

An impetus Event: Farmers Field Day at the heart of Bamyan

The 25th of July 2011 was a special day in the calendar of Bamyan community. Veterinary Field Units staff (VFUs), farmers, community extension groups and stakeholders together have an appointment in Bamyan center to celebrate “farmers field day”.

The mountainous Bamyan, which is located 234kms north of Kabul has hidden huge treasures as well as historical, natural and socio-cultural heritages in its heart. The historical Ghulgula and Shari Zuhak cities (5000 years old), the 6 natural dams that form chains on the top of the mountains, the famous Afghan Budha, and the undulating Baba mountains are few of the attractions in Bamyan. However, this hospitable and amazing province is categorized as the 3rd poorest province in the nation.

According to Eng. Tahir Atayi, Director of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation directorate, more than 90% of the population in Bamyan depend on livestock. But productivity of the livestock is low due to drought, prolonged winters, and lack of awareness among farmers.

The objectives of the “farmers field day” are to review progress of DCA’s projects in Bamyan, to identify key lessons for future planning, and disseminate best practices with stakeholders. Covered by TV Bamyan, Radio Bamyan and other national media, the occasion was marked as one of the most important and the most colorful community events in the province.



About 40 women and 125 men attended the occasion from different stakeholders – farmers/Kuchis, government departments, NGOs and UN agencies representatives. The event comprised of official speeches, updates from project staff, VFU staff presentations, farmers experience sharing, presentations from NGO stakeholders, display and farmer-to-farmer explanation of extension posters and socialization.

Eng. Atayi, on his opening speech underlined that livestock interventions that teach the farmers on how to keep healthy and productive animals are the key priorities. “I encourage all actors and farmers to coordinate efforts on preventive herd health. “Farmers should refuse to buy counterfeit and poor quality medicines and vaccines that are being sold in the bazaar”; says Eng. Atayi.

DCA has been implementing the rural microfinance and livestock support project (RMLSP, financed by IFAD) in Bamyan since June 2010. The project includes establishment and support of 15 VFUs, continuous extension services to 600 men and 120 women farmers, 120 self-help groups, cashmere value chain training to 300 women and men. The project serves about 140,000 people indirectly.

The Head of Veterinary department, Dr. Haydar, emphasized in his speech that brucellosis (one of the notorious diseases that causes abortion in animals and transmits to human being) is spreading rapidly in the province affecting over 150 people. Dr. Haydar says, “the veterinary programs in the province are

not only improving livestock production and livelihood, but also promote healthy human beings through tackling diseases such as brucellosis.”

The project focuses on gender equality and targeting the poorest farmers in remote areas such as Kuchis (pastoralists). Ms. Shereen Gul is a female paravet who attended her paravet course in a DCA training center. She highlighted that she is the only female veterinary worker in the province. “I am proud that I can help my neighborhood farmers. So far, I have vaccinated more than 1000 chicken. This is a big help for poor families”, said Shereen.



Three progressive farmers also gave presentations on their field experiences. Mr. Mohammad Gul, one of the presenters, witnessed that his animals are physically different from the rest of the villagers especially during winter. “I have 10 cattle and they are shiny with good body condition and ability to cope with the harsh winter. People in my village ask me why my animals are different.” Mr. Mohammad Gul started improvement of his livestock production after DCA VFUs demonstrated to him and his fellow villagers on urea treatment of poor quality straw feed and reservation for winter, animal health and housing. “ DCA gave me urea and plastic sheet and showed me how to do it with 25kg of feed, but now I am preparing enough feed reserve for all my animals”, Gul says.



The other session of the field day was demonstration of different extension posters which were explained in a row by 6 progressive farmers. They briefed the participants on livestock feeding, stable management, urea treatment, prevention of different diseases, cashmere value chain development etc. The event was concluded by awarding progressive farmers (3 women and 15 men) to recognize the exemplary performance they accomplished in terms of improving husbandry practices of their own livestock and that of their neighbors.

Beneficiaries of the project acknowledged that they have experienced increased productivity of their livestock, decreased mortality of their livestock, increased livestock off take, and overall improvement in their livelihoods since the beginning of our projects. Moreover, the extension program has contributed to the marked improvement in knowledge, attitude and practices of livestock producers in the targeted villages.