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Good Practices for Family Poultry Production



Advocate gender issues: A sustainable way to control Newcastle Disease in village chickens

by

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Country: Southern Africa

(Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and, more recently, Zambia)

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The purpose of the International Network for Family Poultry Development (INFPD) is to share information about poultry production among scientists, researchers, policy makers, educationists, students and development workers and to promote the cause of family poultry production.

Good Practices of Family Poultry Production (GPFPP) are "practices that address environmental, economic and social sustainability for on-farm processes, and result in safe and quality food and non-food agricultural products" (FAO COAG 2003 GAP paper). Sharing information about "Good Practices for Family Poultry Production" that are successfully implemented in countries, regions or development projects is an important objective of the INFPD so that these practices can be replicated in different region based on the farmers' demand.

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1. Introduction

The understanding of gender relations and its implications with regard to poultry production systems are crucial to the development of appropriate and successful interventions. Knowing not only why and how people raise chickens but also who is raising village chickens is of foremost importance for the improvement of village poultry in general and specifically for the control of Newcastle disease (ND) to succeed.

As most of the countries are adopting gender sensitive measures and policies that aim to redress past inequities between men and women there is a growing tendency among politicians as well as technicians to consider women rights and access to resources as legitimate and positively contributing to the efforts to eradicate poverty. However, in most countries, a majority of the staff and technicians do not always have tools to address women issues and integrate a gender perspective in their work. This can have negative consequences for programmes as a whole and women specifically as it introduces a bias due to gender blindness and may reinforce gender discrimination.

2. What practice are we talking about?

This Good Practice is based on the work developed by the International Rural Poultry Centre (IRPC) of the KYEEMA Foundation, It is the result of community-based ND control program being developed in Southern African Development Community countries (Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zambia) to improve the livelihoods of poor livestock keepers through the effective and sustainable control of Newcastle Disease in the last fifteen years.

By developing gender sensitive programmes to control ND KYEEMA provides an opportunity for households in general and specifically women to increase their flock, their income and food availability and thus gives more visibility to their contribution to the households livelihood. As a consequence, the status of women tends to improve. Women's participation in all ND control activities as vaccinators, staff members and farmers in all the phases contributes to improve gender awareness.

3. Key elements of the good practice

Objective	Instruments
Assess gender roles and responsibilities in village chicken production	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) carried out in same sex focus groups. PRA includes analysis of roles, access, control and benefit related to chicken production.
Develop effective extension material	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Training material should be pre-tested and reviewed to ensure

Objective	Instruments
	gender awareness
Involve male and female support staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 50% of staff should be women • Gender issues introduced in the training of all staff • Gender issues included in the terms of reference of all staff
Identify male and female vaccinators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 50% of vaccinators are women
Ensure gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation of the ND control program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Data collection by vaccinator on male and female headed households vaccinating against ND • PRA carried out with same sex focus groups every year • Participatory exercises carried out with same sex focus groups every year • Yearly random survey with 50% of women interviewees and 50% of women interviewers

4. How did this GP work?

4.1 Understanding gender roles and responsibilities in village chickens production and marketing

In most regions of the world small flocks of village chickens are in the hands of women. In addition to taking care of them, by providing additional feed and water, women often have control over the money resulting from their sale. It is important to acknowledge the different roles, interests and needs of men and women. Several aspects need to be taken into consideration. Men and women or different groups in the community can have different interests (e.g. semi commercial farmer versus village farmers). In the household as well, interests might be different between different members according to their sex and their age. Socio-economic reasons, socio-cultural attitudes, and group and class-based obligations, influence men and women's roles, responsibilities and decision-making functions. Cultural beliefs and practices limit women's mobility, social contact, access to resources, and the types of activities they can pursue. Institutional arrangements can also create and reinforce gender-based constraints or conversely, foster an environment in which gender disparities can be reduced. All these aspects mentioned above affect women's and men's adoptions of new measures, their possibility to scale-up their production or their participation in decision-making related to ND control.

Participatory approaches should be used in order to become familiar with and understand the situation of different stakeholders (producers, traders, livestock personnel, local authorities) (Bagnol, 2009c). They can provide data on the role of women and men in all the activities related to

chicken production and are a tool to advocate for the selection of women as vaccinators. All training and training material should be gender sensitive and staff should contribute to empowering women (Bagnol, 2009b).

4.2 Effective extension material

Communication entails not only the disseminating of basic messages but also engaging various stakeholders and accommodating a multitude of interests that require specific and varied communication interventions. Communication and research are parts of a whole process of improving poultry production. Sharing knowledge widely and discussing alternatives on a regular basis assists to establish trust and dialogue. A thorough understanding of the reality of village chicken producers allows the identification of appropriate channels of communication and the development of adequate messages and communication material.

An example from 2003 in Dodoma (Tanzania) showed that while the female poultry producers had never heard of ND vaccine, the male group had. This illustrated that women can be, and are often, less exposed to extension messages even when the activities are related to what they are in charge (Bagnol 2009a). Thus appropriate channels need to be identified to ensure that women get the information that is relevant to them. Written information is also often less appropriate for them due to lower literacy compared to men. This situation can create a handicap, negatively affecting the production improvement and preventing the identification of suitable options. One of the instruments KYEEMA adopted to reduce these disparities was the adoption of a gender approach when developing the communication strategy. KYEEMA prioritized the use of visual and oral material with the production of flip-charts and the training of the vaccinator and support staff in its use. In the material developed both men and women are represented and sharing roles equally.

Pre-testing the communication material with male and female farmers before its finalisation and dissemination ensures that communication materials are effective in transmitting the intended information and in promoting expected attitudes and behaviours (Alders and Bagnol, 2007; Bagnol, 2009b). Cultural appropriateness is also better grasped through participatory methodologies to ensure that recommendations and messages are acceptable locally. Communication materials that are badly designed can have unexpected outcomes and may communicate negative ideas and messages. Or even worse, they may prevent people from being involved in the development of mechanisms that could help to improve their life.

4.3 Male and female support personnel

Whenever possible, women should be involved in dealing with poultry disease control. There is still a very high gender imbalance among veterinarians and extension workers in developing countries where most of the agricultural and veterinarian staff is mainly male. Involving highly

committed women to play important roles in any poultry project is of utmost importance. With adequate training, sensitization, monitoring and gender balance among staff, gender issues are more likely to be integrated smoothly as the project activities unfold.

The selection of vaccinators should be done during community meetings as it is essential to have all community members aware of women's role in poultry production, including the importance of women visiting other houses to vaccinate and carry out follow up evaluation activities. **Only through extensive sensitization by using PRA exercises and by women presenting their work to men and vice-versa is it possible to make women's contribution to chicken production evident.** Enrolling at least 50% women for training as vaccinator is beneficial for projects because it increases their status and income resulting from the vaccination activities is part of the success of a ND control program (Bagnol, 2009a; 2009b).



Figure 1 Women focus group in Singida District, Tanzania (B. Bagnol)

4.4 Gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation of the ND control program

- **ND surveillance data**

Prior to each vaccination campaign, community vaccinators register in their books information about the male and female-headed households that are interested to vaccinate their chickens and the numbers of birds. This information allows the calculation of the required number of doses of vaccine. During each campaign the vaccinators also register the actual male and female-headed households who vaccinated, the number of chickens vaccinated and the money collected. This allows for the monitoring of the involvement of women in vaccination campaigns. They also register any

mortality that has occurred in chickens in the period between the last vaccination and the current campaign.

- **Participatory Rural Appraisal**

Typically a participatory rural appraisal aims to involve all stakeholders in the process of analysis and decision making such as male and female community representatives, traditional leaders, traditional healers, poultry traders, poultry officers and farmers.

The participatory tools for assessment and monitoring developed in the “Participatory tools for assessment and monitoring of poultry raising activities and animal disease control” (Bagnol, 2007) produced for the FAO HPAI Communication Workshop 22 January 2007 held in Bangkok (Thailand), provides methodologies for staff to better communicate with participants and promote the development of interventions with men and women, based on their needs and constraints. These tools are the result of more than ten years of implementation and thus have been tested extensively.

- **Participatory Impact Assessment (PIA)**

The PIA combines quantitative and qualitative data. It emphasizes the standardization and repetition of participatory methods (Catley et al., 2007). Investigations with single sex focus groups are carried out in selected villages to grasp the impact of the project on men and women.

The use of participatory ranking and scoring methods enables the presentation of qualitative indicators that are often based on opinions or perceptions numerically. Focus group discussions for example thus allow calculation of the percentage of people who report that their flock is increasing, decreasing or remain stable following a vaccination campaign. Similarly, the percentage of participants considering that vaccination campaigns allow to increase sale, consumption and exchange of chickens can be calculated.

- **Yearly random survey**

One tool used to analyze the impact of ND control is to carry out a baseline before any intervention at the start of the project and to repeat surveys every year. **As there are seasonal fluctuations of the chicken flock it is recommended to carry out the survey always in the same period of the year to capture significant changes that occurred in the target population as a result of the project intervention.** The survey can contain a variety of questions related to ownership, control, use (sale, consumption, exchange, ceremonies) of poultry and participation to vaccination campaigns. In addition, to include consideration of gender related issues, the survey should be designed to collect information with half the sample made up of female respondents to assess differences between male and female farmers. Interviewers should also be 50% female (Bagnol, 2009a). Colleagues often assume that it is the “head of the household” that has to be interviewed but sensitivity to the importance of interviewing the people who are owning and doing most of the activities related to chickens has to be developed.

5. Reasons behind the success

In the last ten years mainstreaming gender issues throughout the project activities has been implemented in all interventions that were carried out by the KYEEMA Foundation in Southern Africa (Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and, more recently, Zambia) and financed by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). It is AusAID policy to ensure that gender aspects have been adequately taken into consideration at all stages of the project cycle. KYEEMA's staffs at central and national level are aware of the gender implication of their interventions.

Having a good understanding of poultry production systems, how they are integrated in the farming systems and the roles and responsibility of men and women can help to develop more effective interventions (WHO, 2007). Conversely, not taking gender aspects into consideration can impact negatively on women. If poultry projects are adequately addressing gender aspects they can improve women's condition and status and have a positive impact on the welfare of family members including children's health and education (Mupawaenda et al., 2009).

Despite some resistance registered initially among staff during early stages of the interventions, and in different geographical areas, it quickly became well-accepted that women have a central role to play in poultry production and thus need to be involved to ensure the efficacy and sustainability of ND control. Thus, in all countries after some initial resistance, it was possible to select 50% of women vaccinators and it is now widely recognised by stakeholders and male farmers that women are the key elements of the activities both as beneficiaries and as vaccinators. This wide acceptance of women as the main protagonists is the reason for the acceptance of women as vaccinators. Although being a vaccinator is not a position that gives them huge economic return, it is a role that benefits the community as a whole and allows women to increase chickens flock and sale and improve household consumption of chickens.

Observations from the Singida region in Tanzania showed that as a result of the impact of ND control, poultry husbandry increased and became very profitable. Men in general showed more interest in this activity and several started developing it as a business. It highlighted two aspects: First that gender roles are not static as caring for chickens which is often considered the role of women can change under certain conditions and secondly that economic interest is an important driver for men to engage in poultry production. It was also shown elsewhere that when there are other and better options for men raising chickens remains the responsibility of women (Bagnol, 2009b). If no adequate gender awareness is built into the project design, men can usurp most of the benefit of the project for themselves. If the project is committed to empower women adequate interventions should be developed to ensure that women also can get a share of chicken production improvement and of the changing of scale and purpose of the production. Socio-cultural barriers can hamper women from developing

their activities so extension staffs should be supportive of women's initiative. Unfortunately these transformations often occur at the end of several years of ND control when project interventions are phasing out and not enough documentation of these processes has yet been gathered.

Similar to the observations from Tanzania men in the Thyolo district in Malawi became more interested in the possibility of making business with poultry. Some men said that they were able to avoid going to work in the fields of other people and to concentrate on their own fields as they were able to sell chickens. In some cases the relation between men and women changed. While women still kept the control of their poultry they had more possibilities to negotiate and power to bargain due to increased economic power. One woman in Maganize village still in Malawi explained: "The control of the chickens is with the women. But men are realizing that chickens can play an important place in the life of the household. So when the man has a problem he can come to the woman and ask for some money and then the woman can sell a chicken to sort out his problem if she feels that the problem is genuine". Another woman from Beula village in Thyolo district said: "Before the man was not interested but after seeing that the flock is increasing he is encouraging me to go ahead with the vaccination. Now it is him giving the money to vaccinate the chickens. And another woman participating in the same focus group added: "My husband is always in the forefront to go for vaccination. But I was the first to initiate with vaccination".

Again in Singida, Tanzania, a significant number of women exchanged chickens for goats or cattle, or sold chickens to buy other animals, as a way of diversifying risk. If the couple has a good relationship, they discuss issues and take decisions jointly having in mind the overall wellbeing of the household. In some cases women take decisions alone and in other cases their husbands decide even if the chickens are hers. Issues of ownership and control over goats, sheep, and cattle acquired with the proceeds from chickens' sales are important gender matters as it opens women's possibilities to improve their social status and build autonomous wealth. As chickens are mainly under women's control, buying goats or cattle with the proceeds from the sale of chickens could imply that these acquisitions would be women's property, however, the reality is fluid and complex and subject to negotiation. In rural societies, the number of animals owned is an important indicator of wealth and social status. Men aspire to own more cattle and women want to live in a household with cattle, and aspire to own cattle themselves which is acceptable in some regions whilst, in other regions, they have to use subterfuges to own cattle. Out of respect for the husband, the woman might accept him to behave as the owner and hence enjoy the increased social status derived from it. Mwakiti women and women from Nkunikana both describe the situation in similar terms, saying that the husband poses as the owner of the animals, but everybody in the family knows that this is not true.

Women also mentioned the autonomy that they enjoy when they earn some money that will support their own expenses without having to depend on the husbands and as a result, they explained that “more respect, more love, and more harmony” are felt in the household.

Vaccination not only impacts on farmers but also, and in a special way, on female and male vaccinators. In Singida, Tanzania, female vaccinators, in particular, felt its impact as they became financially and socially empowered due to a new acquired status in society. Being known in their communities by the high and valued title of *daktari*, which means ‘doctor’, gives women vaccinators prestige and shows appreciation. It is extremely rewarding for them to be frequently called out to sort farmers’ problems related to poultry husbandry. Women vaccinators expressed great satisfaction with the activity. They were given adequate training and support to carry out their tasks efficiently and to the satisfaction of the farmers. They learnt about poultry production and are now able to improve their own production and support the production of their neighbors and family members. Adding to an increased knowledge and of equal importance is their capacity to earn significant amounts from the vaccination campaigns. This situation raised their status in their own families due to a significant increase in their contribution towards the households’ livelihoods. They received support from their partners in this endeavor, which in their own word “strengthened their love ties, and harmony” in the household as they became economically more affluent.

6. Replication and Sustainability

The mainstreaming of gender issues is reflected in all phases and in all instruments produced by KYEEMA both for the training, the implementation as well as for the monitoring of the interventions (Ahlers et al. 2009). The methodologies, training material and M & E instruments are publicly available for use by interested organisations and governments and can be easily adapted and replicated (www.kyeemafoundation.org).

7. Conclusion and lessons learnt

Gender issues should be considered in all the phases of the project interventions and for all the material produced. Besides these, aspects such as clear policies, clear targets, constant vigilance and regular gender sensitive monitoring should be institutionalized through concrete mechanisms and processes. This however, does not invalidate the need for women-specific interventions when necessary. When all the steps mentioned are followed, it is very likely that all stakeholders of the project are aware of the gender dimension of the different activities and that they will be able to monitor the impact of ND control on both men and women. So, to achieve sustainable control of ND in village chickens, gender issues should be advocated in each strata.

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