

Veterinary voucher schemes in Ethiopia

Several NGOs collaborated with FAO and local government in Ethiopia on the implementation of veterinary voucher schemes during the recovery phase of a drought. The projects were in remote areas where private veterinarians did not operate, so government vets took on a supervisory role and worked with private veterinary pharmacies, CAHWs, and local communities.

The most successful model was supported by the Agency for Cooperation and Research in Development (ACORD), where people who received vouchers were still obliged to pay 30 per cent of the treatment costs provided by the CAHWs. The CAHWs were obliged to buy their initial drug stocks from a private veterinary pharmacy at full cost. Once treatment had been completed, CAHWs received the voucher worth 70 per cent of the cost of the drug and the remaining 30 per cent as cash. They returned the cash as a form of cost recovery to ACORD along with the spent voucher. ACORD then reimbursed the CAHW for the cost of the drug along with a small service payment, based on 20 per cent of the cost of the treatment. Other lessons from the voucher schemes were as follows:

- In all the voucher projects, the target population consisted of the poorest and most vulnerable households, often female-headed, as selected by the community.
- The value of the vouchers varied from project to project, but those projects that distributed vouchers with a higher value were the most successful. If the voucher value was too small, the participants complained and the process became overly bureaucratic.
- The vouchers were for the treatment of a specified range of common diseases in the areas concerned, not for any disease.

FAO completed an assessment of the programme using key indicators of availability, accessibility, and quality of service as well as intervention impacts on the existing animal health services, both public and private. The assessment concluded that in areas with strong CAHW programmes and private veterinary pharmacies and where stakeholders participate in the design, implementation, and monitoring, a treatment voucher system is effective and efficient in addressing the immediate veterinary needs of targeted beneficiaries during emergencies.

Save the Children USA also carried out an impact assessment of their scheme and found significantly lower livestock mortality in herds treated under the voucher system relative to control herds. They concluded that, 'Given that the veterinary voucher scheme impacted positively upon the privatised systems, upon pastoral livelihoods, and upon the health of animals in the intervention area, it is worth trying in other areas'.

Sources:

Regassa, G. and Tola, T. (2010) Livestock Emergency Responses: The Case of Treatment Voucher Schemes in Ethiopia, FAO, Addis Ababa.

Simachew, K. (2009) Veterinary Voucher Schemes: An Emergency Livestock Health Intervention – Case Studies from Somali Regional State, Ethiopia, Save the Children USA, Addis Ababa.