

## Promoting Livestock Extension Services through Trained Village Animal Health Workers

### Enhancing Livelihoods of Smallholder Farmers in Central Terai District of Nepal- ELIVES

Enhancing Livelihoods of Smallholder Farmers in Central Terai Districts of Nepal (ELIVES) project is a 3 year project funded by DFID and co-funded by ADRA UK and is implemented in four districts of Central Terai region (Bara, Rautahat, Sarlahi and Mahottari) from April 2015. The ELIVES project combines key strengths of project partners - ADRA Nepal, iDE and FORWARD Nepal and district-based partners (LNGO) to enhance livelihoods and income for poor and marginalized smallholder farmers with a focus on women and socially excluded groups in particular, Dalits, Janajati and Madhesi.

The project aims to bring tangible change in poor people's lives through interventions on goats, vegetables/lentil and market access/promotion. The project worked with 600 farmer groups comprising over 13,000 HHs. The project's work in developing local service providers and building market systems has ensured that the beneficiaries continue to get services and access to market and also benefitted the wider community. The end line survey revealed that skill enhancement in vegetable and goat production, coupled with increased access to services and markets increased annual income by £80 for 66.5% of beneficiaries.

### Background

Livestock is an important economic and livelihood asset of farmers as it plays a vital role in family income and diet. It is more important in smallholder and landless families, as their farm production alone is not sufficient for household food security. Any interventions in livestock can contribute to reducing hunger and poverty of smallholder and landless families.

Raising livestock is not an easy task; it needs utmost care, management and attention to prevent livestock from becoming sick and increase productivity. Several pest and diseases cause substantive loss of animals every year, sometime causing havoc due to their



spread as epidemics. The loss of even a single livestock animal can have dramatic impact on the livelihoods of resource poor families as it shares a significant amount of their household economy.

The villages in Nepal lack trained human resources and medicines to treat livestock is also not readily available in the villages. Taking animals to Livestock Service Centers or Veterinary Hospitals run by District Livestock Development Office is practically unfeasible and calling veterinary technicians at home costs farmers very high. By having a trained human resource in the villages can make a big difference as animals can get timely treatment and money can be saved.

ADRA Nepal and partners, through the ELIVES project, have been training local youth as Village Animal Health Workers (VAHWs) with an aim to increase easy and quick access to required technical services at the doorstep of villagers at affordable price for reducing the loss of livestock from disease and pest and improve the productivity of livestock. This intervention also aims to create an employment opportunity for youth and contribute to their income and overall livelihood means.

### Methodology

1. Mapping of existing VAHWs who are already trained and working or those who are trained but not so active.
2. Selection of existing VAHWs who are willing to receive further training to bridge their capacity gaps. Assessment of the capacity of existing VAHWs and their capacity gaps.

3. Identification of areas with weak access to VAHW services through community consultations on the availability of veterinary services
4. Assess the number of new VAHWs to be trained and the number of existing VAHWs to be strengthened.
5. Selection of local youth to train as VAHWs following a standard set of criteria (education, age, commitment to provide services after the training)
6. A 35-days training is conducted on basic livestock health and management by through government approved training providers.
7. Refresher training provided to existing VAHWs in the area of their capacity gaps. This training was conducted in coordination with DLSO.
8. The project introduces VAHWs to goat farmer groups to encourage service seeking and service delivery on payment of a small fee mutually agreed between them.
9. VAHWs are offered with some basic instruments (burdizo castrator) and veterinary kits to help them get started in the business.
10. New VAHWs trained by the project are again provided refresher training after a year to reinvigorate their knowledge and skills. The government training center prescribes a 12-days refresher course but the project negotiated a customized training package with the Regional Training Center of the Department of Livestock Services.
11. Mentoring services and other technical support are provided to VAHWs whenever needed by project staffs and also by DLSO staffs.
12. Bimonthly review meetings of VAHWs are organized with the project team to update about their activities and progress and to discuss on problems/issues and solution. Local DLSO staffs are also invited in these meetings which served to identify problems/issues and provide coaching and mentoring to VAHWs to find solutions to the identified issues.

**Status of VAHW in ELIVES sites**

District	Number of new VAHW trained (35 days training)	Number of existing VAHWs taking refresher course	Number of VAHWs actively providing services
Bara	8	5	10
Rautahat	9	5	10
Sarlahi	9	7	14
Mahottari	8	5	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>43</b>

## Outcomes and Impacts

### Timely and affordable service

The project has trained 56 VAHWs of which 34 are new people trained by the project through 35 days training and rest were existing VAHWs who got their capacity enhanced through refresher training. This ensured one to two VAHWs in each VDC. Although not all trained VAHWs are active and some pockets still showing weak access to service, the availability of VAHWs has tremendously enhanced access to basic veterinary services. The final evaluation found that about 74%

#### Case 1: Transformation in Ajaya's life

Ajay Chaudhary (23 years) from Kolbi municipality-1, Pipariya had to give up his plan for higher study due to his poor family background. Ajaya got 35 day VAHW training at Pokhara through the project. After getting training, Ajaya went to each goat groups and introduced himself. He also provided training on shed management, fodder management and breed management which also strengthened his linkage with farmer groups. Ajaya visits farmer groups every day and interact with farmers regularly. On an average, I earn about 15,000 to 20,000 per month by castrating bucks and treating sick animals. Farmers' trust on him and employment potential motivated Ajaya to take further training to be veterinary technician. He is able to cover the fee of course through income made by working as VAHW.

ELIVES beneficiaries accessed VAHW services in the last year of the project. Since the VAHWs are local residents, they are available at any time upon a single call. So, the villagers feel comfortable in contacting them and trust their skill and honesty. Quick response to livestock's problems helps farmers save animals from possible losses in emergencies. There been has no any complaints from villagers about any VAHW's non-attendance, carelessness and lack of timely availability or unavailability at all.

In addition to treating animals, VAHWs are also trained to castrate animals. The use of castrator is less painful compared to crude indigenous method (that involved clipping with sticks and using hammers) and mortality after castration has almost become nil. The service fee is nominal (NPR 50 to 100) compared to technicians who has to be called from distant places or district head quarter.

### Income and employment opportunity for local youth

The project has also benefited the VAHW since now they have increased client base and hence increased income. Many VAHWs are earning NPR 400-500 through 4-5 visits daily to their clients. On an average, ative VAHWs are earning from NPR 6,000 (£40) to NPR 35,000 (£240) per month. Many jobless youth have now a self-employment opportunity in their own village. This has contributed to their livelihoods and wellbeing. Some of them who were planning to migrate overseas for work abandoned the idea.



बिरेन्द्रा यादवको सल्लाही

यसमा विद्युत विज्ञानोपयोगी प्रयोगहरू (ELIVES) सल्लाही  
आवधिक समुदायमा आर्वा-बर्ना-बागेश्वर विस्तारित स्वास्थ्यको काम  
भएर सफल भए-

आविका समुदायमा कार्यकारीको नाम-सल्लाही प्रमाण-सल्लाही

क्र.सं.	काम/सल्लाही	दिनांक	सल्लाही	सुदामा	सल्लाही
१	आविका सल्लाही	१०/०५/२०	सल्लाही	१	✓
२	आविका सल्लाही	१०/०५/२०	सल्लाही	२	✓
३	आविका सल्लाही	१०/०५/२०	सल्लाही	१	✓
४	आविका सल्लाही	१०/०५/२०	सल्लाही	२	✓
५	आविका सल्लाही	१०/०५/२०	सल्लाही	२	✓
६	आविका सल्लाही	१०/०५/२०	सल्लाही	१	✓
७	आविका सल्लाही	१०/०५/२०	सल्लाही	१	✓
८	आविका सल्लाही	१०/०५/२०	सल्लाही	१	✓
९	आविका सल्लाही	१०/०५/२०	सल्लाही	१	✓
१०	आविका सल्लाही	१०/०५/२०	सल्लाही	१	✓
११	आविका सल्लाही	१०/०५/२०	सल्लाही	१	✓
१२	आविका सल्लाही	१०/०५/२०	सल्लाही	१	✓
१३	आविका सल्लाही	१०/०५/२०	सल्लाही	१	✓
१४	आविका सल्लाही	१०/०५/२०	सल्लाही	१	✓

### Key Learnings

- Although VAHWs have limited capacity to solve complex issue, they can provide basic veterinary services to areas where outreach of government extension services or private veterinary professional is weak.
- 35 days VAHW is not sufficient and they need additional skills and trainings. Periodic refresher trainings are also required to maintain the quality of their services at least up to few years until they gain enough experiences.
- Selection of participants is very important for the service continuity and sustainability. People with high probability of migration should be avoided. It could be effective to provide training to married woman but local cultural norms could be a hinderance in many places.

#### Case 2: VAHW training generated local employment option for Birendra

Birendra Yadav (20) resides in Bardibas-5, Tuteshwor tole, Mahottari district. Yadav family owns 0.50 ha of unirrigated land. Birendra was jobless after passing 10th grade. His sister dropped out of school due to financial problem. Birendra got a 35-day VAHW training organized by the ELIVES project. He also got an opportunity to participate in refresher training and also artificial insemination training. Now, he is providing veterinary services in nearby villages earning an average income of NPR 20,000 (£ 138) per month. The villagers are very happy with his service. Birendra is now able to support his family and finance his sister's education who resumed study.

- Although young people can be good VAHWs, their aspiration is high as seen by many youth planning to enroll veterinary technician course. It will be still good if they come back to the village but they may seek salaried job after the training. Therefore, it is advisable to select people over 25 years for VAHW training.
- Engaging beneficiary community in the selection of youth for VAHW training and a bond to ensure service commitment by selected candidates to beneficiary groups could make both parties accountable for sustainable services. Sharing at least a small share (about 10%) of cost of training might help to avoid wrong participants who just take the chance without commitment to service.
- Mentoring by district or local level livestock offices of the government of Nepal may help the VAHW when they cannot solve the problem on their own. They will also have backup, if needed.
- With proper training and sufficient exposure, these technicians can be involved in providing AI services. This will not only help them diversify their activity but also promote this relatively new technology.
- There is also a potential to train VAHWs as insurance agent which not only increase their income but also access to animal insurance services in the wider community.
- This model has a good probability of success and hence the stakeholders can replicate it in other villages in Nepal. This will also help stop migration to some extent since many of the youths will be having employment opportunity at their own villages.

**For further information:**

ADRA Nepal Country Office, Sanepa, Lalitpur, Nepal  
 Phone: (++977)-1-5555913/14; Fax: (++977)-1-5554251  
 Email: [info@adranepal.org](mailto:info@adranepal.org); Website: [www.adranepal.org](http://www.adranepal.org)

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