

VETERINARY FIELD UNIT

Narration: Afghanistan is a country that has seen a lot of changes in the past several years. After years of war and drought, pastures had become battlefields. During the wars, even animals had not been spared.

This was very difficult for the Afghan people, who had been relying on livestock and agriculture for hundreds of years. They lost thousands of animals because of the war and the drought, which caused a shortage of pastures. In addition, there existed many diseases which could not be treated due to lack of facilities and proper treatments.

Nangarhar is a province of Afghanistan that has also suffered from the decades of wars and drought. In Nangarhar, livestock owners were also faced with a lack of facilities to treat their livestock.

However, after the end of the Taliban regime and the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, some of these problems were solved with the support of Afghanistan's international partners, and especially the United States. Schools and universities have been opened, and seminars and workshops have been put in place to train many young Afghans to address the needs of their communities.

Moheb Gull is one of the beneficiaries of the United States' support to Afghanistan. He graduated from the Veterinary Department, and has provided treatment to the livestock of Mohmandara District for about ten years.

On the way to his village

Moheb Gull: I treated this cow seven days ago and we can see now that it is fine and healthy. And now I go to my clinic/VFU. People will be waiting for me there, because they bring their livestock to get treatment. This is why I go there, to treat cows, sheep and other livestock that is sick.

I have finished my primary school and high school in Kabul. After graduation, I joined police and became a police officer. Then we immigrated to Pakistan, where I continued my studies. After I had finished my studies, we were provided the opportunity to work in the field. We would have training courses after work. I emigrated several times before returning to my province, Nangarhar. This is when I started working.

At that time, people did not know what a veterinarian, or a doctor for animals, was. Most of their livestock would die when they were getting sick. When I first arrived

here, I was treating people's livestock for free. For example, I would sell one vaccine for one Afghani. Later on, I established a fee for the medicines, to ensure that people are aware of the value of their livestock. Now all the people of this area are trying to bring their livestock to me, and even buy medicines.

At the clinic

A customer: Do you have a KPR vaccine?

Moheb Gull: Yes, I do.

Another customer: How much does it cost?

Moheb Gull: It costs about 100 Afghanis.

Narration: Moheb Gull has many hopes and wishes for treating the region's livestock. Through his occupation, he serves the people of this region and earns a good and Halal (legitimate) compensation for his family.

Moheb Gull: I have faced difficulties for about 15 or 16 years. I would walk long distances to treat a cow or a sheep, and then come back to the clinic. Even though I was tired, I would go back if another person would then need me to treat their livestock. I used to face many such situations.

Vox-pops

Villager 1: This facility is good for us. God bless him, and bring him success and health. Every time we call him, he arrives on time, be it night or day. He is a very kind man. Sometimes, he even does not make us pay.

Villager 2: From the day Moheb Gull has come to this area, our work has become much easier. Every time we have a problem, we talk with him. In addition, compared to the city, treating the livestock here is very cheap. If we had to take our livestock to the city, we would have to pay other expenses, such as the transportation fees. This would be too expensive. Since the arrival of Moheb Gull to this village, we have lots of facilities. He is the doctor of our village.

Narration: About 85% of Afghans' livelihood comes from livestock and agriculture. The Islamic government of Afghanistan supports this sector.

Governor Spokesman: Fortunately, we now have Veterinary Clinics in 22 districts of Nangarhar province. In every clinic, there are veterinarians, who are helping the people of the region. Three years ago, following a request of the Provincial Governor

and with the help of the Agriculture Development Teams [*Rolling text: Agriculture Development Teams (ADTs) are US military teams supporting the development of the agriculture sector in Afghanistan*], clinics were built in around 10 to 11 districts of this province.

Narration: The US Agency for International Development (USAID) is an agency of the United States Government in charge of implementing and funding reconstruction and development programs in countries such as Afghanistan. Training veterinarians and improving the livestock sector is one of USAID's programs, which are funded by the American taxpayers. The implementing partners of the program are the Dutch Committee for Afghanistan (DCA) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock.

Governor Spokesman: Meanwhile, Veterinary Field Units were equipped in some districts with the appreciable help of the Dutch Committee for Afghanistan (DCA). Moheb Gull is one of those persons. He has been serving in the district of Mohmandarah for 4 years. [*Cut away: The film shows Moheb Gull on his motorcycle going to the village*] The people are happy with him, so he also goes to remote districts to treat livestock in other areas.

Narration: In order to keep the society healthy, sick livestock should be treated. Healthy livestock contributes to a healthy environment. As most animal diseases are contagious, diseases would spread to humans if animals were not treated quickly. This would in turn cause more diseases.

VFU activities

Hervé Thomas, USAID: The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) supported Veterinary Field Units (VFUs) through the Accelerating Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP) program that was designed in 2004 – 2005 but actually started in late 2006. Through this program, it was a five-year program, which ended a couple of days ago, and provided support to 450 VFUs in 290 districts and 25 provinces throughout Afghanistan. These VFUs provided over 49 million vaccines to livestock around the country. It generated over 12.8 million US dollars in sale from medicines such as analgesics, antibiotics and other types of medicine that the livestock needs to be healthy, as well as services that VFUs provided to the larger farmer and herder community in these provinces and districts.

Narration: Moheb Gull continues to do his job with a strong commitment and interest. By the passage of every day, he gets more experience and wants to serve his community even more.

Training center

Trainer: The project which is currently ongoing was funded by the Agriculture and Irrigation Ministry and the World Bank. It started with a training session in the laboratory section about one month ago, with veterinarians being invited from all districts. After the three days of training, they went back to their districts to continue their jobs in their clinics. One of these students is Moheb Gull.

Moheb Gull: Before this training, we were not able to diagnose specific diseases such as cows' Pianekh or Gouleg. After the cow had died, we would find material such as plastic or cloth in its stomach. Eating those had killed the cow. Now, thanks to these trainings, we are able to take such lethal materials from their stomach by means of surgery.

Narration: Animals cannot say their illness. They must be treated by a specialist.

Clinic

Moheb Gull: These tablets are for treating cows' stomach worms. It does not harm the livestock.

Customer: When and how should we give this tablet to the livestock?

Moheb Gull: Right now. I will give it to the cow.

Narration: Moheb Gull is happy with his life. He is proud of himself and of the fact that he serves his community.

Narration: VFUs, or Veterinary Field Units, are facilities conducting activities at the district level. VFUs' veterinarians, in addition to being trained to modern techniques, have received 12,000 USD worth of equipment, with the support of USAID. They are now ready to treat every kind of livestock disease in their district.

Training Center

Trainer: These trainings are organized by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation and the World Bank. Between 2004 and 2006, USAID trainings were conducted by veterinarians on the different components of veterinary work for the staff of these VFUs, who then went back to their villages. Another project was

funded by USAID in 2009 – 2010. As part of this project, about 250 veterinarians from Paktia, Nangarhar and the entire Eastern region were retrained at the center of Veterinary Field Units in the province of Nangarhar. They learnt to diagnose about 16 types of cow's sickness which exist in Afghanistan, and to take samples.

Moheb Gull: We were provided between 10,000 and 12,000 dollars of equipment by DCA. These included a motorbike, a cabinet, carpet, surgery tools and a refrigerator. We were given this aid in 2010, and have to use it by 2015.

Hervé Thomas: USAID Department of Agriculture, when it was designing its approach, designed it so as to align it very closely with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock's priorities, such: there have 4 key priorities that we deal with: the first being increasing agriculture productivity; the second one being regenerating the economic environment through agri-business; the third one being sustainable management of natural resources; the fourth being change management and capacity building of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock. Our support for the Veterinary Field Units falls into agriculture production and productivity category.

Clinic activities

Moheb Gull, to a customer: These are bugs which harm them.

Moheb Gull: Before, our economic situation was not good, but by the blessing of Allah, it is now very good, and we have everything. I try to help our population, and thanks to this development our economy grows. It was very difficult to follow veterinary studies: I was working at night and studying during the day. Now I am happy and grateful to Allah, who empowered me to learn and be successful in my life. My community and family are also happy for me.

Narration: Let us wish for every Afghan to be able to do their best and work for their country and nation as Moheb Gull did.