



A good news case study: the Decentralised Livestock Services in Indonesia Project

The 5-year Department for International Development (DFID) funded Decentralised Livestock Services in Eastern Indonesia (DELIVERI) project was an action-research project aiming to make livestock service institutions more responsive to the needs of small-scale farmers. It was much more successful than anyone expected.

The project worked concurrently at several levels: with field-level government staff and farmers to research livestock production systems and identify opportunities for improved services, then provided appropriate training to staff and farmers to establish and evaluate pilot projects; with District and Provincial livestock service managers to research institutional constraints and opportunities for supporting more client-oriented services, using the results of the field-level pilot projects to convince them of their value; and with National livestock service managers to research the policy framework and bureaucratic mechanisms for providing livestock services, using the results of the field-level pilot projects, and increasingly enthusiastic field, district and provincial livestock service staff to encourage them to change policies and practices to support more client-oriented approaches.

When the project started in 1996, towards the end of the Suharto era, government services were highly centralized, bureaucratic and inefficient, although policies promoting decentralization, privatization and participation had been in place for a number of years. All budgets, services, programmes and projects continued to be designed and controlled from Jakarta, and regional and district staff simply followed orders. During the first two years, although farmers and field-level staff were enthusiastic about the results of the projects research and the new approaches, and a few enlightened senior managers recognized their value, the project made little headway with the bureaucracy. Then the economic, social and political crisis in 1997/8 pushed Suharto out of office and the new era of "Reformasi" forced ill prepared government departments to rapidly implement the long-shelved policies of "decentralisasi", "privatizasi" and "participasi". By that time the DELIVERI project had a number of successful pilot projects up and running, and some charismatic champions among livestock service staff at all levels, and suddenly found itself in high demand.

By the end of the project livestock services were significantly more available to smallholder farmers in the project areas, more client-oriented, and higher quality. A customer satisfaction survey in 2000 found that 78% of farmers were satisfied or very satisfied with livestock services in general compared with only 16% in 1998, and the improved availability and quality of services has encouraged farmers to invest more in livestock enterprises resulting in a substantial increases in income. By the same time, government policies, practices and budgets were changing to support the development and implementation of more client-oriented services. The Department had a new people-oriented vision "Healthy and productive communities through the development of locally-based livestock resources", new decentralized interdepartmental structures and new mechanisms to co-operate across departmental boundaries, and over 50% of central government livestock service budgets incorporated more "participatory" approaches. The new approaches were also starting to spread to other sectors at district, province and national level².

The surprising success of the DELIVERI project illustrates several critical factors, which influence whether the results of research can influence policy. Some are about the 'location' of the research within the pre-existing policy environment:

-
- Focus – the project was undertaking research on how to implement the government’s well established, but not yet implemented policies of decentralisation privatisation and participation. The research had political legitimacy, but, initially at least, little political influence.
 - Close linkages with policy-makers – the project built on DFID relationships in the livestock sector at field, district, provincial and national level, that had been established through collaborative work over the preceding 10 years. It had champions who were able to bring the results to the attention of policy makers and senior managers.
 - Timing – the project was in place, well established and therefore able to capitalise on the new policy opportunities presented by the economic and political collapse in 1998, and rush for “reformasi”.

Others are about how the research was done:

- The DELIVERI project had a clear strategy for policy influence from the start – it had explicit sequenced activities, first to undertake field research and establish, pilot projects, then research the policies and practices government livestock service provision, then synthesise convincing evidence to convince people at all levels of the value of the new approaches, and finally to work with senior policy makers, planners and managers to help them to make the necessary changes to policy, organisational structure and practice to promote them on a wider scale. There is a clear and necessary role for research at all stages of the policy process, if high-level policy change is to implemented in practice.
- Researchers and other staff worked closely with all stakeholders, including farmers, community leaders, local, district, provincial and central government, and other organisations involved in livestock services. Involving policy-makers and practitioners in identifying the issues, undertaking the research, and implementing the results is likely to be more successful than undertaking the research in isolation then seeking to interest policy makers in the results afterwards. Establishing synergistic networking between different stakeholder groups, so they could share their own interpretation of the results was a particularly effective mechanism for communication.
- DELIVERI was a “process” project. Within the overall project framework, implementation was iterative – activities were based on an assessment of the results of previous activities, and the ever-changing context, and the project was flexible enough to be able to respond to the political opportunity presented by the economic crisis in 1998.
- The project used a quality management approach – all activities were “fit-for-the-purpose” rather than individually perfect. Much of the research was qualitative, or if quantitative, based on small sample sizes, yet was good enough to convince senior planners and policy makers.
- A major effort was made to synthesise and disseminated high-quality tailor-made information to all of the stakeholder groups. The project developed a communications strategy during the first year, which identified the key targets, their information needs and preferences, and the most effective mechanism to deliver it. Personal meetings were the most effective mechanism for senior policy makers, supported with attractive printed materials, and video clips. An illustrated diary, with attractive summaries of key findings and recommendations was very popular with field staff and service managers. Particularly since government budgetary constraints prevented many departments from producing their own.
- The project’s multidisciplinary team of researchers, practitioners and communicators from a wide range of backgrounds focused on individual people at all levels, using collaborative research, specific training activities, personal follow-up, coaching and mentoring to generate enthusiasm.

This summary is based on information on the DELIVERI project website (www.deliveri.org/default.htm). More detail about impact can be found in the "Progress and Impact" section (www.deliveri.org/frames/deliveri/default.htm)