

DCA voucher system promising alternative for free veterinary services

Free veterinary services (treatment and sometimes vaccination campaigns) are one of the emergency responses that help to protect livelihood assets during disasters. However, these kinds of livelihood based assistances need careful designing to make sure that local capacities and systems are not bypassed and/or harmed.



From different parts of Afghanistan free veterinary campaigns have been reported. Most of these campaigns never engage the existing VFUs (Veterinary Field Units), thus causing severe damage to the local private veterinary system that has been built over several years. This situation is worse in Bamyan Province.

Mr. Jan Mohammed, a paravet who has VFUs in two locations in Naitaq village of Yakawalang District, estimates that he

loses 40-50% of his annual income as a result of free or subsidized veterinary campaigns in the neighborhood. *“These free veterinary services coupled with cheap, illegal and often counterfeit products in the bazaar make it very difficult for us to continue our work without support from DCA. If this situation does not improve, it could take more than five years of support for a VFU to become self-sufficient and sustainable”*, says Mr. Mohammed.

DCA has successfully piloted a voucher system for the support of poor farmers in five provinces (Bamyan, Baghlan, Takhar, Kunduz, and Badakhshan). In this approach, DCA staff distributes vouchers of \$10 value to targeted poor farmers to collect medicines and vaccines from the VFUs. DCA staff then re-collect the vouchers and reimburse the amount to the VFU staff. This way, both the needy farmers and the local service providers (VFUs) benefit from the assistance. Donors, NGOs, UN agencies and PRTs/ADTs could adapt the voucher system to achieve their goals while at the same time building the local capacities.

VFU staff are committing themselves to help the remotely located rural poor through enhancing access to veterinary services and creation of awareness, while at the same time struggling to improve their own livelihood. The government, particularly MAIL, should take a leading role to encourage the private sector in the veterinary services to thrive. This significantly contributes to one of the three pillars of Afghanistan National Development Strategy: “Economic and social development through a private-sector led market economy”.

September 2012, Dr. Chalachew Niguse, DCA-VET Programme Officer