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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.

# Acknowledgements

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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# Table of Contents

<a href="#"><u>Abstract</u></a> .....	i
<a href="#"><u>Acknowledgements</u></a> .....	iii
<a href="#"><u>Table of Contents</u></a> .....	iv
<a href="#"><u>List of Tables</u></a> .....	vii
<a href="#"><u>List of Figures</u></a> .....	ix
<b><a href="#"><u>I. CHAPTER</u></a></b> .....	<b>1</b>
<a href="#"><u>Project Background</u></a> .....	1
<b><a href="#"><u>1. The need for Primary Animal Health Activities (PAHA) in developing countries</u></a></b> .....	<b>1</b>
<a href="#"><u>Characteristics of PAHA</u></a> .....	2
<a href="#"><u>Complementing State Veterinary Service by PAHA</u></a> .....	3
<a href="#"><u>PAHA - Sources</u></a> .....	4
<b><a href="#"><u>2. Malawi - Country, Economy, Agriculture &amp; Livestock Sector</u></a></b> .....	<b>5</b>
<a href="#"><u>The Country</u></a> .....	6
<a href="#"><u>National Economy and Agriculture</u></a> .....	7
<a href="#"><u>The Livestock Sector</u></a> .....	8
<b><a href="#"><u>3. The Basic Animal Health Service (BAHS) Project</u></a></b> .....	<b>13</b>
<a href="#"><u>Preface</u></a> .....	14
<a href="#"><u>The BAHS-Project - background and achievements</u></a> .....	15
<a href="#"><u>References</u></a> .....	24

## **II. CHAPTER ..... 30**

### **Results of a livestock population survey .....30**

Abstract ..... 31

Introduction ..... 32

Material & Methods..... 33

Results ..... 38

Discussion ..... 42

References ..... 45

## **III. CHAPTER ..... 46**

### **Farm and personal characteristics of the clientele of the BAHS-Program.....46**

Abstract ..... 47

Materials & Methods ..... 48

Results ..... 50

Discussion ..... 60

References ..... 63

## **IV.CHAPTER ..... 65**

### **Characteristics and performance of Keymen and Veterinary Assistants .65**

Abstract ..... 66

Introduction ..... 66

Materials & Methods ..... 67

Results ..... 68

Discussion ..... 74

References ..... 77

**V. CHAPTER ..... 79**

**The effect of the BAHS-scheme on farm herd dynamics and husbandry applications .....79**

Abstract ..... 80

Materials & Methods ..... 81

Results ..... 83

Discussion & Conclusions ..... 97

References ..... 101

**VI.CHAPTER ..... 103**

**Economic Evaluation of the BAHS-Program .....103**

Abstract ..... 104

Introduction ..... 105

Materials & Methods ..... 106

Results ..... 110

Discussion ..... 114

References ..... 116

**Summary Remarks .....117**



# List of Tables

<a href="#">Table I-1: Malawi national livestock estimates</a> .....	9
<a href="#">Table I-2: Development of FIAH expenditures between 1995/96 and 1998/99 (MK)</a> .....	22
<a href="#">Table I-3: Summary of FIAH income and expenditures (MK)</a> .....	23
<a href="#">Table II-1: Relative scores attributed to selected livestock, farm items and condition of the house to reflect different economic scores</a> .....	35
<a href="#">Table II-2: Household size and ownership of different livestock species within Mzuzu ADD in 1997 stratified by ecological zone</a> .....	38
<a href="#">Table II-3: Cattle herd composition in the study comparing survey results with Government statistics</a> .....	39
<a href="#">Table III-1: Distribution of age and household members according to farm- status (n=288)</a> .....	50
<a href="#">Table III-2: Annual mean numbers of livestock owned and estimated annual crop yield, stratified by farmer-status</a> .....	51
<a href="#">Table III-3: Additional sources of income other than livestock off-take or sales of crops, stratified by farmer-status including <math>\chi^2</math> results (n=288)</a> .....	52
<a href="#">Table III-4: Final multinomial logistic regression model of the relationship between indicators of farmer's income and farmer- status as the dependent variable</a> .....	54
<a href="#">Table III-5: Frequency of use of selected husbandry measures stratified by farmer-status including <math>\chi^2</math> analysis results (n=288)</a> .....	54
<a href="#">Table III-6: Final multinomial logistic regression model of the relationship between farmer's literacy and farmer-status as the dependent variable</a> .....	56
<a href="#">Table III-7: Final multinomial logistic regression model of the relationship between self-perception and farmer-status as the dependent variable</a> .....	57
<a href="#">Table III-8: Distances (km) between farm locations and KM and VA houses by farmer status (n=288)</a> .....	58
<a href="#">Table IV-1: Comparison of VA and KM characteristics and work related issues</a> .....	68
<a href="#">Table IV-2: Annual number of farm visits and total treatments by KM/VA per species between 9/1996 and 8/1997</a> .....	70
<a href="#">Table IV-3: Sales of most wanted BAHS drugs as per selected location between 7/1996 and 7/1997</a> .....	71

<a href="#"><u>Table V-1: Adjusted and non-adjusted cattle off-take rates according to farm-status and ecological zone (n=276)</u></a> .....	87
<a href="#"><u>Table V-2: Off-take rates of sheep and goats according to farm-status and ecological zone (n=213)</u></a> .....	88
<a href="#"><u>Table V-3: Final generalized estimating equation model looking at the effects of farm-status, visit number and KM/VA-status on calf mortality between 11/1997 and 12/1998 (n=264)</u></a> .....	90
<a href="#"><u>Table V-4: Final generalized estimating equation model looking at the effects of farm-status, visit number and KM/VA-status on small ruminant mortality between 11/1997 and 12/1998 (n=212)</u></a> .....	91
<a href="#"><u>Table V-5: Final generalized estimating equation model looking at the effects of farm-status, visit number and KM/VA-status on chicken mortality between 11/1997 and 12/1998 (n=283)</u></a> .....	92
<a href="#"><u>Table V-6: Frequency of use of selected husbandry measures between 11/1997 and 12/1998 stratified by farm status (n=276)</u></a> .....	93
<a href="#"><u>Table V-7: Farmers judgment about their livestock production during the study period in comparison with previous years (n=288)</u></a> .....	96
<a href="#"><u>Table VI-1: Input variables concerning annual extra costs per farm status and farming level (US\$)</u></a> .....	106
<a href="#"><u>Table VI-2: Input variables of annual average livestock numbers kept</u></a> .....	107
<a href="#"><u>Table VI-3: Input variables concerning average prices for livestock and animal skins (US\$)</u></a> .....	107
<a href="#"><u>Table VI-4: Input variables concerning annual mortality, reproduction and off-take according to farm-status</u></a> .....	108
<a href="#"><u>Table VI-5: Livestock keeping households and percent of farms at respective farming levels per districts</u></a> .....	109
<a href="#"><u>Table VI-6: Estimated numbers of non-users, part-users and users per farming level (in 1000)</u></a> .....	109
<a href="#"><u>Table VI-7: Annual livestock species budgets according to farm-status and farming level (US\$)</u></a> ..	110
<a href="#"><u>Table VI-8: Annual net income from livestock production per status and farming level (US\$)</u></a> .....	110
<a href="#"><u>Table VI-9: Regional gross income livestock production per farm-status for the study area</u></a> .....	112

# List of Figures

<a href="#">Figure I-1: Malawi and its neighboring countries</a> .....	6
<a href="#">Figure I-2: Cattle kraal conditions during the rains in the Ekwaiweni area (Highlands)</a> .....	10
<a href="#">Figure I-3: Common type of chicken-house (BAHS extension material)</a> .....	11
<a href="#">Figure I-4: Common type of kraal for sheep and goats (BAHS extension material)</a> .....	12
<a href="#">Figure I-5: Traditional pig housing as a combined pigs-pigeons-house (BAHSP library)</a> .....	12
<a href="#">Figure I-6: The Project area comprising of Mzuzu and Karonga Agricultural Division.</a> .....	15
<a href="#">Figure I-7: The cycle of the Drug Revolving Fund</a> .....	18
<a href="#">Figure I-8: Structure of the Foundation for the Improvement of Animal Health</a> .....	19
<a href="#">Figure I-9: Development of FIAH income through drug sales between 1995 and 1999 (US\$)</a> .....	21
<a href="#">Figure I-10: Development of overall FIAH income between 1995 and 1999 (MK)</a> .....	21
<a href="#">Figure I-11: Development of costs recovery for FIAH between 1995/96 and 1998/99 (US\$)</a> .....	23
<a href="#">Figure II-1: Co-ordinate locations of farms randomly selected for inclusion in the survey (n=412)</a> .	34
<a href="#">Figure II-2: Histogram of the distribution of score-totals for all interviewed households</a> .....	36
<a href="#">Figure II-3: Box and Whisker plots for distributions of economic status score-totals for individual households stratified by ecological zone</a> .....	40
<a href="#">Figure II-4: 2D Plot based on multiple correspondence analysis of ownership of selected livestock and field services received.</a> .....	41
<a href="#">Figure III-1: Locations of study farms (n=288) and sealed roads within Mzuzu ADD</a> .....	49
<a href="#">Figure III-2: 2D Plot based on multiple correspondence analysis of farmer's economic indicators</a> ..	53
<a href="#">Figure III-3: 2D Plot based on multiple correspondence analysis of literacy and attitude towards use of drugs in animal as indicators.</a> .....	55
<a href="#">Figure III-4: 2D Plot based on multiple correspondence analysis of farmer's self-evaluation</a> .....	56
<a href="#">Figure III-5: Box and Whisker Plots of one-way straight line distances in km between the locations of users' farms and the houses of their nearest KM or VA according to zone (n=96)</a> .....	59

<a href="#">Figure IV-1: 2D Plot based on multiple correspondence analysis of job satisfaction and self-perception</a> .....	72
<a href="#">Figure V-1: Mean cattle herd-sizes between 11/1997 and 12/1998 stratified by farm-status (n=276)</a> .....	83
<a href="#">Figure V-2: Mean herd-sizes of small ruminants between 11/1997 and 12/1998 per farm-status (n=213)</a> .....	84
<a href="#">Figure V-3: Mean flock-size of village chickens between 11/1997 and 12/1998 stratified by farm-status (n=288)</a> .....	84
<a href="#">Figure V-4: Monthly percentage of cattle moved out of and into the kraal between 11/1997 and 12/1998 (n=276)</a> .....	85
<a href="#">Figure V-5: Mean monthly mortality rates for calves, adult cattle, sheep and goats and chickens between 11/1997 and 12/1998</a> .....	89
<a href="#">Figure V-6: Temporal pattern of cattle-kraal-repairs as monthly totals between 11/1997 and 12/1998 stratified by farm-status (n=276)</a> .....	94
<a href="#">Figure V-7: Temporal pattern of nest provision for brooding hens as monthly totals between 11/1997 and 12/1998 stratified by farm-status (n=288)</a> .....	94
<a href="#">Figure V-8: Temporal distribution of drinker-provision for chicken-flocks as monthly totals between 11/1997 and 12/1998 stratified by farm-status (n=288)</a> .....	95
<a href="#">Figure VI-1: Annual percent net margin of users and part-users over non-users (US\$)</a> .....	111
<a href="#">Figure VI-2: Results of modeling higher regional income (US\$) by gradually reducing non-usage of BAHS at different levels</a> .....	113