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Advancing Investment in Sustainable and Equitable Livestock project is financed by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (OPPI 153150) and the CGIAR Research Program on Livestock. ILRI thanks all donors and organizations which globally support its work through their contributions to the [CGIAR Trust Fund](#).



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Compiled by Cynthia Mugo

Citation: ILRI (International Livestock Research Institute). 2020. *From evidence to actions: how can we use evidence to better inform investment and policy priorities for the livestock sector*. Nairobi, Kenya: ILRI.

Background

The International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) led Global Livestock Advocacy for Development (GLAD) project convened a virtual consultative meeting (learning event) for sector champions dubbed *From evidence to actions: how can we use evidence to better inform investment and policy priorities in the livestock sector* from 19–21 May 2020. The virtual meeting gathered more than 45 participants from key partner international agencies, national and regional civil society organisations, education service providers, African Union (AU) agencies and research institutions working on the agriculture and/or livestock sector nationally, regionally and/or globally.

The objective of the meeting was to strategize on the engagement and influencing strategies to be used to realise crucial global policy and financial commitments for the livestock sector. The 3-day meeting was designed as a highly participatory learning and sharing event, with both days focusing on reflections based on experiences of what has worked or not in an attempt to identify approaches and pathways that can lead to an action plan that delivers the needed financial and policy support in the livestock sector.

Most partners working in the livestock sector in low- and middle-income countries recognize that engaging policy and decision makers to advance priority policy and financial commitments can be very difficult. Our engagement efforts have been further encumbered by the strong anti-livestock advocacy campaigns that are increasingly featuring in mainstream media platforms and policy discussions in high income countries that threaten sustainable livestock-based livelihoods for over one billion men and women.

With workshop participants coalesced around a common goal of more and better investments in sustainable livestock sectors, the meeting sought to address the following questions.

- What outcomes and changes do we want to see?
- What do we need to influence? And to do what?
- What engagement strategies and approaches will get us there?
- How do we know we are making progress?
- What works and what does not – learning together.

The workshop delivered three streams of output:

- a) change we want to see;
- b) lessons from our experiences and implications; and
- c) principles that should guide the design of future engagements.

Through participants' shared experiences prior and during the workshop, the following broad areas were identified as the "Change we want to see".

1. Improved performance of value chains.
2. Healthier people, healthier animals and healthier environment.
3. Improved livestock investment (both in quality and quantity) in Africa.
4. Livestock is treated as a critical development pathway by influencers and decision makers.

Lessons learnt to date: what works, what doesn't?

- Leadership and political will/commitment are key: including, having a critical mass constituent and real champions driving policy change, accountability and performance management, as well as intersectoral coordination and quality engagement of key stakeholders through effective platforms that can serve to achieve alignment.
- No single approach or pathway exists: strategies that were highlighted include, using multiple paths/strategies, intentional and diverse engagements, getting the message and target right, using evidence to build the story, working with influencers/champions, fostering local ownership, and ensuring inclusivity during agenda setting.
- Lack of capacity to use evidence greatly constrains the quality of engagements. Capacity gaps exist on both the demand and supply sides of using evidence to engage and influence policies.
- Working with local actors, including civil society, community-based organizations and farmers, provides sustainability for policy support. Local ownership and engagement would ensure sustainability of engagements in the short, medium and long term.
- Policymaking is rarely “evidence-based”. Stories and political expediency often act as catalysts. That said, these can be interlaced to be “evidence-informed” if engaged with effectively to influence policymakers.

“Principles” that should guide the design of future engagements

- Understand the local context, especially how the political system works, to be able to know what change is needed.
- Improve communication and articulation of evidence, ensure communication messages are clear and targeted, have message guidelines, set up multi-stakeholder platforms for coordination and alignment and bring in non-livestock sectors to support or minimize obstacles.
- Collective action beyond narrow specialist groups builds buy-in and committed engagement and strengthens the group's voice.
- Monitoring, learning and evaluation are crucial to monitor progress and adapt influencing positions, strategies and tactics in response to feedback and the changing context.
- Embedding public awareness and education in engagement processes enhances their sustainability and strengthens social accountability.
- Engagement needs to be continuous and intentional with a clear and targeted message. Involve communication specialists early to co-create the engagement message.
- Strengthen capacities to communicate, package and engage with evidence.
- Draw on credible, experienced and authentic influencers as intermediaries to champion messages that resonate with the target audience.
- Design, frame, time and adapt the presentation of evidence to the changing context to maximize its influence on target audiences.
- Where possible, undertake “policy pilots” to develop and test operational solutions to inform and improve policy implementation.

The workshop ended with an appreciation that while the context at which policy happens is complex and involves a range of actors at multiple levels, it's complexity can be navigated by designing clear, targeted and simple communication combined with early and continuous engagement that brings in trusted and neutral facilitators/influencers and embraces people from non-livestock sectors. Throughout the communication and engagement process, continuous monitoring and evaluation will be important to guide adjustments and feedback of the evidence.

Next steps

The workshop organizers will use the information collected through the workshop to develop a decision framework that will be shared with all participants as a guideline on how best to engage going forward.

In addition, it was agreed that more active use of the GLAD d-groups should be used to share information and collaborate around events. To this end, GLAD is also testing a new approach to proactive media engagement which will be coordinated by Marchmont (<https://www.marchmontcomms.com/>). Marchmont will catalyze the GLAD network to bring in more perspectives into the livestock debate in the media.

Annex I: From evidence to actions: how can we use evidence to better inform investment and policy priorities for the livestock sector.

View and download the presentation here: <https://hdl.handle.net/10568/108890>

From evidence to actions: how can we use evidence to better inform investment and policy priorities for the livestock sector



*Virtual workshop for sustainable livestock champions
May 19–21, 2020*

Global Livestock Advocacy for Development (GLAD)



Annex 2: Agenda

From Evidence to Actions: How can we use evidence to better inform investment and policy priorities for the livestock sector
May 19–21

Day 1- May 19, 16:00 EAT

Introduction

Introduction

00:00 | 15'

Welcome and introduction

Setting the scene and objective of what we want to achieve

Layout overall agenda and how the workshop fits in developing a theory of change

LEADS: ISABELLE

Introduction to participants

00:00 | 20'

Technology check on Mural and Zoom

Allow participants to get to know each other

LEAD: MICHAEL

Identifying pathways to change

Introduction to pathways to change

00:00 | 15'

Review how we have gone about making sense of the outcomes and introduce framework for discussions next two days.

Answer and clarify questions

LEAD: PETER

Group work on refining outcomes at different levels

00:15 | 40'

Group work to flesh out each of the different outcomes what/who to target

Present back results

00:55 | 20'

Each group gives quick overview of the results

Closing and reflection

01:15 | 5'

1 Takeaway

Day 2- May 20, 16:00 EAT

Review and reflection from previous day

00:00 | 20'

Review work for the day and plan for the day

LEADS: ISABELLE AND CYNTHIA

Identifying appropriate engagement interventions

Sharing experiences on evidence to outcomes

00:20 | 45'

Opportunity for participants to share their experiences

Experience of what works and what failed – stories and short presentations (5 minute stories)

Group work: What are strategic interventions for each outcome

01:05 | 45'

Identify and discuss good/bad practice and continue to develop a list of approaches for different outcomes

Report back

01:50 | 20'

Report back from each group

Reflection

02:10 | 5'

Menti reflection to check where people are

Day 3- May 21 16.00 EAT

Bringing it all together

Review and introduction

00:00 | 10'

Review the progress from day before and agenda

LEAD: CYNTHIA

New initiatives for review and feedback

00:10 | 25'

Opportunity for participants to introduce new initiatives that they are carrying out in engagement and advocacy (feedback)

Working Groups:

00:35 | 30'

Provide opportunity for further discussion and finalize each pathways for change, what works and what doesn't work

Making sense together

01:05 | 30'

Review all the outcome areas and see where there are complementariness and gaps

LEADS: MICHAEL AND ISABELLE

Next steps

01:35 | 10'

What do people commit to, how will we proceed (Menti)

Evaluation (Menti)

LEAD: MICHAEL