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STRENGTHENING VETERINARY SERVICES IN AFRICA WITH REFERENCE TO SUCCESS STORIES IN UNDER-SERVED AREAS
Strengthening Veterinary Services in Africa with reference to success stories in under-served areas

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Abstract

- Role of the state: the problem or the solution / Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) have not fully delivered for Africa / Institutional failure as the key ‘absent issue’
- Rationale for strengthening vet services / Value of livestock / value added by State Veterinary Services
- Case studies – Mali/CAR/Botswana/Guinea/Senegal/Ethiopia
- Features of successful systems
- Partnership / performing institutions / permissive policy and legislation / plural approaches
- Policy recommendations for strengthening African Veterinary Services

Introduction

This paper argues that the market-promoting, state-restricting policies that have dominated African economic development in the last twenty years are by themselves unable to bring about growth and development in the livestock sector. Institutional weaknesses must also be addressed. This paper will draw on case studies from a number of African countries to show that appropriate strengthening of government livestock services can and does work. Most of these examples are successes in under-served areas, where the state has traditionally been most challenged. As such they serve as ‘test-cases’; approaches that succeed under extreme conditions have lessons to learn from and are likely to have wider applicability. The paper discusses common factors for success in livestock sector systems and tentatively suggests policy recommendations for strengthening African Veterinary Services.

Rolling back the state

“Why strengthen veterinary services?” This question is not as absurd as it may seem. From once being regarded as the solution to development, recently states have been seen as part of the problem. Whilst not agreeing with such sentiments, some others argue (Williamson 1993 and 2000) African states have grown too big and intervened too much. Furthermore some argue that African governments are ‘overextended’; they lack the resources to provide more than a judicial system, education and health services and should restrict themselves to these (Dusenberry 2000).

‘Rolling back the state’ has been a central solution of the Bretton Woods Structural Adjustment Policies promoted from the 1980s onwards to Africa’s problems. The easily interpreted and compelling logic of simple ‘commandments’¹ that allow the private sector to thrive, exports to flourish and usher in a new era of growth has been broadly applied. The prescription to be followed revolves around: fiscal discipline and the redirection of public expenditure, tax reform, privatisation, deregulation, trade liberalisation including direct foreign investment, interest rate and exchange rate liberalisation for the promotion of open economies. However despite two decades of extensive policy reform, many parts of Africa still need to dramatically increase economic growth in order to sufficiently cater for the populations needs (Goldsmith, 2001).

Levels of poverty and aid dependency have increased (McPherson, 2000) and GDP per capita fell by 0.6% from 1987 to 1994 (Sachs, 1996). Whilst there have been recent improvements, few claim unambiguous progress is being made. One-third of African countries have per capita incomes lower than they did in the early 1960s (Rodrik, 1997). In the livestock sector, Africa, despite comparative advantage in extensive livestock production, imports three times as much livestock and livestock products as it exports. Its share in world trade has declined from 2.4% to 2% in the last decade (Tambi, Maina & Bessin, 1999).

**The importance of institutional strengthening**

So how can the situation be improved? Detailed cross-country comparisons show that institutional factors play a major role in accounting for differences in growth (Radelet, Sachs, and Lee, 1997; Bloom and Sachs 1998). Institutional failures such as lack of ownership in accepting policy initiatives, lack of credibility in undertaking and lack of capacity in implementing policy initiatives are commonly cited as reasons for the limited success (Brautigam, 1996).

Institutional weakness occurs in all sectors including the private sector, but as governments shape markets and society through their leadership roles, they are most critical to policy success or failure. Adjustment programs, with their focus on containing civil service costs, have had limited success in tackling the institutional problems of the public sector (World Bank 1994a).

The centrality of institutions to growth and development has important policy consequences. It suggests that ‘non-market’ failures are as important as ‘market failures’. That is, the market is not the only driving force. The remedies for these failures are distinct and different. While solutions to market failure has been put forward as restricting the state; institutional failure requires strengthening it. Policies such as SAP, which mainly focus on market failure, are by themselves unlikely to bring about lasting positive change.

**The value of livestock to Africa and the value added by state veterinary services**

Before looking at the detailed case studies and the lessons learned it may be useful to briefly review the value of livestock to African countries, and the value added by state veterinary services.

In Africa, the livestock sector makes up at least one third of agricultural value and involves 80% of the rural population (ILRI 1992). Rangelands occupy six times the area of arable lands and provide 70 million people with their livelihoods, for another 400 million agro-pastoralists livestock are an essential part of the farm enterprise (Blench, 2000).

While the enormous contribution of livestock to African economies and peoples livelihoods is incontrovertible, the contribution of state veterinary services is less easy to precise. One approach is to look at the value of goods and services, which could not be produced in the absence of state enablement. In a globalised economy, trade in livestock and livestock products must increasingly conform to international rules and standards. Currently over 90% of African countries export livestock products earning over $USD 1 billion a year3. Opportunities for livestock trade are expected to grow rapidly over the next two decades and by 2020 livestock will be the most important agricultural sub-sector in terms of land use and value added. (IFPRI 1999, World Bank 2001). This trade is almost wholly contingent on a functioning veterinary service.

Control of epidemic disease is a largely public good requiring centralised and authoritative management – as such it is in all countries a state function. An indication of the benefits of disease control can be obtained by looking at the costs incurred when animal disease escapes control. The 1996 outbreak of African swine fever in

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2 Institutions are stable, recurring patterns of behaviour that determine the policies that are accepted and the way that these policies are executed; Policies are rules that express goals and provide rewards or sanctions to attain them; organisations are structures of recognised and accepted roles.

3 FAOSTAT. Data averaged for 3 years (1996-1998)
Cote d'Ivoire killed 25% of the pig population and cost between US $13 and US$ 32 million. An outbreak of the same disease in Nigeria in 1998 cost that country’s farmers US $ 8.4 million in just six months in one state (Lagos). Also in Nigeria the Rinderpest resurgence of the 80’s caused losses to livestock production in the order of US$ 2 billion. An outbreak of contagious bovine pleuropneumonia in Botswana required the slaughter of 320,000 animals and cost 400 million Dollars (Geering et al 1999).

The contribution of state services can be assessed by considering the negative control – i.e. the ‘without government scenario. It is not without significance that the only remaining suspected foci of Rinderpest in Africa are in areas with no functioning state services – Southern Sudan and Somalia. In Somalia the absence of recognised state services was one of the factors that has led to the bans on trade with the Middle East, and the long delays in those bans being lifted. These bans have cost the producers in the Horn of Africa tens of millions of dollars in sales (Steffen et al 1998).

And monetary cost is often the least significant impact. The Rinderpest pandemic of the late 19th century killed an estimated 10 million cattle and untold numbers of wildlife - irrevocably changing livestock husbandry and wildlife ecology and forcing pastoralists into exploitative labour in settlements and mines and consequent mass fatality from disease and malnutrition (Packhard, R 1992).

**Getting the institutions right**

The livestock sector is essential to African economies and livelihoods and its performance depends on well functioning and appropriate state veterinary services.

If some Sub Saharan African public sectors are considered to be relatively weak institutionally there is little reason to assume that all state veterinary services are institutionally strong. However, recent decades have seen several initiatives that have delivered real, substantial and documented benefits to livestock producers, users and consumers by transforming and building institutions. By looking at the common strands of these successes, conclusions can be drawn on critical factors for success.

**Mali**

Sahelian countries have comparative advantage in production of livestock for the West African Coast. For Mali, livestock is the second most important export, accounts for one/fifth of GDP and provides a livelihood for nearly one third of the population. However despite this comparative advantage, according to Meltzer et al (1998) livestock have been in decline, mainly as the result of policy bias, from the 70’s. These biases included an over valued currency (making domestic production un-competitive); high tariffs and taxes which effectively penalised trade; imports of subsidised beef from the EU; and high levels of un-official taxation. Governance deficits in the civil service compounded the problems. (Diakete, 1997).

The devaluation of the CFA in 1994, opened the door to several initiatives. Tariffs and taxes on livestock trade were reduced, export licensing and other documentation was simplified, and market information on livestock trade in the region improved. Coordination committees were established to interface between the private sector and the government easing formal and informal barriers to regional trade of livestock.

The combination of exchange rate and tax reform with institutional development had dramatic effects on production and profitability of livestock. From 1993 to 1998, farm-to-butcher marketing costs had been under 29%, meaning that farmers receive in income 71% of the coastal market price (USAID, 2000). Overall in Mali producer prices increased by 86% and exports by 85%, while unofficial payments that traders had to pay decreased by CFA 100 000 per truckload of animals (Metzel et al 1998).
**Central African Republic (CAR)**

Livestock is a cornerstone of the economy in CAR, it makes up one third of agricultural value and is a major source of foreign earning. 80% of cattle keepers are transhumant pastoralists (World Bank, 1994b).

From the 1980’s onwards a combined approach of policy reform (input liberalisation) and institution building was introduced. This transformed a group of regional livestock associations into a national service organization capable of playing a major role in livestock development. A highly positive correlation was established between the introduction of full cost recovery and drug availability. Household survey results in the project areas showed that once full pricing was introduced, drugs became more available, especially among the poor, who purchased on average, 50% more drugs per animal than the wealthier livestock producers. As a result of health improvement CAR livestock more than tripled while meat production increased at 8000 tonnes a year (Sidahmed, A 1997).

Over 4,000 community animal health workers were trained resulting in appreciable increases in preventative treatment and decreases in mortality. One study found 80% of herders were regularly treating their animals for internal/external parasites and mortality rate among 1-3 year-olds fell from 14% to 6.7% (IFAD, 2000). The black market supply to pastoralists went from 67% to 7% (de Haan and Bekure, 1997).

However many of the achievements were subsequently jeopardised by rising insecurity, drops in cattle price of more than 30%, and inadequate governance in grass-roots, professional and government institutions (IFAD, 2000).

**Botswana**

Although African countries are commonly believed to have over-staffed bureaucracies, in fact they have fewer government workers per capita than any other developing region (World Bank, 1997). The number of bureaucrats has been falling over the last decades. Botswana with a thriving livestock sector and exports is an exception to this trend. Since the 60’s it has relied on a large, increasing and well-managed, bureaucracy to become one of Africa’s fastest growing economies (Goldsmith, 1999).

But it is not just a question of number of employees. Unlike many African civil services, in Botswana recruitment and promotion is by independent administrative bodies (Holm 1996). Moreover, civil service pay is sufficiently attractive to retain the best workers and minimise moonlighting. This is unfortunately not always the case.

**Guinea**

In Guinea around 30% of the rural population depend on livestock. Previous to reforms, government policy had required that 10 percent of all herds be sold at a fixed price through the State Cattle Marketing Agency. This caused many herders to emigrate and conceal their animals in forests or outside the country. In addition, poor animal health constrained production. From the 80’s onwards a series of reforms were introduced. Livestock Directorate staff were reduced by two-thirds and training was given to those who remained. Access to veterinary inputs was liberalised, herders groups were formed and over 1000 CAHWs trained.

The impact was dramatic, more than 600,000 head of cattle are estimated to have returned as a result of the government's new liberalization policy. Census revealed a 67% percent increase in bovines and a 9% percent increase in herders over the 1988–95 period. But perhaps the most significant achievement was the growth of trust between herders and government (World Bank 1998).
Senegal

In Senegal a network between a veterinarian and paravets was facilitated by an NGO. The result of the assurance of quality that comes from a well-functioning referral network was at least a doubling in herder purchase of preventive treatments from paravets. (Ly, 2000)

Ethiopia

In the early 1990s one of the main constraints to rinderpest eradication in Africa was the persistence of the disease in remote areas such as the Afar region of Ethiopia. This area, inhabited by pastoralist or agro-pastoralist communities was poorly serviced by government veterinary services and had been underserved in terms of conventional rinderpest vaccination activities operated by the Pan African Rinderpest Campaign. To varying degrees, these areas were also characterised by insecurity and logistical difficulties that limited the use of cold chains and conventional, government services.

In 1991, Ethiopian veterinary services were exposed to heat-stable rinderpest vaccine developed by Tufts University of Boston, Massachusetts (Mariner, 1996). In order to deliver this vaccine to places such as the Afar they adopted participatory approaches developed by NGO animal health projects in Afghanistan and the Greater Horn of Africa. This involved developing an inter-active partnership with the traditional or indigenous pastoral institutions of the Afar (Catley 2001). This linkage was to yield dramatic results in the Afar. As a result respect for and contact with the Afar the state veterinary services quickly realised the Afar was an endemic area for rinderpest. Within 5 years, community-based animal health workers had been trained and equipped. They were supervised by government veterinarians, who also involved the communities in planning of vaccination campaigns and provision of improved health services. According to Mariner (1996), Afar CAHWs in Ethiopia achieved 84% vaccination efficiency. In Afar, 22 CAHWs vaccinated 70,000 cattle in one season and their efficiency exceeded the 72% efficiency reached by conventional government vaccinations teams. In addition conventional government teams comprising 64 staff in 14 vehicles only vaccinated 140,000 cattle. This level of efficiency quickly removed the rinderpest and Ethiopia was subsequently able to declare to the OIE provisional freedom from the disease.

Conclusions

These cases describing strong institutions delivering demonstrable benefits to producers and consumers, share several common factors. First of these is partnership. The most successful state interventions have been those where private sector and civil society are involved and empowered. Secondly institutional performance – successful interventions devote considerable time and resources to building new institutions (such as PAs) or enabling existing institutions (such as traditional pastoralist organizations) to work better. This often entails transforming attitude and behaviour, dismantling and restructuring rewards and internalising governance, accountability and transparency mechanisms. Thirdly there must be a permissive policy and legal environment; if macroeconomic, fiscal and trade policy is not conducive to production and marketing little sustainable improvement can be achieved. Without markets, production and productivity improvement are wasted. Similarly if institutional innovations are not legitimised they remain fragile and are easily eroded. And finally pluralism, best results are achieved when multiple strategies (e.g. fiscal reform, capacity building state services, empowering farmers associations) are carried forward at the same time.

Policy implications

The livestock sector is essential for livelihoods and economies in Africa. Its fundamental growing importance must be communicated to policy and decision makers. The function of state veterinary services should be recognised as the first step of any reform process designed to improve those services. While there is still a role for restricting over-extended state activities, the most urgent need is for strengthening states so they can fulfil
unique and non-transferable responsibilities. This strengthening requires an institutional approach that takes into account underlying behaviour, attitudes, norms and incentives.

A strong state veterinary service should work closely with finance and planning ministries to help shape the macro-economic, fiscal and trade policy that shapes livestock production. It will listen to civil society and private sector, include them in planning. It will do the things, which only states can do or that states do best and contract or delegate all other functions to civil society and the private sector. It will have broad accountability – and this infers that authority must be decentralised and de-concentrated. It will have well-paid, well-trained, motivated employees whose primary loyalty is to the public.

Partnership, improving institutional performance, creating an enabling policy and legal environment and pluralism are strategies that have been tried and tested and are essential to success.

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