinary services started relatively recently in Ethiopia. A French Veterinary Mission began providing veterinary services in 1908. During its occupation of Eritrea, and later other parts of the country from 1936-41, the Italian army was treating equines used

in its cavalry unit. Moreover, it established a laboratory around Kechene Medhanealem, in Addis Ababa, where some vaccines were produced. The progress of veterinary services was slowed down for a while after the Italians were forced out of the country. However, it was later decided that the Ministry of Agriculture should take over the laboratory. Thus, the first Ethiopian veterinarians took responsibility for providing animal health services. British experts were invited to the country and Ethiopians professionals were trained at home and some were sent to East Africa to get training in laboratory techniques and vaccine production. In addition, 250 vaccinators were trained by the Point 4-aid organization of the USA and were later assigned to serve

in the various provinces of the country. A considerable leap in vaccine production, research and investigation of diseases began after the 1950s. The reasons for these developments include the gradual return back of Ethiopians after acquiring high-level veterinary training abroad and the establishment and functioning of the National Veterinary Institute and the Animal Health Assistants School through financial and technical cooperation of the American and French governments and the FAO. The National Veterinary Institute has been fully engaged in the production of vaccines and provided most of the diagnostic services in the country until the first regional laboratories were constructed in the 1970s and developed in the 1980s. The Institute of Animal Health Assistants also gradually increased the number of sub-professional graduates to a maximum of 80 per year after a two years' program of studies. The Faculty of Veterinary Medicine of the University of Addis Ababa has been operating since 1979 and 25-30 students graduate each year following a 6-year training cycle. Thus, the modern veterinary service that started in the 1900s showed slow progress in the first fifty years. Following this it has shown progressive improvement and at present fast change is observed in areas of manpower, infrastructure, material and financial build up.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The expansion of livestock sub-sector in most rural areas of the developing world has been seriously challenged by rampant diseases, poor veterinary infrastructure and limited professionals. Thus, delivery of effective veterinary services requires strong governance of animal health systems in addressing the risks associated with this resource. To this effect, implementation of the OIE tool is a key element in the assessment of the efficiency and quality of veterinary services.

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