

Best Practice

Professionalising Veterinary Paraprofessionals

Improving the career prospects of newly qualified veterinary paraprofessionals (VPPs)



Objective: To increase the employability of VPPs from partner institutions involved in the P3V project and ensure their long-term career prospects. To achieve this objective, it will be necessary to set out detailed career pathways, identify viable business models, raise awareness among training institutions, and ensure that both initial and continuing training are aligned with the demands of the labour market.



Method	Outcomes	Stakeholders
1. Diagnosis and consultation: • Conduct qualitative and quantitative surveys among employers and graduating trainees about the employment of newly qualified VPPs • Assess the income-generating potential of animal health activities in order to identify viable economic models, which are essential to the long-term viability of the profession 2. A workshop on the joint development of an employment support programme • Organisation of national and regional stakeholder workshops to jointly develop the programme, which should cover: ○ The roles and responsibilities of the various actors involved, including Employment Information and Support Services (EISS) and liaison officers from training institutions ○ Governance and funding: establishing management mechanisms and sustainable sources of funding ○ Operational issues: structuring information flows to ensure effective monitoring and identifying ways in which mentors/sponsors can encourage newly qualified VPPs	List of expected outcomes: Report on the employment of VPPs after initial training and the difficulties encountered, by country (first such report in the region). Report on the income-generating potential of viable animal health activities in agricultural systems, by country. Increased awareness among training institutes regarding the issue of employment support and the creation of Employment Information and Support Services. A model for an employment coaching and monitoring tool: • An initial model for an employment coaching and monitoring tool and specific indicators for tracking the employment of VPPs Monitoring indicators: • Report on the survey regarding the employment of newly-qualified VPPs and the identification of viable economic models • Indicators derived from the employment coaching and monitoring tool, such as the number of young, newly qualified VPPs who have found a job within a year (including the proportion of women).	National Authority (Relevant government departments and units, such as the Department of Veterinary Services or the Department of Employment) Expert in economics and the employment of VPPs (External consultant, FAR Network) Training institution (Teaching staff and representatives from the VPP training institutions partnering with the project) Relevant professional authorities (Veterinary statutory bodies and other equivalent bodies representing VPPs) Professional associations of stakeholders (Livestock farmers, former students, veterinarians, other animal health professionals, and, where appropriate, NGOs) Project Implementation Unit (P3V Coordinator and Technical Assistant, Focal Points)



Conditions for success

- **Alignment of strategic visions:** It is imperative that the relevant government departments, regulatory bodies and training institutions agree on a key point: entry into the workforce is not an option; it is, rather, the ultimate goal of training. Without a sustainable socio-economic framework (employment prospects, stable incomes), improvements to initial training will have no impact on the capacity of the veterinary network.
- **Active involvement of the private sector:** Veterinary statutory bodies must work with them as co-responsible partners. Their interest lies in having access to a skilled workforce capable of extending health coverage to areas where they cannot be physically present.
- **Promotion of decent working conditions:** Support for newly qualified VPPs entering the workforce must include information on their social rights. Compliance with formal contracts and social security contributions is essential to ensuring the profession remains attractive in the long term.

Key points

- **Gender mainstreaming:** Analysis of data on the employment of VPPs must be systematically disaggregated by gender in order to identify disparities. Particular attention must be paid to the specific constraints faced by female VPPs, particularly the socio-cultural barriers that limit their access to bank credit or land ownership.
- **Optimisation of existing systems:** Before rolling out a new tool, it is essential to map out existing government schemes. The aim is to connect VPPs with funding mechanisms and national programmes supporting youth entrepreneurship in order to ensure their seamless integration into the national economy.

Recommendations

- **Advocate for interprofessional collaboration:** The monitoring tool should serve as a platform for dialogue between veterinarians and VPPs, clarifying the mechanisms for collaboration, partnership and recruitment.
- **Ensure the long-term sustainability of the employment support programme:** Implement and continuously improve the programme that was developed in collaboration with stakeholders, ensuring it is fully integrated into training programmes.
- **Leverage survey findings:** Use evidence-based data (income-generation analyses and employment rates) as advocacy tools with legislators to improve the regulatory framework, thereby safeguarding the practice of the VPP profession.
- **Broaden students' horizons:** Share examples of economic success (case studies of VPPs who have successfully transitioned into the workforce) from the outset of initial VPP training, the aim being to challenge preconceptions and demonstrate the diversity of possible career paths (employment, self-employment, specialist). This could also include providing information on funding options for VPPs, where available.

Conclusion

Improving support for VPPs as they transition into the world of work is a key factor in ensuring the long-term future of the P3V project. By empowering training institutions to expand their role as key players in the labour market – through Employment Information and Support Units – the project goes beyond the educational context to become firmly rooted in socio-economic reality.

The successful long-term viability of a project depends not only on these training institutions, but also on the strength of the partnerships forged with the wider socio-economic community (employers, organisations supporting entrepreneurship, and funding bodies). By ensuring that the profession is economically viable and guaranteeing decent working conditions, we safeguard not only the future of young VPPs, but also the overall resilience of the national veterinary healthcare network.