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Para-veterinary Training Programmes in Andhra Pradesh

N.S.R. Sastry and S. Ramalinga Raju

1. Introduction

This report is a part of the PPLPI-CALPI Government of Andhra Pradesh (GoAP) initiative to improve livestock service delivery by analyzing and coming to a better understanding of the performance of the para-veterinarians in Andhra Pradesh with a view to enhancing their performance through restructuring of the training programme(s). In this context, the objective of the current study was 'to develop a clear understanding on the training provided to para-veterinarians and para-veterinary workers by various agencies including the deficiencies and gaps in training, if any.'

For the purpose of this study, a para-veterinary worker or a village-based livestock service provider (VLSP) is defined as a community-based or private village level worker trained to liaise between livestock owners and veterinarians, besides him/herself being able to provide artificial insemination (AI), basic veterinary, and preventive health services to the village livestock in the village itself.

The study aimed to provide the following information on the para-veterinary training programmes offered in Andhra Pradesh:

- Overview and description of the main training programmes
- Assessment of the programmes
- Service delivery by the para-veterinarians
- Suggestions for improvement of the training programmes

2. Methods

In order to achieve the above objective, a comprehensive list of all organizations providing training to para-veterinarians in all the sectors in Andhra Pradesh was prepared. Thirty-three organizations were identified and sent a mail questionnaire seeking information on various aspects of their training programmes.

The information collected via questionnaire was supplemented by visits to some of the organisations and interviews of staff as well as through the review of relevant documents from other sources such as the GoAP Animal Husbandry Department (AHD).

3. Results

The response rate to the questionnaire was above 60%. Twenty-six training programmes were thereby identified, 23 of which were provided by government and quasi-government organizations. Clearly, AHD is the main training agency for para-veterinarians in Andhra Pradesh, having a systematic approach at planning, curriculum building and implementation of para-veterinary training programmes to meet its own requirements and those of other government and bilateral development projects in the state.

The three non-governmental programmes were organized by the NGOs Rayalaseema Sewa Samithi (RASS), Anthra, and JK Trust. These NGOs generally have training programmes tailored to meet their specific needs.

Training Programmes on Offer

As the main objective of this study was to understand the training programmes for animal health workers providing services in the villages, long-term courses (1 to 2 years) were not further considered in this study. The key training programmes identified were:

- **Gopalamitra** programme, offered by the Andhra Pradesh Livestock Development Agency (APLDA), focusing on cattle breeding through doorstep AI, fodder development, and calf rearing.
- **Sanghamitra** programme for veterinary first aid, preventive vaccination and livestock extension. These Sanghamitras are expected to work in the Velugu Programme – AP Rural Livelihoods Project. However, they are not practically working now. The few Sanghamitras approached by the Study Team did not provide further insights saying that they are not able to work.

- **Woman Poultry Health Worker** programme specializing in marketing network and vaccination. These are trained to work in the Velugu Programme – AP Rural Livelihoods Project. However, the Study Team could not locate even a single woman poultry health worker and AHD personnel informed that they are not able to work currently.
- **Sheep Extension Worker** programme in Nalgonda district, implemented with the help of ISNRMPA, Hyderabad, specializing in sheep development, rotation of breeding rams, and sheep vaccination.
- **AI Technician** programme of the NGO BAIF in Mahabubnagar and Ananthapur districts and of the NGO JK Trust in Anantapur district.
- **Women Village Health Worker** programmes of the NGO RASS, working in a limited area in two Mandals of Chittoor district amongst women self help groups (SHG) as a sort of employee of RASS, and the
- **Women Village Health Worker** programme of the NGO Girijana Deepika, trainees of which are trained by the NGO Anthra, Hyderabad. Girijana Deepika workers work in a tribal area of the Rampachodavaram Mandal of East Godavari district. Some information on their training could be obtained from NGO Anthra and on their performance from farmers of the region.

The *Gopalamitra* programme developed by APLDA is the most widely taught course for para-veterinary training in Andhra Pradesh. This course is also used by some NGOs, development projects and dairy cooperatives either in full or in part to upgrade skills of their own village-based workers. For example, the *Gopalamitra* programme of the JK Trust and the Velugu programme organized for the World Bank development projects are based on the *Gopalamitra* programme. However, the NGO Anthra develops specific courses to meet its requirements.

Characteristics of the Training Programmes on Offer

Admission Criteria: Selection criteria for *Gopalamitra* and allied courses are 10th class pass. However, in practice candidates with lower and/or higher than required qualification (some even post-graduates) attended the courses. For the Woman Poultry Extension Workers training programme the minimum qualification is set as the 7th class.

Training frequency: At least one course of 1 to 4 months duration is organized each year by the designated regional animal husbandry training centres. Otherwise the state organizations conduct 3 training programmes a year on average. Out of the 454 trainees per year, only about 9% were females. The NGO Anthra conducted 6 training courses where the number of trainees were 123, 40% of which were women, while all 12 trainees in the one time para-veterinary training course of the NGO RASS were women.

Coverage: In case of government organizations, coverage was the territory (state/district/block/village) for which the organizations are mandated.

Training Cost: Total training cost for the four-month *Gopalamitra* training programme was around Rs. 19,500. Anthra's costs varied between Rs. 120 and Rs.300 per trainee per day depending on lodging and boarding costs. Anthra uses a graded system of charging for the training programme depending on the ability and willingness to pay. The duration of their programmes varied between 20 and 35 days.

Trainers: Most training organizations generally utilize in-house trainers, almost invariably veterinarians. Out of 26 organizations/programmes considered, 22 used in-house trainers whereas 6 organisations hired consultants.

Certification: For all the courses considered in this study, only a Certificate of Participation is given. No certificate is given for courses of 1 to 7 day duration.

Course Content

In terms of the content of course work, the emphasis seems to be on large ruminants (AI), to some extent on small ruminants, but much less on poultry, and negligible on pigs. The reason for this is that the *Gopalamitra*, the most widespread and common course focuses on AI in cattle and buffaloes. The NGOs do teach 'other' topics such as 'gender issues', evaluation, and herbal medicines. Nevertheless, AI is the most popular subject, while livestock management, health care subjects, extension and fodder management rank a distant second.

Suggestions for Improving the Training Programmes

We also solicited suggestions for improving the training programmes. The suggestions included: a) provision of adequate budget, staff, infrastructure, and facilities (laboratory and 'sheds' for conducting practical training) at the training institution; b) advance planning of the actual conduct of given training programmes and educational tours; c) timely selection of trainees, and; d) prompt payment of travel costs to trainees, honorarium to trainers and funds for providing refreshments to trainees.

Service Delivery by Para-veterinarians (Trainers' Views)

Location of service delivery: Most organizations reported that the para-veterinarians deliver services both at the farmers' doorstep and at a central point. Out of the 23 organizations that responded to this question, 14 reported providing services at both locations, while 7

organizations provided services only at the doorstep and 2 reported that service delivery was exclusively at a fixed central point.

Out of the 21 government organizations, 3 operated in peri-urban areas, while 18 organizations covered backward and low potential areas. The NGOs reported providing services mostly in dry and disadvantaged areas.

Cost recovery: Not much information could be collected on user charges. Regarding AI, the NGOs BAIF and JKT charge for providing the service in the areas of their operation although these areas of operation are relatively small. Apart from that, none of the NGOs charge user fees for other services.

Over and above this, the NGOs BAIF, RASS and JKT pay their para-workers a monthly allowance of Rs. 1,500 to 2,500 and some part of the user charges. The Gopalamitras, on the other hand, collect Rs. 40 to 50 (Average Rs. 35) from farmers when they provide services at the doorstep and Rs. 20 when provided at a central place. Veterinary aid at doorstep may yield around Rs. 20. Out of the user charges collected for AI, Rs. 20 is paid to APLDA towards cost of materials. It appears that the amounts mentioned above are as and when paid by some one. Actual payment could be moderate in rich delta districts but the payment for these services could be very difficult for poor farmers of disadvantaged communities, especially the keepers of small ruminants.

Problems with service delivery: Most of the organizations (17 out of 23) reported para-veterinarians using antibiotics, which is beyond their brief. Other undesirable acts observed were - carrying out surgery (3 out of 23), wrong doses (9 out of 23), wrong techniques (9 out of 23), and wrong care of equipment (7 out of 23).

4. Summary and Conclusions

Some salient features of VLSP training in Andhra Pradesh can be summarized as follows:

- In general, training is open to candidates with all socio-economic backgrounds, though those belonging to weaker and poor sections of rural areas were the main trainees.
- The programmes are generally not targeted for providing services to specific agro-climatic areas or socio-economic target groups, though some were organized especially for women, tribal and marginalized communities and drought-prone areas. Such programmes are generally organized by voluntary organisations.
- Need for the service, determined mandate and, in a few cases, demand by farmers are the main reasons for the organizations to undertake training of para-veterinarians.

- Courses mainly focus on large ruminants and the provision of AI, partially on small ruminants while poultry and pigs are largely neglected.
- Supervision, monitoring and evaluation of performance of newly trained field workers are some of the aspects that need vast improvement.

From the information available to us, it appeared that the organisations in Andhra Pradesh are reasonably well endowed to organize VLSP training, though there is always scope for improvement. Laboratories and sheds for conducting practical training with live animals seem to be the most important thing to be improved uniformly at all places.

Overall, from the discussions with field staff and senior officials of AHD, it seems that, at present, the Gopalamitra is 'no one's baby' and is somewhat hanging in the air. He/she has difficulties in earning a living, being taken to task for exceeding his/her brief, while no institution including APLDA comes to rescue in difficult professional situations.

From the many suggestions coming from actual organizers of training programmes, however, it seems that once the courses are decided at higher level, the organizers are somewhat left to fend for themselves in their training task. This calls for greater monitoring and guidance by the higher authorities of the para-veterinary training programme.

5. Contacts and Further Information

This research report is an excerpt from the full report submitted to PPLPI and CALPI. For additional information, please contact:

Vinod Ahuja

Indian Institute of Management
Vastrapur, Ahmedabad-380 015, India
Email: ahuja@iimahd.ernet.in

Abraham K. Joseph

Capitalization of Livestock Programme India (CALPI)
Sarvodaya Enclave, New Delhi, India
Email: lcindia.calpi@spectranet.com