ANNEX GHANA LVIF POLICY BRIEF

Agnes Loriba , Nelly Njiru , Galie Alessandra , Awin Peter

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IDRC GRANT / SUBVENTION DU CRDI : - TRANSFORMING THE VACCINE DELIVERY SYSTEM FOR CHICKENS AND GOATS IN GHANA: WHAT APPROACHES AND WHAT BENEFITS FOR WOMEN?

Vet Technician prepares to vaccinate female farmer's livestock.

Transforming Livestock Vaccine Delivery To Reach, Benefit And Empower Women Farmers In Ghana: Approaches That Work

Executive Summary

In Ghana, chicken and goats are critical for households' food and nutrition security. They are especially important for women livestock farmers, who can access them more easily than other assets like land. Preventable diseases in chicken and goats cause high mortality of these animals, negatively affecting women's livelihoods. Although vaccines are available, women are limited from accessing them by cultural and traditional practices. They have low awareness about vaccines, find them too expensive, are unable to interact with male vets, and have poor access to the cold chain infrastructure. The Women Rear Project built evidence on what approaches lead to women's inclusion in vaccine delivery and benefit them. These include reaching women livestock farmers through women vets and trained women lead farmers, engaging reflection on gender-based discrimination at the community level and improving cold chain infrastructure at regional and district levels. These approaches increase demand for vaccines by women, leading to healthier animals, and increased flock sizes.

Key Messages

- Improving the health of poultry and goats is likely to benefit women livestock farmers, and nutrition of their households. However women are generally excluded from animal vaccine systems. Little work has been done to see what approaches benefit them and lead to their inclusion in vaccine delivery and their ability to benefit from it.
- Cultural and traditional practices in the project districts affect women's ability to access vaccines, own animals and sell animals-limiting the potential benefits of livestock to women and their households.
- Recruiting and training more women vets can importantly enhance reach and quality of animal health service provision to rural livestock farmers, especially women.
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- Gender-responsive digital technologies together with engagement of communities to question cultural practices that hinder the wellbeing of their communities-are also key.

Introduction

Overall, about half of all the rural households in Ghana are dependent on livestock for food and income (Nuvey et al., 2020). Rearing goat and chicken is very important for the livelihood of women in rural Ghana, who use them to feed the household and cover daily expenses. The government of Ghana recognizes the great potential of poultry and goat farming to address the scarcity of animal protein in local diets and has established initiatives like the National Farmers Day award, and policies such as the Diseases of Animals Act 83 of 1961 to incentivize production. In addition, the government removed customs duty on poultry inputs like drugs and vaccines. Despite these efforts, the livelihoods of women livestock farmers are negatively impacted because of high mortality caused by the preventable Newcastle Disease (ND) in chickens and Peste des Petits Ruminants (PPR) in goats. While vaccines can reduce deaths and potentially eradicate these diseases, women cannot access them because they are not aware of their availability, have limited cash to pay for them, and cannot interact with male vets who provide vaccines and services to male farmers. In addition, there is a lack of vets, and their response time to calls is often delayed (Enahoro et al., 2021). Women also face gender-based social, cultural, and religious barriers such as restrictions on mobility and ownership of livestock that limit them from benefiting from the livestock vaccine system. Other 'technical' constraints include a weak cold chain infrastructure, particularly downstream, which limits the timely delivery of good quality vaccines. Further, while government regulations play a key role in vaccine delivery to end users, currently there is a gap in the number of animal health professionals, communication infrastructure for reporting diseases, and a generally weak animal health infrastructure which poses huge risks to poor people's livelihoods, most of whom are women.

The Livestock Vaccine Innovation Fund (LVIF) was introduced against this backdrop with the aim of supporting the development of affordable livestock vaccines, targeting diseases that impact on women and men livestock smallholders, and facilitating their access and use at scale. A set of participatory action research projects within LVIF are addressing barriers faced by women in livestock vaccine systems and are generating new evidence on how women can better benefit from and participate in these systems.

Why was this study needed? and the main approach?

There is considerable evidence to the fact that livestock vaccine systems are not adequately reaching women, but little research has been done on how to improve the gender responsiveness of these systems. Furthermore, there is little evidence on what approaches benefit women and lead to their inclusion in vaccine delivery.

Addressing this gap, we designed an action research project to address the identified constraints faced by women goat and chicken farmers in remote rural areas. The project piloted new ways of reaching women with vaccines and other animal health advice, as well as ways to address the infrastructure challenges that affect the distribution of vaccines in rural areas:

- Recruiting and building the capacity of women vets to interact with women livestock farmers.
- Identifying women lead farmers from the communities who can inform the women, organize vaccine delivery, support the application of i2[1] vaccines locally, and mobilize payments for vaccines.
- Adapting digital technologies to women's needs, e.g audio messages to women farmers in local language on mobile phones.
- Using radio as a communication medium to increase awareness on the importance of vaccines and how to access them.
- Expanding the cold chain infrastructure at the regional and district level to improve the timely delivery and quality of vaccines, coupled with solar-powered refrigeration and the utilization of drones to lower both vaccine costs and the time of delivery.

To address gender norms that limit women's ability to access vaccines, the study engaged male members of households and male and female village leaders in community-level dialogues and reflections on gender-based discrimination.

We tested these activities to understand their efficacy in the local socio-cultural context of the women livestock farmers.

[1] i2- vaccine for Newcastle Disease in chicken

Insights from the Women Rear project

Overall, our study found that women chicken and goat farmers are more easily reached by Women Animal Health Service Providers (WAHSPs) than by male vets. However, WAHSPs are rarely involved in the public animal health

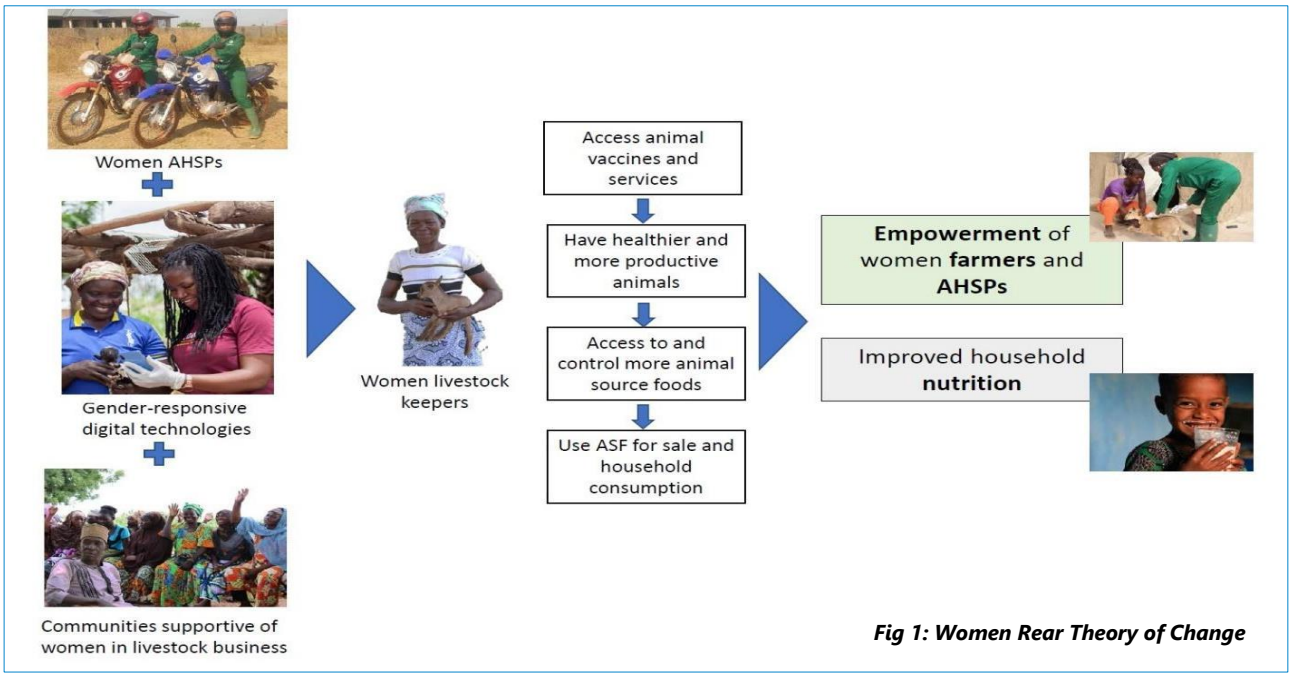

Fig 1: Women Rear Theory of Change

system, especially in rural districts. Their involvement in the public and private systems can be encouraged through targeted recruitment and training.

Identifying women lead farmers who act as community leaders to facilitate access, provide information on the importance of vaccines and their use, and administer vaccines for a fee, is a sustainable way to meet women livestock farmers' needs. Furthermore, digital technology adapted to rural women users can be an effective way to reach women in remote areas with information and services and to lower the costs of vaccines.

> *"Women who kept animals depended on their husbands to buy or access vaccines, but now it is no more tha case, because we now have women who are AHSPs so we can easily access vaccines through them" (Female FGD respondent, Bawku West District. March 2023)*

Under the Women Rear project, 170 female lead farmers were trained to work as WAHSP and two women vets were recruited by the project. Some 4000 women farmers got access to livestock vaccines. A post-vaccination survey revealed that WAHSPs felt more accepted by both male and female livestock farmers.

Engaging community members in reflective dialogues on gender and social norms enabled both women and men to recognize how changing traditional attitudes and practices has the potential of improving their livelihoods.

> *Women can now sell their livestock by themselves. The sensitization on gender has enlightened and saved us from the past when no woman could sell. The sensitizations have made us understand it is just about working together to help one another. (Male FGD respondent, Pusiga District, March 2023)*

The baseline study provided evidence that women's and men's knowledge about ND and PPR vaccination, and access to animal health services, is positively associated with women's empowerment.

Creating cold chain infrastructure increased timely access of livestock farmers to good quality vaccines and reduced vaccine wastage. Internal monitoring data revealed a 30% reduction in vaccine wastage.

> ***Gender Equality:*** *The equal enjoyment by women, girls, boys, and men of rights, opportunities, resources, and rewards.*

Finally, a more gender-responsive vaccine delivery system for chicken and goats has the potential to alleviate poverty and increase food security (SDG 1 and 2). Adapting vaccine technology to reach women farmers in remote areas helps to reduce inequality, contributes to gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG 10 and 5), and supports the national government "Rearing for Food and Jobs" initiative.

Policy Recommendations

1. National government policies need to invest resources to increase the reach and quality of livestock extension services to rural smallholder women livestock farmers, who need them the most. Recruitment and training of women AHSP at the district level can help reach women farmers and importantly improve the livelihoods of both women and men smallholder livestock farmers.

2. Empowering women to lead livestock farmers at the community level, can play an important role in scaling the distribution of livestock vaccines to enhance their availability to rural livestock farmers, to improve livestock productivity. Instituting a fee for services they render can sustain their role.

3. Engage formal and informal institutions to address practices that limit women's access to and control of productive resources. Policies and actions that increase women's asset ownership, and knowledge of animal health and vaccines, are important. Build capacity of both women and men AHSPs to address discriminative culture and traditions that affect effective service delivery to women livestock farmers.

4. Increase the supply of good quality drugs and vaccines in remote rural areas. by improving cold chain and vaccine delivery infrastructure. This requires effective participation of the private sector, which can be enabled through a supportive regulatory framework for public, private partnerships.

5. The adoption and integration of technology in service delivery can significantly enhance inclusivity, efficiency, and effectiveness. This could include digital record keeping, GIS mapping for better reach, mobile-based information dissemination, and online training modules for AHSPs. Technology should be leveraged to collect regular livestock census on livestock population, breeds, mortality rates, and disease prevalence to inform policy policymaking, resource allocation, and performance tracking.

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About this Brief

Authors: Agnes Loriba[1], Nelly Njiru[2], Galiè Alessandra[3], Awin Peter [4]

[1] CARE International: agnes.loriba@care.org
[2] ILRI; n.njiru@cgiar.org
[3] ILRI; a.galie@cgiar.org
[4] Cowtribe; peter.awin@cowtribe.com

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Vaccination Image, John Akugri (CARE International)

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