Understanding gender roles in small ruminant health management in Ethiopia

Building capacity

To help prioritize health interventions in small ruminants, 24 veterinarians from 12 national research institutions and agricultural offices learned how to conduct gender-integrated research using participatory methods.

Participatory research

The trainees facilitated 92 focus group discussions across Ethiopia; separate discussions were held for men and women.

Discussions revealed small ruminants are particularly important for women to generate income. Statements like ‘sheep are like fast growing cabbage in the homestead’ or ‘sheep are like injera, ready to be eaten’ confirmed this.

Men and women assigned highest scores to respiratory diseases. Men gave high scores to neurological diseases observed during herding. Women focused on respiratory diseases as they notice bad smells when cleaning the barns.

Differences in perceptions between men and women about who does how much in small ruminant management were apparent.

Both genders agreed that women are more severely affected by small ruminant diseases since they lack income-generation alternatives.

Household survey

Findings of the survey informed the design of a household survey to collect more in-depth data on gender differences in small ruminant health management.

444 households were enrolled in the study; asking men and women to give their views on gender-related issues.

Conclusion

This study provided important entry points to design gender-responsive interventions to improve productivity of small ruminants. It also offered an opportunity to collect baseline data to evaluate the impact of these interventions.

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