

Livestock rehabilitation programme in Mozambique

Anabela Braganca

• Introduction

Throughout the ten years of civil war in Mozambique thousands of *camponese* (traditional farmers) sought refuge in urban centres. The cease-fire, signed in October 1992, has now made it possible for them to return to their former villages and farms. VetAid, a UK-based NGO, has responded to these changing circumstances and are planning a community restocking programme in the Inhambane Province. Here, livestock-keeping is traditionally important for both subsistence and economic reasons. Previously, VetAid worked in a training capacity with the Provincial Livestock Services Department (SPP) in Inhambane Province.

• Participatory Rural Appraisal

The *camponese* existed for ten years in virtual isolation. Neither government nor non-government organisations possess up-to-date information on the social, economic and environmental impact of the civil war on those *camponese* remaining in the rural areas. The *camponese* have also just experienced one of the worst droughts of this century.

Only by collecting current information could VetAid begin to assess the situation and respond to the immediate needs of both the remaining community and the returning refugees. To achieve this, we planned a participatory appraisal (PRA) to gather information on the socio-economic, ecological and political conditions in the villages. This information was then used to help design a restocking programme appropriate to the needs and priorities of the community, the existing local resources and the traditional livestock production system.

The specific goals of the PRA were to:

- Gather information on existing agricultural production systems, animal husbandry, market structures and credit schemes;
- Establish what the community consider to be their most pressing needs and limiting resources;
- Make an inventory of local natural resources and the infrastructure required for a restocking programme; and,
- Carry out a wealth ranking exercise to identify groups with common interests and wealth status and assess whether they possess the resources, knowledge, time and inclination to raise loaned stock as part of a restocking programme.

Participatory Appraisal techniques

The PRA took place over 10 days in the village of Mangorro, Inharrime District. A wide range of PRA tools were used, including:

- Informal group interviews, ensuring that at least one person in the group spoke the local language;
- Transversal walks and resource mapping;
- Venn diagrams indicating institutional relationships;
- Seasonal calendars of disease incidence;
- Wealth ranking;
- Time-line transects; and,
- Preference ranking for livestock and disease treatments and criteria matrices.

This was the research team's first experience of participatory methods and the first opportunity to test them in an area that had previously been a conflict zone. It was a challenging and

unpredictable task. The team knew little about the area so it was essential to carry out a background study based on old official registers, knowledge of local structures etc. We also collected vital information on the whereabouts of landmines.

A description of a few of the methods used are outlined below. The information collected and the difficulties encountered both throughout the appraisal and with the application of specific techniques highlight some of the problems with using PRA techniques in a community ravaged by conflict.

Wealth ranking

A wealth ranking exercise was carried out with 14 *camponese*. It revealed the extent of poverty in the area. According to World Bank indicators, an estimated 78 per cent of *camponese* live in abject poverty. The ranking exercise helped the research team to understand and define how farmers perceive wealth, for example in relation to farm size and number of animals owned.

However, the team found that the criteria were distorted because many people had been absent from the area for a long time and could not define current-day wealth indicators. Mangorro had been at the centre of the conflict for ten years, culminating in a severe drought, so existing wealth criteria seemed neither relevant nor appropriate. The *camponese* interviewed found it difficult to classify the different wealth ranks. For example, they ranked farmers, who had been rich before the civil war but had now lost everything, on their former wealth and social status in the community rather than on their current status. Nevertheless, the

information gave us an indication of the extent of poverty in the village, and hence an idea of the scale of any ensuing restocking programme.

Informal interviews

Initially the *camponese* were reluctant to speak to members of the PRA team about their way of life. They associated strangers in the area with terrorist attacks on the village; they had lived in constant fear of this threat for many years. During the first two days of the appraisal the villagers gave false names and information, but as they became more familiar with the team they began to trust them and respond to the different approaches and PRA exercises. The turning point came when a group of farmers were asked to make a social map of their area (Figure 1). This seemed to break down barriers and even facilitated the correction of false names. The most fruitful interviews took place around the dipping tank at Nhacoongo where the *camponese* felt relaxed and willing to talk freely. By this stage the *camponese* had gained enough confidence to trust the research team so the full range of PRA methodologies were used with them.

Since traditional village structures had collapsed and families were still returning to the provinces, the research team found that a majority of the inhabitants were men, many of whom were reviewing the security situation in the area before advising their wives and families on whether it was safe to return. This meant that the majority of interviews were conducted with men. All informants were farmers but also had other vocations, such as teachers or nurses.

Matrix ranking

The absence of women in the community was a constraint for the research team. It was difficult to gather reliable information about the livestock for which the women would normally be responsible such as goats and poultry. The animals provided by the planned restocking programme were likely to be poultry, goats and rabbits so it was important that representative views on livestock preferences and management practices were recorded. In spite of this bias, a ranking exercise was carried out to establish local criteria and preferences for different types of livestock.

Diagrams

Venn diagrams (Figures 2 and 3) were drawn to show the level of institutional interaction before and after the civil war. These indicated the collapse of traditional village structures and religious activities in the region and the fragmented nature of the community. Using the venn diagrams as a discussion point, the team were able to establish that the *camponese* were keen to redevelop community activities and to restore village life to its former, pre-war situation. However, the *camponese* expressed caution about their involvement in any imposed co-operative systems, which they thought might be introduced as part of a rehabilitation project. Previous experiences of institutions imposed by

the Frelimo regime had proven to be corrupt and inappropriate.

The venn diagram in Figure 2 shows the situation before the war. It shows how NGOs were linked to the central Government and Ministry of Agriculture rather than to the communities they were intended to serve. This made VetAid aware of how the villagers had perceived their own, earlier attempts at assistance. VetAid had been involved in training Ministry personnel in improved basic animal health measures. It may be inevitable that the *camponese* could not fully appreciate the aims and benefits of this training programme if they were not benefitting directly from it. An analysis of the venn diagram prompted VetAid to review their policy and attempt to correct the *camponese* perceptions of NGOs.

VetAid proposes to link their work with both the Department of Rural Extension and the Ministry of Agriculture to avoid working in isolation. This should enable the rural communities to maintain better links with the government sector, especially the SPP. It should facilitate the communities' access to resources and assistance, preventing them from becoming marginalised and dependent upon NGO assistance. By working through traditional institutions and farmers associations, where they still exist, VetAid hopes to strengthen war-torn communities and help them to develop linkages with other institutions.

Historical transect

The drawing of an historical transect (Figure 4) demonstrated the dramatic fall in livestock numbers over the past eighteen years and, in particular, the overall reduction in agricultural activity during the war years.

- **Anabela Bragance**, VetAid, Centre for Tropical Veterinary Medicine, Easter Bush, Roslin, Midlothian EH25 9RG, Scotland, UK.