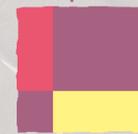




Saving rural livestock

Propcom



Mai-karfi

Making rural markets work for the poor

Enabling a policy framework for Community Animal Health Workers

- Poultry production is essential to food security in rural northern Nigeria where 60–87% of women in low-income households supplement their income by raising chickens.
- This activity remains under-developed because millions of village chickens die every year from the preventable Newcastle disease.
- Working with the Veterinary Council of Nigeria, Propcom has enabled a model that allows rural communities to access veterinary care and vaccines through a network of Community Animal Health Workers.
- The Council has paved the way with a curriculum, training programme and supervisory framework for new animal health workers nationwide.

Around 80% of Nigeria's livestock is raised on a small scale in rural areas. Animals are a vital income source for many people, particularly women. However, their potential is severely limited by a lack of veterinary services. To make markets work for these smallholders, a change in policies is set to bring animal health workers to their communities.

After successfully piloting a vaccination programme for smallholder poultry, Propcom Mai-karfi worked with the Veterinary Council of Nigeria to give veterinary services a greater reach in rural areas. A manual and curriculum are now available and being introduced state by state, to train and regulate the service delivery of Community Animal Health Workers. Propcom has raised widespread interest among vaccine manufacturers and distributors to leverage on this intervention to expand their market penetration, starting with the humble but very important village chicken.

By working with regulators, Propcom has brought an advancement for all: healthier animals for rural entrepreneurs; services and disease surveillance in 'hard to reach' regions; regulation to prevent quackery; and enhanced food security for the whole country.

Adding value at home

Indigenous poultry play an essential role in the rural economy, providing smallholders with a source of protein and income that can be used for urgent monetary needs, such as school fees or medicines. Propcom Mai-karfi's research has revealed that 60–87% of northern Nigerian women in poor rural households keep chickens, raising a flock size of 16–18 birds.

Outbreaks of disease are a frequent and devastating occurrence for domestic poultry, and Newcastle disease is the biggest threat for indigenous chicken breeds. Its appearance regularly especially during the “dry season” kills 90–100% of a flock. Therefore, investing in larger flocks is a burden that few smallholder farmers are willing to take on.

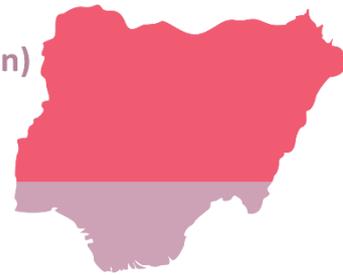
The problem is exacerbated by under-capacity in veterinary services. Nigeria's estimated 600 million farmed animals are served by only around 10,000 veterinarians. Most of these work for larger commercial enterprises based in urban or peri-urban areas. The widely dispersed rural population and poor transport infrastructure, together with the perception that smallholders will be unwilling or unable to pay, makes veterinary practise in rural communities unattractive and impractical. Communities often have to rely on unskilled and unqualified practitioners or quacks. As a result, diseases spread quickly among rural stock and makes animal mortality high.

Local professionals

Early on in its activities, Propcom identified the missing capacities in the market system that the existing rural model was unable to address. Its first intervention in poultry health made use of community vaccinators to deliver the Newcastle disease vaccine to local chickens and other backyard birds in order to protect them from the devastating effect of Newcastle disease.

Nigeria has 180 million chickens

₦80 billion
(£178 million)
poultry
sector



2% of GDP

2/3 of these – 120 million birds –
are rural backyard poultry

This intervention was met with initial resistance from some stakeholders in the veterinary profession who feared a loss of revenue and failure in coordination. However, it was a noteworthy success, providing important data that illustrated the disconnect in the distribution of livestock and veterinary facilities and services – with 80% of livestock being raised in rural areas, while the majority of veterinary services were based in cities.

Propcom was able to demonstrate that low productivity was directly associated with high bird mortality in rural areas and that this mortality could be reduced by up to 90%, in the case of Newcastle disease, by using a network of community-based animal health workers to improve vaccination access. Furthermore, improved surveillance and notification could effectively reduce the spread of diseases. And addressing these issues would lead to more revenue for veterinarians and suppliers, as their networks expanded into formerly unserved areas.

Teaching the essentials

Key to the success of the community health initiative is working with regulators, rather than creating alternative parallel channels. In 2015, Propcom presented its findings on the rural vaccination gap to the Veterinary Council of Nigeria. They agreed that a network of Community Animal Health Workers, fully trained and licensed to work under a supervising veterinarian in locations where the veterinarian cannot reach, could provide the services so badly needed by local communities.

With the support of two consultants engaged by Propcom, the Council developed a curriculum, guide, handbook and workbook for animal health workers. This was reviewed and approved at the start of 2017. Propcom supported the Council in its training-of-trainers sessions.

Delivery channels for all

In July 2017, a communiqué was signed authorising the use of the training materials across Nigeria. To date, 20 of the 36 states of Nigeria have expressed an interest in training Community Animal Health Workers. Propcom's next step is to facilitate pilot programmes in some of these states, in partnership with interested service suppliers, veterinary companies, distributors and clinics. These private partners will leverage the new community channels to reach far more rural smallholders.

Implementation is most advanced in Kaduna state. Here, Propcom has partnered with the distributor Ambuvets. Ambuvets runs a clinic and pharmacy in Kaduna town, but wants to extend its services to rural areas through mobile veterinary clinics. To facilitate this, Propcom is cost-sharing Ambuvet's investments in training of the Community Animal Health Workers to serve in the clinics as well as in demand creation activities.

From pilots to policy

2012

Community vaccinators pilot reaches 1,567 smallholders

2013

2014

Community vaccinators scaled up across Benue, Nasarawa, Niger and Gombe states

2015

Review of data leads to CAHW proposal

2016

Curriculum reviewed

2017

Communiqué signed and trainers trained

The aim is to establish a strong and lasting presence for Community Animal Health Workers in rural Nigeria. Propcom's work with the Veterinary Council of Nigeria and the states throughout this pilot stage will help to develop the model that will deliver affordable and cost-effective training across the country. It will also encourage veterinary companies to work with these local professionals in cost-effective ways that will make their services accessible to all rural smallholders.



Helping regulators advance

Propcom's early intervention with community vaccinators met with local but limited success, partly because it was perceived to be in competition with regulatory authorities and established service providers, and partly because of its limited capacity to provide integrated veterinary services along with husbandry and business advice. Based on this lesson, Propcom has worked with the Veterinary Council of Nigeria to bring Community Animal Health Workers to Nigeria, a solution that benefits all parties.

Standardised training, as well as a hierarchical referral, supervision and reporting system, will ensure that rural smallholders throughout the country receive required quality service that helps them maintain the health of their animals. The workers will also offer practical advice on how to increase productivity and manage livestock as a business. At the same time, their presence in villages will mean that the state can be promptly notified of disease outbreaks and can act quickly to halt them.

The system will also work for suppliers. Currently, veterinary products are produced and packed in bulk, or often require specialised storage conditions to maintain their efficacy. Aggregating the demand of smallholders through the Community Animal Health Worker distribution chain makes the development of thermotolerant pharmaceuticals provided in small pack sizes more profitable for their manufacturers.

All of these changes fit into Propcom Mai-karfi's overarching aim; to make markets work for the poor (the M4P approach). This is not just about supply and demand, it's about all of the external factors which influence supply and demand – such as deadly diseases and the trained workers who can stop them.

Ultimately, the policy intervention will benefit Nigeria as a whole. Millions of healthier chickens and other livestock will increase food security, limit disease outbreaks among Nigeria's 138 million livestock population, improve rural livelihoods and nutrition, and boost the pro-poor benefits of Nigeria's livestock sector.

Propcom Mai-karfi

Propcom Mai-karfi (which means 'stronger') is a programme supported by the UK Government to make rural markets work for the poor.

By engaging with private sector partners and governments, Propcom Mai-karfi has raised the incomes of over 500,000 people in northern Nigeria.

Through its partnership approach, the programme has stimulated £20 million in private and public investment into the rural economy.

