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**Impact Assessment of a
Community-based
Animal Health Service Program
in northern Malawi**

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Abstract

Many community-based animal health services have been established in developing countries. There are a large number of publications and references describing these services but only a few researchers have attempted a quantitative analysis of the components and benefits of such programs.

The Basic Animal Health Service (BAHS) Project/GTZ in northern Malawi was established in 1989 and will finish its activities in 2003. An Impact Assessment was implemented during the BAHS field consolidation in 1996/97. The goal was to verify the effectiveness of the scheme and to demonstrate the benefits farmers obtain by using BAHS would pay.

A series of studies were conducted. In Chapter I the characteristics of community-based livestock service programs are described and an overview of different international projects is provided. In addition, the background and philosophy of BAHS is explained and the traditional way of livestock keeping portrayed.

In Chapter II data of a representative livestock population survey for the study area is analyzed. The results provide evidence that more households keep various species of livestock than official data would suggest. An attempt is made to evaluate the link of income status and livestock ownership of the rural people.

The results of a cross-sectional study involving 96 users, 96 part-users and 96 non-users of the scheme are presented in Chapter III. The findings suggest that users owned larger numbers of livestock, were better educated and more open towards new methods compared to their fellow part- and non-users.

Results of interviews with 42 village keymen (KM) and 84 veterinary assistants (VA), who are the key players in service delivery, are analyzed in Chapter IV. Additional information about their visit and treatment patterns are included. The foremost trend emerging from this data was the overall job satisfaction for both, KM and VA, which is a solid basis for further expanding the scheme.

Chapter V contains the results of a longitudinal study. All 288 farms visited for the cross-sectional study were monitored in regard to their livestock performances and husbandry applications between July 1997 and February 1999. The results show that users of BAHS had higher off-take rates in cattle, maintained more stable herds of ruminants and that their livestock mortality was lower compared to both of the other groups. Users also applied a range of livestock husbandry and management measures more frequently than part- and non-users. During concluding interviews in January and February 1999, BAHS-users felt significantly more positive about the past year in terms of livestock health and production compared to both of the other groups.

Chapter VI presents the results of the economic analysis of the BAHS-scheme. Partial budget and cost benefit analysis are applied by using a spreadsheet model. Different farming levels were modeled. Users achieved higher net returns from livestock production compared to part- and non-users. It is assessed that the regional gross benefit farmers obtain through livestock production annually amounts to US\$ 45 Mio with BAHS and US\$ 44 Mio without, respectively. Different models were applied to evaluate the impact of an increased density in BAHS usage.

The main challenge for the BAHS-program lies in intensified field extension, better support for village keymen and veterinary assistants and a significant increase of involvement of very poor households.

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Throughout my professional career as a veterinarian I have been involved in fieldwork in one way or the other, which I have enjoyed. However, I often came to the point where I had to consult someone, on how to handle the pool of data and information I laboriously gathered. I found this very unsatisfactory. This brought my family and me to New Zealand.

We have loved to stay here 'down under', to make real friends, to deal with a different culture and to widen our horizons. This was only possible with the right partner on my side.

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