

Executive Summary

Final Independent Evaluation

Brooke-AHTCS Working Equines Welfare Programme in Nepal

2012-2017



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Pantera G. 2020. Executive Summary: Independent final evaluation report for the Brooke-AHTCS Working Equines Welfare Programme in Nepal. Brooke UK. pp 1-5.

<https://doi.org/10.46746/gpande.2020.eval.bahtcs.nepal.1217>

Executive Summary

This **Independent Final Evaluation** was conducted at the request of Brooke with the full collaboration of AHTCS. It focuses on the Working Equines Welfare Programme (WEWP) implemented by AHTCS over the past 5 years (April 2012 – March 2017) in Nepal. The evaluation focussed on a selected sample of project sites on the hills, on the plains, in the brick kilns and in phased-out areas.

The Nepalese **context** was found to be extremely challenging to introduce knowledge and practice of equine welfare, due to cultural and logistic features. The concept of equine health has just recently taken a step-up within the local animal welfare system, as evidenced by the development of a new section of the Terrestrial Animal Code following OIE introduction of the *Welfare of Working Equids*. The change was made possible through improved animal welfare concerns among the DLSO personnel.

The overall goal of the **WEWP** is to *improve welfare status to an acceptable level for at least 80% of the equine population in project areas*. This is pursued through 6 specific objectives focusing on service provision, capacity building and advocacy.

The Overall Objective of the evaluation was to provide an external and independent analysis of the Working Equines Welfare Programme successes and areas for improvement, through the lenses of the following criteria: a) Design; b) Relevance/Appropriateness; c) Coherence; d) Efficiency; e) Effectiveness of management setup; f) Effectiveness; g) Sustainability and likelihood of impact. The Specific Objectives are namely: 1. Determine whether the programme has achieved its specific objectives 2. Evaluate the adequacy of its managing structure including budgetary provision, provision of support by Brooke India and Brooke UK, internal structure and engagement with external stakeholders and 3. Identify successes, lessons learnt, areas for improvement and develop recommendations for adaptive management.

The **evaluation approach** reflects the OECD–DAC norms and standards, assessing the project against the criteria and related research questions as agreed between Brooke Evaluation Manager and the Evaluator in the Inception Report. The research methodology was qualitative with a convenience sampling of sites to be visited and people to be consulted. Sites were selected so as to ensure the assessment of the different project strategies (intensive approach and extensive approach) and of a sample of phased-out sites. The field work enabled the evaluator to assess a significant sample of stakeholders and beneficiaries, performing Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), semi-structured interviews and direct observations of a variety of project sites. Findings from the field visits were triangulated with project quantitative data when available.

Limitations to the exercise included the timing of the evaluation, which did not allow direct observation of working equines in the brick kilns, and delayed and incomplete provision of the project monitoring data.

Validity of design was confirmed by the consistency of the project's overall logic, the identification of sustainable equine welfare as the main goal, the use of a participative approach involving local communities and institutional actors in the design of the project. The Logical Framework includes only three out of the six project specific objectives developed through a large number of outcomes, outputs and related indicators. Unfortunately, there is a limited source of verification for indicators, which proved to be challenging to the monitoring of implementation progress. The monitoring system includes valuable tools. However, the data collection implementation plan and the delayed feedback on the data analysis results from Brooke to AHTCS prevented their consistent use to inform the project strategy.

The project was found to be highly **relevant** to the needs of equines and equine owners in Nepal. The programme, which was developed based on valuable scoping studies and mapping of resources, is considered as a high priority by the local communities and governmental bodies consulted. It addresses a major gap within the animal health system and local equine welfare culture. An *intensive* and *extensive* approach has been used based on an analysis of the context to ensure that the outputs are relevant and the project is cost-effective.

Coherence between Brooke operations and the priorities of the governmental bodies was confirmed during the field assessment. Brooke overall strategy was highly appreciated and recognized as bridging the technical gaps and strengthening the capacity of institutional actors. The advocacy strategy was found to be fully coherent with the growing institutional attention for equines' welfare and with the recent steps undertaken to record equine population data and comply with OIE standards. The use of collected epidemiological data could be improved. There is a need to ensure consistency in the way data are being processed and analysis results distributed. The data collection could be coordinated with governmental bodies and information shared to reinforce their capacity to control infectious diseases.

AHTCS has made an **efficient** use of the financial resources allocated by Brooke. It has complied with Brooke requirements on reporting and forecasting. The funds assigned met the implementation needs, covering the costs of all the activities. However, funding to cover overhead and support staff costs does not fully meet AHTCS needs. Brooke has provided support to its partner, in particular to the administrative and finance officer and through consistent capacity building of the technical staff. Although appreciated, training of the technical staff only addressed the needs to a limited extent. There is still a gap in the knowledge and practice of equine medicine for veterinarians and vet technicians, due to the limited time allocated to training. In addition, a Training of Trainer approach is not implemented.

Effectiveness of management set-up seems to be limited because of the high turnover of veterinarians, which is largely due to the high offer of more appealing work opportunities for these professionals in Nepal. Veterinarians invest lots of their time into project management tasks (such as Project Coordinator or Field Coordinators), which prevents them from consistently participating in clinical work in the field and providing on-the-job training to technicians.

The project's strategy to increase the **geographical coverage** is based on the broad use of sustainable uptake delivering equine health assistance through the LHPs. Conversely, the short-term uptake figures, related to the clinical work done by AHTCS staff, are far above the target.

Effectiveness of the implementation was hard to assess as progress of indicators could not be verified due to a lack of updated means of verification. According to the field visits and desk review, **service provision** showed signs of overall effectiveness in delivering curative and preventative veterinary care. The approach developed strong linkages between owners, LSPs and governmental veterinary bodies.

Approach to **clinical care** presented some room for improvement of the capacity of either AHTCS staff or local technicians; the infectious disease control requires a more systematic approach to become effective. Training of **farriers** increased the availability of professional shoeing, which had a positive effect on foot management; the usefulness of results, however, was limited as the cost of the service was considered barely affordable among the owners consulted. A change in the owners' behaviour as regards animal **handling** was achieved to different extents in the different project areas; the consolidation of improved practices of equine husbandry and management is nonetheless still challenging for most of the sites visited.

The WEWP is effectively providing valuable health assistance to working equines in the **brick kilns**, while spreading equine welfare messages to equine and brick kiln owners. The effectiveness of the multi-stakeholder coordination needs to be strengthened and enlarged as much as possible to other humanitarian actors.

The WEWP strategy and its implementation attained a good **sustainability** of links among communities and private and governmental trained professionals. The use of services is continuing autonomously in phased-out sites.

Likelihood of a positive **impact** on equine welfare depends on a sustained improvement of owners' behaviour changes in care and management, which was achieved to different extents in the different groups. The project had an unintended positive impact as the equine owners' groups are autonomously developing additional activities and new collaboration modalities with service providers.

In **conclusion**, the WEWP is a broad and valuable operation generating a positive change in the behaviour of local communities while providing improved services for equines. Long-lasting linkages among the different actors concerned by equine care are likely to produce durable changes. However, some persistent poor practices of equine owners still limit the consistent achievement of an acceptable welfare status for the equines targeted. Although the treatment of infectious diseases is effective, their epidemiological control is not strengthened. Equines are still showing signs of weakness as regards their fitness to work, and physical and psychological health. The operation should continue to consolidate the achievements in the provision of quality services while providing further support to strengthen the clinical skills of technicians. The use of well-developed monitoring tools can be improved to timely inform the project strategy and provide data to institutional animal welfare actors. The project needs to continue its collaboration with the governmental bodies and international actors to contribute to pursuing OIE targets for working equids.

A good practice found (Annex II) is the use of natural remedies as an alternative to secular medical treatments, which is an innovative trend in the global equine medicine, although still not consistently reflecting in the assistance of livestock in emergency and development contexts. The WEWP developed an accurate protocol for the use of turmeric powder for wounds' healing

Recommendations

Design

1. Develop outputs, outcomes and related indicators for groups of activities, limiting their number so as to facilitate monitoring.
2. Devise sources of verification to monitor the progress of the indicators during implementation, ensuring timely feedback to inform the project strategy.
3. Re-define the beneficiary population by clustering direct and indirect beneficiaries.

M&E

4. Ensure the accountability of reported data, providing track records for sustainable uptake and clinical details for short-term uptake. Use updated official figures to define the coverage target.
5. Improve the use of the clinical data collected, upgrading the analysis to investigate infectious disease trends. Undertake action accordingly.

Management

6. Harmonise the grant agreement duration with the length of the strategic plan, reducing administrative burden while improving accountability to the local stakeholders.
7. Revise the management setup by developing two different lines: a) programme management b) health equine advisors. According to resources, include a Medical Coordinator to ensure quality of the clinical support delivered, continuous capacity building of technicians, and technical collaboration with DLSO.
8. Increase access of Welfare Facilitators to the Brooke training package.

Implementation

9. Engage in major infectious disease investigation, reporting and screening, in collaboration with the Department of Livestock Services (DLS).
10. Improve an effective capacity building of health providers in clinical examination, increasing the length and frequency of trainings, and ensuring supervision through a medical coordinator.
11. Develop a strategy to mitigate the costs of farriery, e.g. providing incentives to the farriers, thus increasing the use of this service.

Behaviour change

12. Improve proximity of the technical staff to the owners' groups, promoting structured awareness campaigns.
13. Increase project support to the owners' groups in building the necessary infrastructures to host equids, e.g. paddocks and sheds, ensuring adequate spaces to manage sick animals, improving access to grazing, and guaranteeing suitable rest spaces.

Advocacy

14. Organize an Inception Workshop to present the project to the DLS, advocating to consider equine welfare activities within the Governmental Annual Plan.
15. Further develop bonds with international protection actors to advocate for innovation of the work in the brick kilns through mechanization.

Phasing out

16. Ensure the monitoring of phased-out sites to consolidate achievements, planning health camps on a yearly basis.