

DCA-VET livestock extension: beating the challenges

Throughout the DCA-VET programme, livestock extension plays a major role. Extension on animal health and production by VFU staff promotes farmers' awareness on proper animal husbandry, and on prevention and treatment of diseases. This newly gained knowledge helps the farmers to beat the challenges they experience in the daily care of their livestock, resulting in less mortality and diseases, and in increased animal production.

DCA-VET's extension packages are developed based on consultations with farmers. The DCA core extension team is highly qualified and gender-balanced, experienced in designing of extension materials and in facilitation of training based on participatory approaches. The core team cascades the training to VFU staff through field monitors. VFU staff in turn organize farmers' groups at village level and facilitate seasonal extension twice a month.

How do the farmers assess the extension support by DCA? And, will the extension efforts be sustainable even after international supports ends? To find an answer to these questions Dr. Chalachew Niguse, DCA-VET Programme Officer, described his experiences of a recent visit to Bamyan.

Extension in Bamyan Province



On 15th September, Dr. Niguse visited the extension group of paravet Mr. Bahawudin in Sorkhder village. One group member said: *"We have several severe challenges such as livestock diseases, shortage of feed and poor stables. But we can cope with them now thanks to the awareness education from Dr. Bahawudin. Now we know what to do; just sell one of our sheep and buy the vaccines and medicines needed to keep the other healthy and productive."*

Similarly, the women of the female extension group in Poladi village confirmed that the knowledge they picked up at meetings remains with them and will be shared with all women farmers in their village. *"We take every opportunity to speak about it. We share our knowledge at wedding ceremonies, funerals, and any other gatherings"*, said Ms. Sharifa. The women emphasized they feel more assured of a proper livelihood than before, thanks to the extension training and also to the accessibility of veterinary services nearby.

The VFU staff Dr. Niguse spoke to unanimously agreed that the extension program is very critical in increasing the demand of veterinary services, as well as enhancing respect and trust by their customers. Although in the absence of donor support they may not continue the extension program as regularly as at present, they will take all opportunities to explain seasonal topics when farmers are gathered for vaccination or treatment campaigns.

The very fact that the extension is conducted through privatized paravets that are established in their home villages guarantees that the extension system works, regardless of whatever will happen in the local political or security situation.