

**Uganda Country Experiences:
Delivery of veterinary services by
Community Animal Health Workers
(CAHWs) and Veterinary
paraprofessionals (VPP)**

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Legal basis for veterinary practice

- The only existing legal basis for indulging in veterinary services delivery in Uganda is the veterinary Surgeons Act 1958.
- Four Sections (5,13,14 and 24) have direct bearing on delivery of services by Veterinary paraprofessionals and CAHWs

Legal basis

- Section 5 restricts registration for veterinary practice to holders of degrees and diploma in veterinary science/medicine from Universities recognized by the Uganda Veterinary Board.
- Section 13 criminalizes practice by unregistered or un-licensed persons and
- Section 14 supports section 13 by denying unregistered persons legitimacy to lay claim to payment for a service delivered in veterinary practice.

Legal basis ...

- Section 24 of the Act provides for exemptions and states that “Nothing in this Act shall be deemed to prohibit or prevent the practice of veterinary surgery by any person in the service of the Government”

The Law Vs Practice

- Section 5 - The Uganda VSB has only registered degree holders and never registered diploma holders although the law provides for it. This may be because universities (in the region) never offered diploma courses in veterinary medicine
- Despite Section 13 which criminalizes veterinary practice by unregistered or un-licensed persons, the diploma and certificate holders as well as CAHWs are operating in the country under different **informal** arrangements.

The contradiction - exemptions

- The above notwithstanding Section 24 of the Act on Exemption states that “Nothing in this Act shall be deemed to prohibit or prevent the practice of veterinary surgery by any person in the service of the Government.
- This section creates separate camps in the administration of veterinary services in the country
 - the government employees who are not subject to the Act and
 - the private sector players that are subject to the Act.

Trends in Public Vs Private veterinary service provision

- Since the initiation of formal veterinary services in Uganda, the government has been and remains the largest employer in veterinary services delivery although private practice is encouraged.

Trends – Unskilled manpower

- Before 1970s and generally before the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) took root the government veterinary structure was characterized by very few veterinarians who conducted more of planning and supervisory work than actual field practice. The field was mainly manned by diploma and certificate holders supported by unskilled manpower at grass root
 - unskilled manpower
 - Skilled and

Un-skilled manpower

The unskilled manpower was at grass root and was composed of

- veterinary scouts (community based informers of disease picture) at the lowest level followed by
- veterinary field assistants (community based persons who assisted to mobilize livestock keepers during programmes like vaccinations and construction of cattle crushes.
- They had no formal training – on the job experience.

Trained cadres

- The veterinary assistants constituted the lowest level of trained persons and were certificate holders after formal training lasting two years in a recognized institution.
- Animal husbandry officers are diploma holders. They undertook one extra year of training after the veterinary certificate course.
- Veterinary surgeons (degree holders) are a step above the AHOs.

Effects of Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)

- The SAP dropped veterinary scouts, field assistants and veterinary assistants from the employable category by government.
- The vacuum created by the elimination of the three categories became apparent but government did not re-estate them
(remember SAPs where meant to reduce government spending and encourage private sector growths)

Responses to SAPs

- The NGOs and other organizations like FAO started to support the CAHWs as a gap filler. FAO is on record as having trained and deployed (with government approval) over 600 CAHWs in a single support programme to Karamoja Region – a hard to reach and historically insecure part of Uganda which had about 20% of the national herd but poorly served by veterinarians.

Challenges

- The protection afforded by section 24 weakens the VSBs actions because very few persons subscribe directly to the VSBs authority.
- Management of privatization in full light that government veterinarians are doing the same work
- The short term project approach used by NGOs and FAO support to the CAHWs often leaves creates a sustainability problem
- Most farmers cannot differentiate between different categories of practitioners hence a lot of confusion

Challenges ...

- Different cadres of veterinary staff operate on rival basis - competitors rather than complimentary systems

Recommendations

- The review of the Veterinary surgeons Act is expected to give legitimacy to Veterinary paraprofessionals to practice through a registration exercise and to remove the protection afforded to government employees so that they practice under similar conditions as private practitioners.
- This is a sound approach because more than 80 % of the animals are attended to by categories lower than veterinarians.

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- THANK YOU