



AWARENESS CREATION, COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY IN SUPPORT OF BETTER MANAGEMENT OF AnGR IN AFRICA

KEY MESSAGES

Among issues concerning awareness creation, communication and advocacy on livestock and AnGR that may have policy underpinnings are:

- The need for clear strategies for awareness creation, communication and advocacy strategies that speak to each other, and have good chances to contribute to resource mobilization.*
- The need to have country and regional levels priority communication plans with a view to have a stronger and more coherent voice on animal genetic resources (AnGR) issues.*
- The need for understanding of the legislative and regulatory provisions related to the management of AnGR in countries.*
- The need to identify ministries and departments, actors outside the agriculture/livestock ministry whose policies and activities may pose obstacles to the effective development and implementation of awareness and communication strategies on AnGR issues.*
- The roles of countries and regional economic communities (RECs) in undertaking studies to provide concrete evidence to back claims on socio-economic contributions of AnGR sectors to countries and regions.*

INTRODUCTION

Greater diversity of species and breeds enable rural households to ensure their food security by continuing to produce in uncertain environments, thus enabling them to manage risks more efficiently. Development of animal genetic resources (AnGR) is a priority for most of the countries in Africa where livestock production constitutes a very important component of the agricultural economy and contributes up to 30% to agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Upton, 2004).

A prerequisite for the institutional development and capacity building in the field of AnGR management, is a recognition of the importance of the role and value of the AnGR. Public awareness can support efforts to involve the private sector, local communities, and local and non-governmental organizations in AnGR activities, thus ensuring a broader base for conserving and sustainably using the resources. Genetic improvement programmes of indigenous breeds have been taken up by various institutions/organizations in Africa. These programmes have assisted in increasing the productivity of the AnGR and have also helped in conservation of indigenous germplasm. They have contributed in creating awareness of adoption of improved techniques and technologies of animal husbandry among the farmers (Philipsson et al., 2011). The implementation of these programmes were instrumental in increasing awareness of the roles of AnGR and their genetic diversity and in engaging with all organizations and breeding structures.

Working with the media is a crucial aspect of raising awareness. An enhanced level of the perceptions of ownership is critically important for the successful, sustainable and result-oriented management of AnGR. In this regard, the institutionalization of measures for creating awareness through appropriate media on the values and value addition implicit in the conservation and sustainable use of AnGR is crucial. The existence of institutions or organizations, in Africa, offers tremendous opportunities for bringing the diverse stakeholders and their interests together and to bridge the gaps in the understanding and views on AnGR.

Although some efforts have been made to raise the profile of AnGR conservation, there is still insufficient awareness and inadequate appreciation at all levels of the value of AnGR. This lack of appreciation masks the importance of AnGR and their potential to address developmental issues. This lack underscores the need for more policy advocacy and creation of awareness on the importance and value of AnGR to socio-economic development. This awareness needs to be created at all levels. Public awareness is key to mobilizing popular opinion and to generating and sustaining appropriate political actions (Philipsson et al., 2011). There are clear linkages among awareness creation, communication, advocacy and resource mobilization.

The AU-IBAR project '***Strengthening the Capacity of African Countries to Conservation and Sustainable Utilization of African Animal Genetic Resources***', referred as the Genetics Project, has addressed the topic on the promotion of knowledge, attitude and practice of the contribution of AnGR and the livestock sector to economic growth, food security and poverty reduction. The sections presented below suggest issues concerning awareness creation, communication and advocacy on AnGR that may have policy underpinnings.

NEW DEVELOPMENTS ON AWARENESS CREATION, COMMUNICATION, ADVOCACY AND RESOURCE MOBILIZATION IN BUSINESS

The experiences from the Genetics Project show that communication on projects or programmes in the AnGR sector in Africa need to go beyond exchanges on the technical subject matter underlying the project, to include socio-economic and cultural aspects and impacts of the project. The target of the communication should also go beyond "policy makers" to include millions of decision makers in rural areas where the intended "beneficiaries" live and make decisions daily basis about their livestock.

In the past, even in situations where linkages among awareness creation, communication, advocacy and resource mobilization had been identified, there was tendency to compartmentalize them, leading to "stand-alone" strategies for these aspects on agriculture

and AnGR development. The new thinking nowadays is that all these strategies should speak to each other. The new thinking arises from experiences on institutions and projects globally that suggest that Communication Strategies may or may not reinforce Advocacy Strategies, and that Advocacy Strategies may not necessarily lead to immediate Resource Mobilization (Servaes and Malikhao, 2010). Furthermore, within this new paradigm of thinking, it is believed that while Communication and Advocacy may be everybody's business, the need for "one voice" and "consistent messages" is an imperative. Advocates of this new approach to communication argue that since a Communication Strategy has to do with positioning, marketing, and publicity, "companies that continue to take a tactical short term approach to communicating with key constituencies will find it increasingly difficult to compete. Developing an integrated strategic approach to communication will be critical to success" (Argenti et al., 2005).

These hypotheses and positions can be applied to the agriculture, livestock and natural resources management sectors. Unless the messages on the degradation of the environment arising from poor agricultural and natural resources practices, and the erosion of biological diversity, including farm animal genetic resources (FAnGR) and wildlife resources are provided in one consistent voice, the prospects of getting advocacy from well-connected persons in the society and for mobilizing resources would greatly reduce. This is particularly so if it is understood that Advocacy Strategy is about "getting decision makers to do something to advance a cause or make a change". In other words, the more it is widely accepted by leaders in the agriculture and livestock sectors that "advocacy is about knowledge and persuasion, and persuasion depends on good communication" the higher the prospects that the goal to reach large numbers of constituents, including policy makers and donors, would materialize (Argenti et al., 2005).

SETTING THE POLICY AGENDA

Absence of formal Awareness and Communication Strategies on AnGR

There is a clear absence of formal Awareness and Communication Strategies on AnGR in almost all the countries in Africa. Governments have a major responsibility of ensuring that there is adequate awareness and communication which would lead to effective and efficient agricultural systems that will supply food and animal protein in a sustainable manner. When the rural communities lack access to knowledge and information that would help them achieve maximum yield, they are not only grope in the dark but are driven to the urban centers in search of formal employment, as the only option for survival. Awareness and communications is a way to influence people's knowledge and attitudes and, hence, the actions that they take (Argenti et al., 2005). Given the integral role humans play in conserving biodiversity, an awareness and communications strategy can offer a powerful means to help achieve the conservation goals. As such, an awareness and communication

strategy can be important when lack of knowledge, lack of awareness, or unfavorable attitudes as indirect threats are identified.

Incoherent messages on the topic of AnGR

“Many voices” are speaking on the topic of AnGR but the different messages produced are incoherent. This inconsistent use of key terms renders it difficult to weave coherent messages from such a multitude of threads. Greater effort in coordinating assessments, while maintaining their independence, could be a worthwhile response to the impacts of the challenges that AnGR face at all levels. International, regional, national and community messages must be guided by a coherent and coordinated regulatory framework. It is the absence of coherence in laws and policies that has occasioned duplicity and overlap in the execution of institutional mandates. Various sector laws, policies and institutional mandates that define roles and functions in relation to interventions required for conservation should therefore be harmonized to avoid duplication of efforts and to enhance synergies. African science-policy platforms on biodiversity and ecosystem services could help to ensure that the assessments that include discussions relevant to AnGR are better coordinated, thus helping to ensure that these issues are more effectively communicated to key audiences.

Diverse approaches in identifying priorities in awareness creation

There are diverse approaches, even within a particular country, in identifying priorities in awareness creation and diverse plans to communicate these priorities. Countries have expressed commitment to develop the legal, institutional and practical capacities for the sustainable management of AnGR, and several countries have taken a number of important steps in this regard. However, adequate coordination between government agencies and coherent approaches national and regional, in identifying priorities in awareness creation, are often missing. One of the chief reasons for this problem is the lack of in-depth knowledge and understanding of the national communication strategies and the role that different stakeholders can play in supporting their implementation. In order to build sustained political support, it is important factors that impact priority setting, such as the type of stakeholder engagement, cultural factors supporting explicit priority setting, decision maker/group composition (size and clarity of process, local ownership and awareness and representation), and management of local politics be extensively debated. More important is that key stakeholders come together to discuss the relevance of the Communication Strategies for their respective countries, regions, identify priority areas of greater coordination and activity and make progress on the implementation of the Strategies.

Advocacy and resource mobilization

Providing evidence of good practices, positive impacts, profitability and contributions of the AnGR sub-sectors to the socio-economic development, including Gross Domestic

Product (GDP) may lead to advocacy and resource mobilization. The Advocacy processes operate to mobilize political, financial, and social commitment for social or policy change. They aim to create an enabling environment to encourage equitable resource allocation and to remove barriers to policy implementation. Advocacy also contributes to shifting beliefs and “norms” and help to create an awareness on the use of AnGR and that stakeholders can and should invest. Investment in the AnGR sub-sectors is worth. Compelling advocacy is crucial to persuade decision-makers to make efficient and effective use of the available resources to secure new funding from national budgets, donors, innovative financing mechanisms and the private sector. Without continued investment, the great gains in the AnGR sub-sectors could be reversed (Swaans et al., 2014).

Approach to channeling its awareness and communication systems

The approaches taken to channel awareness and communication systems to the improvement of management of AnGR, in most of the countries in Africa, are centered on:

- Building human capacity and field programmes (such as traceability, livestock identification and recording systems) and strengthening of surveillance mechanisms.
- Regular characterization, inventory and breed surveys, valuation (socio-economic and cultural value) of AnGR and the environment, documentation (AnGR classification), development and institution of early warning systems.
- Engaging the livestock research divisions, extension services and training divisions, direct strengthening of the extension-communication system by using multiple media, especially demonstrations, awareness-raising tours, farm visits, group approaches, radio and television broadcasting, in both public and private media outlets and supporting the farmer field schools programmes. The focal theme is that research should be built on the indigenous knowledge systems.
- Devolution to lower administrative regions to manage the communication as the livestock functions is being devolved to county governments for closer and better management of AnGR, with technical backstopping from the national government and agencies.
- Creation of the National Consultative Committees (NCC) on AnGR that seeks funding to develop the National Strategic and Action Plans (NSAP) on AnGR, which among others include sensitization of stakeholders on the value of AnGR.
- Establishment and promotion of platforms for various livestock commodity value chain actors, strengthening existing livestock farmers’ organizations and promotion of livestock trade fairs.

Priorities for enhancing public understanding and awareness

The priorities, in Africa, for enhancing public understanding and awareness are found to be very diverse. Some countries revert to the priorities of the government ministries and agencies responsible for Agriculture. Other countries list as priorities:

- The initiation of community based AnGR conservation programmes and capacity building programmes focusing on communities and breeders' associations, combined with demonstration farms for educational purposes.
- Education for both farmers and the public on the importance of AnGR management and conservation for sustainable development
- Establishing good communication skills, clearing-house mechanisms, web sites building, use of mass media, publications and agricultural shows to sensitize stakeholders.
- Strengthening of partnership between the government departments in charge of livestock and the scientific research and regional and international institutions specialized in the field of AnGR.
- Establishment of a mechanism for regular monitoring and periodic evaluations of possible modifications in projects and other interventions.
- Explain to the wider population, the law and regulations on access and benefit sharing (ABS).
- Promotion of the intrinsic value of each species in relation to the needs of the populations, their contributions from the financial point of view, cultural, health and market development.
- Seeking for grants for the conservation of endangered and threatened AnGR species, the active participation the local population in such conservation programmes and ensuring the ownership of such interventions.
- Focus on adaptability studies and discovering and further development of alternative niche markets for indigenous products.

Obstacles to the creation of understanding and awareness of the public in the matters of AnGR

Public awareness and effective communication strategies were recognized by African countries as among the arsenal in the fight against the erosion of indigenous AnGR. Countries deployment of aspects of the overall information and communication systems in support and promotion of better management of AnGR was deemed crucial for the successful implementation of programmes. This deployment was also considered to contribute to efficient reporting to international initiatives and conventions. Strategies for the various countries, and their priorities for enhancing public understanding and knowledge varied widely, but obstacles to improving public understanding and knowledge had common threads. Most common public awareness strategies, planned or implemented, were centered around or in connection with livestock-based projects, such as:

- Registration, identification and traceability of animals.
- The existence of weak extension systems coupled with the lack of knowledge on AnGR
- The lack of funds to facilitate the training of stakeholders and the promotion of modern livestock managements

- The poor planning, the existence of inadequate structures and the lack of resources for professionals to perform their work
- The lack of strong Breed/Breeders' Societies and associations, the low literacy level of livestock owners, the weak civil society organizations
- The low level of professionalization of producers in an environment, marked by a lack of incentives for local productions
- The low sensitization on the benefit of specific breeds
- The limited media coverage and the lack of communication and marketing around AnGR
- The lack of understanding of the legislative and regulatory provisions in the management of AnGR

The solutions to address these obstacles to awareness creation and communication may not lie immediately within the AnGR sub-sector, but may involve several actors and stakeholders in the value chains in the livestock sector and those outside of the sector. Ministries responsible for Natural Resources Management, Transport and Trade may well be relevant in removing obstacles surrounding AnGR development and awareness and communication issues that are of immediate and long term concerns. Much of the obstacles to the creation of understanding and awareness of the public in the matters of AnGR are found to be similar in the different countries.

POLICY OPTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy options to resolve some of the gaps in reaching include:

- Deliberate actions by governments to consolidate AnGR related policies, strategies and activities under one department in one ministry with avenues for other relevant departments to participate in planning and implementation. This will enable securing a “one voice” communication messages on AnGR to stakeholders.
- A common Awareness Creation and Communication Strategy with flexibilities to be adapted to country conditions should be part of all regional and continental projects on AnGR.
- In view of the obstacles, especially regarding funding for the effective awareness creation and delivery and communication to stakeholders, governments should take careful actions to support the formulation of strategies that link to existing or new Resource Mobilization Strategies. Clear messages, properly crafted, hinged on evidence and targeted at different audiences are likely to contribute to successful advocacy and resource mobilization.
- For a broader understanding of regulations in the AnGR domain, parliamentary committees charged with crafting regulatory provisions pertinent to AnGR should themselves have capacity built into their work. This in view to ensure better appreciation

of the issues in the domain, not only for the purpose of supporting pertinent laws but also to contribute to advocacy for the sub-sector.

- A call for better documentation and packaging of evidence of impact-making results and outputs from AnGR interventions to serve as basis of communication and advocacy.

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