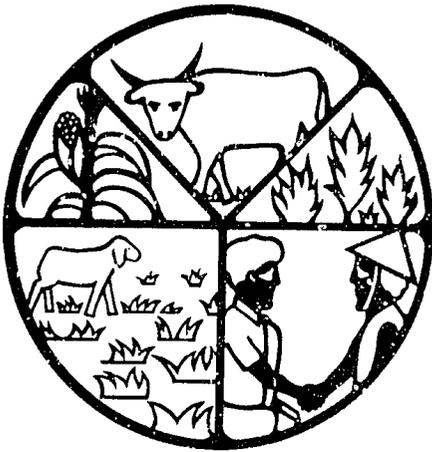


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Mixed Farming Technical Report



GAMBIAN MIXED FARMING AND RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PROJECT

Ministry of Agriculture and
Natural Resources
Government of The Gambia
Consortium for International Development
Colorado State University

GAMBIAN LIVESTOCK OWNERS ASSOCIATIONS:
A BRIEF EVALUATION

by

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Technical Report No. 5

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GAMBIAN LIVESTOCK OWNERS ASSOCIATIONS:
A BRIEF EVALUATION

Introduction¹

Livestock are an integral part of almost every Gambian farming operation. Most livestock have a common economic function--security, but cattle and small ruminants have different social functions and roles within the general Gambian household. As is common across much of Africa, cattle are the most prestigious animal and the most versatile in terms of products they provide. Since cattle are so important to Gambian agriculture they have been the focus of several development efforts. One of the early efforts was the oxenization project to introduce animal draft power. Started in the mid 1950s as a major emphasis in the Mixed Farming Centers, animal traction spread steadily. Currently, oxen, donkeys and horses are widely used in land preparation, planting and cultivation of the major upland crops. In addition animal drawn carts provide a significant proportion of transport in rural areas.

More recently the Department of Animal Health and Production (DAHP) intensified its efforts to assist Gambian livestock owners. Livestock Owners Associations (LOAs) were formed to provide organized groups of farmers for the Department's extension development efforts. The LOAs were designed to enhance the DAHP's work by providing identifiable contact points to disseminate technical assistance. One of their first functions was to distribute pharmaceuticals prescribed by DAHP veterinarians. LOAs were also supposed to provide a vehicle to articulate livestock owners' interests and concerns back to the government.

The first LOA was formed in the Bansang area in 1976. This was quickly followed by the formation of 41 more associations nationwide. These 42 LOAs have been the target of past

development efforts and are likely candidates for future efforts. Therefore an evaluation of the organizations was deemed desirable. Among the questions which guided the evaluation were the following:

- a) Is the LOA an appropriate vehicle through which interventions should be moved in terms of equitable access and benefits?
- b) Would some of the interventions be more appropriately introduced at the village level, or through a more localized institution?
- c) What have been the accomplishments of the LOAs and what benefits have members realized?
- d) What activities should the LOAs pursue in the future?²

Primary data for the study were collected from two sources. Formal questionnaire interviews were conducted in February and March, 1984 with the adult males and wives in a sample of 47 compounds. This sample was originally drawn for an intensive farm management survey and was otherwise appropriate in every way for these purposes. Enumerators were readily available to conduct the interviews and the sample was a representative, if not completely random, national sample of Gambian livestock owners. Formal questionnaire interviews were also conducted with all available officers of four LOAs during November and December, 1984. A third source of data was provided by intensive interviews with animal and range science personnel who have been involved with the LOAs over the years. These interviews were conducted in August, 1983 and provided background on the LOAs plus informed observations on the problems and shortcomings of their actual operation. Secondary data were also obtained from various reports and memoranda from the Mixed Farming Project and DAHP files. Since the data were essentially qualitative in nature no statistical analyses were performed beyond tabulation of response frequencies.

FINDINGS

As indicated above, a sample of 47 compounds provided one block of data for this study. In an effort to locate informed respondents two males and two females were approached in about half of the compounds. In spite of that effort only 31 of 69 farmers approached had enough knowledge of the LOAs to respond to the questionnaire. Only one female out of 67 approached felt well enough informed to respond. Of the respondents, 78.1 percent were LOA members; 52 percent of the members indicated they attended meetings "regularly", the remaining 48 percent indicated they seldom or never attended. The number of animals owned by respondents ranged from fewer than ten sheep and goats to more than one hundred cattle.

When asked to indicate what activities an LOA was supposed to engage in most respondents identified only one or two activities. As can be seen in Table 1, 90.6 percent of the sample mentioned drug sales while water development, marketing activities and pasture/supplemental feed development were also mentioned. The "other" category included such things as management training and holding meetings. When asked to evaluate how well each of the activities were progressing 59.0 percent were judged "poor", with 19.7 percent "all right" and only 21.3 percent "very well".

Respondents were asked what additional activities they would like to see their LOAs perform. Their responses appear in Table 2. Water development was mentioned by 50 percent of the sample followed by marketing assistance, pasture and/or supplemental feed development and drug sales. When asked what specific benefits they had received from LOA membership, 43.7 percent indicated drugs while 34.4 percent indicated they had received no benefit at all and 21.9 percent did not reply to the question.

When asked to list the officers of an LOA, most respondents mentioned president, committee member and/or cashier/treasurer. They had only a sketchy idea of the duties of these officers. A few respondents could list the whole slate of officers and describe their duties. When asked about their own participation in their LOA, responses ranged from little and ineffective to often and very effective. In that respect these Gambian farmers often seem very much like farmers elsewhere in the world. Some participate and influence the course of events while others are more passive.

Table 1. Actual LOA Activities Identified
by Gambian Livestock Owners, 1984

Activity	Frequency ^a	Percent of Respondents
Drug Sales	29	91
Water Development	15	47
Marketing	9	28
Pasture/Feed Development	8	25
Other ^b	11	35

^a There were 32 total responses, each respondent could indicate one or several activities.

^b Includes such things as management training and holding meetings.

Table 2. Perceptions of Needed LOA Activities
by Gambian Livestock Owners, 1985

Activity	Frequency ^a	Percent of Respondents
Water Development	16	50
Marketing Loans	11	34
Pasture/Feed Development	10	31
Drug Sales	10	31
Other ^b	8	25

^a There were 32 total respondents. Each respondent could indicate one or several activities.

^b Includes such things as holding meetings and fire control.

The sample of 29 LOA officers provided the second data source for the study. LOA officers owned substantially more livestock than respondents in the previous sample. All officers in the sample owned at least a few cattle, one man owning 250 head. The largest herd owner in the sample also had 125 sheep and goats but most other cattle owners kept only a few small ruminants. As would be expected they were much better versed on the offices and the officers' duties. Almost all respondents could list all the offices and describe the duties of all the officers. Their rate of participation and feelings of effectiveness was also generally higher than the non-officer sample. Most had held their offices

higher than the non-officer sample. Most had held their offices since the founding of their LOAs seven years before the interview.

When asked to list the goals of LOAs, 93.1 percent indicated drug sales, (See Table 3). Water development was identified by 75.9 percent followed by marketing assistance (51.7 percent), stock route development (34.5 percent) and pasture/feed development (31.0 percent). When asked to identify the accomplishment of their LOA since its inception, fund raising topped the list being mentioned by 72.4 percent of the respondents, (See Table 4). This was followed by pasture/feed development (62.1 percent), drug sales (58.6 percent), stock routes (41.4 percent), and "other" (20.7 percent). However, when asked about current activities 62.1 percent indicated "nothing" was happening while 37.9 percent indicated there was some pasture development in their area. The Mixed Farming Project (MFP) pasture and supplemental feeding programs are still in the experimental/demonstration phase and touch only a part of the members of about a dozen LOAs in the entire country.

Table 3. LOA Goals as Identified by LOA Officers, 1984

<u>Goals</u>	<u>Frequency^a</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Drug Sales	27	93
Water Development	22	76
Marketing Assistance	15	52
Stock Route Development	10	34
Pasture/Feed Development	9	31

^a There were 29 respondents in the sample.

Table 4. LOA Accomplishments as Identified by LOA Officers, 1984

<u>Accomplishments</u>	<u>Frequency^a</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Fund Raising	21	72
Pasture/Feed Development	18	62
Drug Sales	17	59
Stock Routes	12	41
Other	6	21

^a There were 29 respondents in the sample.

There are costs associated with LOA membership beyond the annual dues. Officers and members alike frequently commented on the time required to travel to and attend meetings. The presidents, in particular, sometimes paid for refreshments and other expenses out of their own pockets. It is an elementary maxim of human behaviour that people will only engage in a given activity if the rewards exceed the costs. Several respondents were very explicit on this point. They said, in effect, since there are currently no benefits to LOA membership how can new members be encouraged to join? They questioned why anyone should pay dues into an organization which is essentially dormant. One might also ask why officers would continue to serve in this state of affairs. For one thing there was little activity. Thus there were few demands on them by the end of 1984. For another, officers seem to derive some extra status recognition and this probably justifies their extra input.

Department of Animal Health and Production personnel and expatriate advisors were interviewed informally. They corroborated the major point that most LOA's were essentially dormant by the end of 1984 due primarily to a lack of government activity. Exceptions were the MFP's ongoing pasture and/or supplemental feeding work and the International Trypanotolerance Center's (ITC) research activity. Several respondents pointed out that many LOAs are probably too large and diverse to function effectively. Some LOAs contained ethnic mixtures that made close cooperation difficult. Villages near a river have very different water development and grazing problems from upland villages. In some areas sheer distance makes travel to meetings costly and time consuming. It was observed that the interests of a few self-centered large owners sometimes dominated in a few LOAs.

By early 1983 there was a movement underway to transform the LOAs into Savings and Marketing Cooperatives which would substantially alter their form and functions. K. B. Cham writes:

"The proposed societies would operate as Credit and Marketing Societies. Credit would be obtained from their banker to purchase members' cattle, sheep or goats for re-sale to the Livestock Marketing Board who will act as guarantor for the credit. It was also pointed out that the societies could select honest and loyal members who would buy livestock for the societies."³

It appeared that the authors of the By-Laws intended to give the cooperatives a monopoly in livestock marketing and use the societies to enforce government marketing policy. The official By-Laws for the Livestock Savings and Marketing Cooperative Society Limited state:

"Binding Contract With Members. No member shall dispose of any livestock owned by him otherwise than through his society without good reason duly reported

to the committee and recorded in the minutes of the appropriate committee meeting. Infringement of this By-Law may be punished by a fine (not exceeding 10% of the value of the livestock wrongly disposed of) at the discretion of the Management Committee."⁴

These societies were also to function as savings and loan agencies. Every member was supposed to subscribe a monthly or yearly savings which would provide funds for loans. Only members would be eligible to receive such loans "for purposes which in the opinion of the committee are productive or necessary and in the best interests of the borrower."⁴

One suggestion of a subsequent pre-proposal for a technical assistance project was the establishment of a paid buying station staff which would move from one station to another on market days.⁵ This same pre-proposal also took strong exception to creation of a monopoly in livestock marketing. It pointed out that this would not be in the members' interests and that it would therefore undermine their support for the cooperatives. It envisioned a four year project to form at least six marketing and supply cooperatives while strengthening the remaining LOAs as pre-cooperatives. Apparently this pre-proposal has not been followed by a proposal or project.

While the samples of informants were relatively small a clear and consistent picture of the LOAs emerged from the interview data and other documents. The following section summarizes the major points and examines implications for future LOA development activities.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

With a few exceptions the LOAs were essentially dormant by the end of 1984. Members, officers and observers all indicated there had been few if any meetings during the past two or three years and that dues collection had fallen sharply. The major

exceptions appear to be those LOAs associated with the MFP pasture and supplemental feeding program and the ITC program. However, the dormancy appears not to be due to any lack of interest on the part of the membership. Rather it is due to lack of leadership and activity on the part of the government agencies. It must be recognized that the LOAs concept was imposed from the top down on a clientele which was generally receptive but not entirely capable of sustaining even a modest level of activity without continuous assistance and encouragement.

The goals of animal health care, water development, demarcation of stock routes, a marketing scheme and supplement feeding were all popular with the membership. However, after the initial supplies of drugs were distributed, replacement stocks were unavailable. Most of the officers interviewed clearly indicated that they had been promised a continuous service/supply of drugs. When few benefits materialized and the technical experts appeared less and less frequently, interest dwindled. Almost all respondents cited collection of funds from dues and drug sales a major LOA activity. However, no respondent mentioned even one example of any application of these funds. The funds were deposited in bank accounts and there they apparently remain.

DAHP personnel lacked mobility and were often unable to respond to requests for help with sick livestock. Even when they could attend sick animals and diagnose the malady, there usually were no drugs available. One owner of a large herd told of going to Senegal to obtain drugs. A small herd owner went home to pray when no drugs were available. Water development and other assistance slowed to a trickle from lack of institutional support. Similarly LOA members frequently lamented the lack of loans which would provide funds for the cooperative marketing project. In sum, after the initial burst of activity in the late 1970s the LOAs have languished from lack of technical assistance.

The officers were somewhat more positive about the accomplishments and prospects than was the general membership. While their inputs to the organizations was generally greater than the general membership, they also seemed to obtain a boost to their social status. That may be more than enough to justify all the time (and not infrequently, expense) they incur while conducting association business.

This is not to suggest that the LOAs had no problems while they were active. Because each LOA includes a whole district both the membership and the husbandry conditions faced by members are often quite heterogeneous. This frequently made it difficult for members to agree on goals and to effectively work together. Low levels of literacy and numeracy made it difficult for officers to keep even minimal records or for members to check these records. Accounts of the deposits, membership lists and other LOA records were difficult to find during the interviewing process in 1984. It did not appear they were being hidden from the interviewers. Rather they had been misplaced or lost, if indeed they had ever existed.

The original purpose of the Livestock Owner Associations was to provide organized points of contact for the Department of Animal Health and Production's extension and development efforts. The evidence indicates that the LOAs were generally appropriate development organizations for that purpose in The Gambia. Technical experts who had worked with the LOAs cited several examples of members' willingness to cooperate on activities of interest to them such as demarcation of stock routes, collecting crop residues for feeding trials, and planting grass.

LOAs seem quite compatible with the existing socio-political structure. Some district chiefs (seyfos) were actively involved in the LOAs; others were less involved but none seemed to be opposed to them. Since officers and members included both small and large herd owners, with perhaps a few exceptions, the interests of every livestock owner was fairly represented.

However, like most desirable plants, the LOAs did not spring untended from the soil nor will they bear fruit without careful attention. Several things must be done to ensure their success while other optional changes could widen the benefits to members and make them more efficient.

Two major elements will be required to revitalize the LOAs and these elements must be provided in coordinated concert. One is technical assistance which provides tangible benefits for the members. Members must have some reason to justify the meetings, the dues and the work they are asked to do. The past goals of providing drugs, water development, demarcation of stock routes, marketing assistance and supplemental feeding are all things most livestock owners wanted and were willing to work for. The second essential element is organizational assistance, i.e. to help the officers learn and perform their duties and to help with record keeping and financial management. This is no small task in a population with the low level of literacy and numeracy found in The Gambia. It should be emphasized that technical and organizational assistance must go hand in hand. Neither one is likely to be effective without the other. The associations must have a clear purpose or reason-for-being to attract an active membership. And they must produce benefits for their members if they are to flourish. To produce benefits they must operate more effectively.

The LOA's parent institution is the DAHP. However, LOA activities overlap with those of the Gambia Cooperative Union (GCU) and the Livestock Marketing Board (LMB). Successful operation of the LOAs will require interaction with all three agencies. In addition, several donor funded activities anticipate utilizing the LOAs as a point of village level contact. Some way needs to be found to avoid multiple, confusing or even contradictory advice to, or demands on, LOAs from these agencies. One possibility would be formation of a technical coordinating committee composed of representatives from all three agencies. Its function would be to coordinate

all relations between the agencies and the LOAs to ensure coherence in the advice and requirements of the three agencies. This committee could also serve as a channel to articulate upwards the concerns and/or suggestions of the LOA membership.

In the future it may become necessary to split at least the larger LOAs to improve their effectiveness. Where riverine and upland communities are involved in one LOA, diversity of interest obviously arises and conflicting objectives are possible. Ethnic diversity sometimes, though by no means always, causes problems and lowers cohesion of the association. Travel time/distance does keep some members from attending meetings. Also, when the membership is very large the quality of interaction among members is lessened. Meetings become rallies rather than a forum for meaningful interchange. There may also be a tendency to form disruptive subgroups.

LOAs need to keep accurate and complete records independent of the agency personnel working with them. They need to be able to read scales and simple accounts and perform simple calculations if they are to be able to check on and have faith in their organizations. Therefore an effort to improve literacy and numeracy would benefit not only the associations but the society at large.

As was pointed out above only one woman out of 67 could respond to the questionnaire. This indicates that the LOAs have been very much a male domain. However, there are some 300,000 head of small ruminants in The Gambia, about half of which belong to women. While full female participation in the same organization with men is somewhat problematic, ways need to be devised to reach this segment of livestock owners.

In similar fashion it would be desirable to more directly involve the young men. Since they do the herding and have much of the direct contact with the livestock it is important for change agents to have direct contact with them. However, since young men own relatively few livestock and have lower status

than their elders they tend not to become involved in LOAs. Ways need to be devised to encourage their participation.

Revitalization of the LOAs to enable them to effectively pursue their original goals would be no small undertaking. Effective distribution of drugs and other livestock inputs financed through a revolving fund will require considerably better record keeping and tighter organization than most associations have had before. Several LOAs have successfully participated in supplemental feeding projects so there is a limited record of accomplishment. Revitalization would seem to be feasible provided the relevant resources in DAHP, GCU and LMB were focused on a coordinated and a sustained effort. Such LOAs would function essentially as pre-cooperatives but they could provide several very popular and necessary services.

A final observation is in order on the move to convert the LOAs into marketing and savings cooperatives. A general outline of this initiative was presented above. Although a livestock marketing monopoly was envisioned by at least the authors of the cooperative by-laws, such cooperatives can function equally well in a competitive free market. Beyond the issue of competition there is the question of the pragmatic organizational aspects of such cooperatives. Getting such complex cooperatives to function effectively is at least an order of magnitude more difficult than the much simpler associations previously discussed. A successful marketing operation requires a combination of substantial skills. In addition to handling a substantial amount of cash which requires appropriate fiscal controls, specialized skill is required to buy livestock. Anyone having those abilities is apt to already be buying for his own account and is not apt to be available to work as a volunteer in a cooperative venture. The CLUSA pre-proposal cited above envisioned a four-year, expatriate staffed effort to establish six marketing cooperatives. Almost certainly any such effort would necessitate a substantial amount of external resources to accomplish. A cooperative marketing effort might be politically very attractive because it is always popular to

blame middle men for "exploiting" the farmers and undermining government pricing policies. However, replacing the middlemen with organizations which function effectively is much more easily proposed than accomplished.

Footnotes

- 1 This evaluation study was initiated by Manuel Alers Montalvo, Rural Sociologist with the Mixed Farming Project. He formulated the questionnaires and supervised the primary data collection. However, he had departed from The Gambia before the analysis and interpretation of the data. The authors gratefully acknowledge his contributions but must alone bear responsibility for any shortcomings in this work.
- 2 USAID, Project Paper and Annexes, Gambia Mixed Farming and Resource Management Project 635-0203, Annex J, p. 19, 1978.
- 3 K.B. Cham, Senior Assistant Registrar of Cooperative Societies, in a memorandum dated February 9, 1983 of Cooperative Societies, Department of Cooperation, Banjul, The Gambia.
- 4 Registrar of Cooperative Societies, n.d. "By-Laws of the...Livestock Savings and Marketing Cooperative Ltd.," Banjul, The Gambia.
- 5 Cooperative League of the USA, Livestock Cooperatives Project: Identification Draft, July 15, 1983.