

EMPOWERING VETERINARY PARAPROFESSIONALS IN AFRICA FOR BETTER CONTROL OF TADS

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Veterinary paraprofessionals (VPPs), often referred to as *paravets*, collectively represent a spectrum of workers in the field of animal health who may be trained from a few weeks (community-based animal health workers) to several years (Bachelor's degree), but are not regarded as veterinarians and cannot be qualified as such, which limits their relative scope of activities. VPPs encompass a wide range of categories, e.g., vaccinators, field animal health assistants, laboratory bench workers, meat inspectors and veterinary nurses, to name a few. These professionals work either in the private or public sector as part of a veterinary team, under the direction of a qualified, certified, veterinarian.

In Africa, veterinary paraprofessionals have been active for decades greatly outnumbering veterinarians, particularly in remote areas, and have been successfully deployed in a variety of tasks and campaigns, such as the eradication of rinderpest. VPPs in Africa still frequently play a critical role in delivery of preventative and associated services in animal health. Since the adoption of the global programme to eradicate *peste des petits ruminants* (PPR), there is renewed interest in supporting this cadre of veterinary staff and identifying how the recently adopted OIE Competency and Curricula Guidelines for VPPs could be used to improve their training and promote standard setting, recognition and licensing of VPPs by veterinary statutory bodies.

Several initiatives, led by the OIE and EuFMD, are currently underway to strengthen the competency acquisition and recognition mechanisms and establish models for sustainable practices providing high quality delivery of "last mile" VPP services. These models will enhance preventative approaches against PPR, FMD and other *transboundary animal diseases* (TADs) and identify levers to amplify the impact that several categories of VPPs might have on attaining the objective of eradicating PPR by 2030. These include legislative reform or adaptation of regulations, curriculum development, board certification or -at least – licensing and *continuous professional development* (CPD). These initiatives are supported by the donor community (AFD, BMZ, DTRA, BMGF) with beneficiary countries to be identified shortly in West, Southern and Eastern Africa.