

Accredited Agent for Health and Extension of Livestock Production (A-HELP)

1. Introduction

Currently in every village/ panchayat/block there is a veterinary dispensary (VD)/ hospital or Artificial insemination center. In a village dispensary there is provision for one Veterinary doctor, Veterinary Livestock Inspector/ Assistant and one attendant. Whenever, there is some specific activity drives or campaigns the Livestock Inspector/assistant gets engaged in these duties leaving behind other routine animal health related duties.

Further, the local veterinary institutions are engaged in organizing supplementary scheme implementation programs and other support activities of Animal Husbandry sector of that area. The very nature of their job responsibilities does not allow them to take up the responsibility of a primary service provider and extension agent. **Thus a new band of community based functionaries, named as Accredited Agent for Health and Extension of Livestock Production (A-HELP) is proposed to fill this void.**

A-HELP worker will be the first port of call for any health-related demands of livestock population of that village, especially those who find it difficult to access the veterinary health services. It has been envisaged that states/UTs will have flexibility to adapt these guidelines keeping their local situation in view.

2. Roles and Responsibilities

Both the Departments would form a Joint National Level Steering Committee (JNLSC) of the Secretaries which would be supported by a Joint implementation Task Force (JITF) for ground level project conceptualization, formulation, finalization, implementation including monitoring and review. Similar State Coordination and Synergy Committees (SCSC), would be established at the state level and district level (DCSC) to ensure that the projects are made as per local requirements and are dovetailed with the National level schemes in a seamless manner. Within the overall framework laid down by the above Committees, the following specific roles are envisaged for A-HELP:

2.1 A-HELP

- A-HELP will act as “Livestock Resource Person” (LRP) for the designated area/village. The unit of operation for A-HELP may preferably be village or a group of villages but with high livestock/ poultry population density, an area/ village may have more than one A-HELP.

- The selected person will serve as a last mile extension worker providing 24*7 services at the doorstep of farmers and act as a connecting link with Department of Animal husbandry. The fulfilment of all roles by A-HELP is envisaged through continuous training and up- gradation of her skills, as and when required
- A-HELP will keep record of all livestock and poultry in the area/ village and share it with block level veterinarians for easy co-ordination of activities.
- A-HELP will sensitize the livestock owners about ear-tagging and identification of animals and ensure that the animals are ear-tagged and registered on INAPH. She will help in the data entry on INAPH.
- They will take steps to create awareness and provide information to the animal owners/community on scientific health management of Livestock, basic sanitation & hygienic practices which will keep herself/himself and their animals healthy, other information on existing Veterinary health services in their area of operation.
- She will counsel the first time farmer/livestock entrepreneur by providing all the sources of information to avail the loan or benefits from different departments/organizations and will help to apply for loan applications/filling/uploading or tracking the progress of his/her applications.
- A-HELP will share their telephone numbers with Mobile Veterinary Units/ Clinics (MVUs), if active in their area, so that they can coordinate with the call center, as and when required.
- She will support the animal owner in getting their animal insured as per the guidelines of animal husbandry
- She will do the activities like Vaccination, ear-tagging and Artificial Insemination for the animals after proper training and will give information such as calf birth, details of AI etc to the Veterinary Dispensary/AI centre as directed.
- She will help the farmers for Ration Balancing programme and also support animal owners in conservation of feed. She will also help in supply of mineral supplements by preparing them through local available resources. DAHD will provide necessary training to her, so that she is also able to act as a link in the supply chain. This will also enable a source of income for her services.
- A-HELP will provide primary medical care/first aid for minor ailments such as wound, diarrhoea, and for minor injuries. (A “First Aid Kit“ will be provided to each A-HELP. Contents of the kit will be based on the recommendations of the expert/technical advisory group set up by the Government of India.)
- She will promote fodder cultivation in farmers’ land.

- She can act as enumerator, in case of sample surveys and other census activities.

2.2 DAHD

- At the national level DAHD will issue directives to the State/UTs Animal Husbandry Departments (AHDs)
- The state AH departments and State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM) will co-ordinate all the activities
- The State/UT AHDs will give all the directions and materials related to the approved activities and services through its existing system of district, block and village/institutional administrative system
- The publicity and extension materials /modules of DAHD/State AHDs will be provided to the SRLM
- The technical works like AI, Vaccination and Tagging etc. will be random monitored by the concerned Veterinary officer of the area.
- A- HELP will be given basic training in Artificial Insemination as per the SOPs prescribed by the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying and AI training Institutes accredited by DAHD before A-HELP is established as Multipurpose AI Technician In Rural India (MAITRIs) under Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM). Assistance or equipment grants as admissible under RGM will also be made available to A-HELP. Activities of A-HELP undertaking AI programme will be monitored by local veterinarian as in case of MAITRIs. A- HELP may undergo retraining if desired conception rates are not achieved.
- DAHD will establish a robust online MIS system for monitoring and capturing the data of activities performed by A-HELP.

2.3 NRLM

- The common guidelines and directives at National level will be communicated to NRLM
- NRLM has set up dedicated sensitive support units at the National, State, district and sub-district levels, to catalyze social mobilization, build institutions, capacities and skills, facilitate financial inclusion and access to financial services, support livelihoods and to promote convergence and partnerships with various programmes and stakeholders. These systems with the same channels would be utilized for the A-HELP model also.

3. Selection Process

The selection of A-HELPS will be done through the existing set up of NRLM. The MoU between the Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying and Department of Rural Development would help in facilitating the mutual term. State governments may modify the

guidelines except that no change may be done in the basic criteria of A-HELP **being a women agent** with minimum **educational qualification upto class VIII** and that **she would be an existing member of NRLM**.

3.1 General Norms of Selection

- The norm of coverage of A-HELP would be such that she is assured of reasonable compensation for her time and effort. The SCSCs could lay down norms for the same. Separate norms could be laid for tribal, hilly, desert, or difficult areas.
- The states will also need to work out the district and block wise coverage/phasing for selection of A-HELP.
- SRLMs will support in selection and training of A-HELP.

3.2 Criteria for Selection

- A-HELP must be primarily a member of DAY-NRLM self-help groups (SHGs)
- A-HELP should have effective communication skills, leadership qualities and be able to reach out to community. She should be a literate woman with formal education upto class Eighth. This may be relaxed only if no suitable person with this qualification is available.
- State may relax minimum educational qualification criteria for selection of AI workers in consultation with the experts in the field so that there is no reduction in conception rate and effect on the reproductive health of the animals.
- Adequate representation from disadvantaged population groups should be ensured to /serve such groups better.
- Priority may be given to the existing SHG members who is doing AH activities/MAITRIs/AI workers

4. Institutional Arrangements

The success of A-HELP scheme will depend on how well the scheme is implemented and monitored. It will also depend crucially on the motivational level of various functionaries and the quality of all the processes involved in implementing the scheme. It is, therefore, necessary that well defined and yet flexible and participatory institutional structures are put into place at all levels from state to village level.

4.1 Working Arrangements

A-HELP will have her work organized in following manner. She will have a flexible work schedule and her work load would be limited to putting in only about two-three hours per day, on about four days per

week, except during some mobilization events and training programmes.

i. At VD/AI center: She will be attending the VD/AI center for collecting vaccines and Deworming agents etc., The detailed or necessary arrangements will be made in consultation with State AHDs.

ii. For performing AIs or where A-HELPS are acting as AI workers necessary guidelines will be issued by the State/District AHDs. Similarly, she will follow guidelines for coordinating with MVUs.

iii. In the Panchayat level, she will arrange animal health camps or awareness camps in consultation with the dairy co-operatives or other NGOs with support of DAHD.

iv. At home: She will be available at her home so as to work as depot holder for distribution of supplies like dewormers, nutritional supplements etc. to needy people or for any assistance required in terms of first aid/advise/application filling etc.. State AHD will support in management of depot by managing the supply of necessary inputs as per the guidelines

v. In the Community: She will attend meetings of village agriculture/animal husbandry committees as required and designated.

vi. She will also help in implementation of state specific animal husbandry policy and will be eligible for remuneration in accordance with the respective guidelines.

4.2 Monitoring Mechanism

i. At the **National level**- Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) with the technical and financial support of DAHD will provide technical and professional support to the states

ii. At the **State** level, the State Rural Livelihoods Mission (SRLM) constituted by State Government, would oversee the implementation of all NRLM related activities in the state. The A-HELP Guidelines will be implemented with the support of State Animal Husbandry Department. They will have the power to modify the Guidelines as per the local needs and resources within the ambit of National MoU signed.

iii. **District Mission Management Unit (DMMU)**: The DMMU of the SRLM would be responsible for meeting NRLM objectives and implementing NRLM activities in the district. DMMU, linked suitably with District AHD, would be a facilitating and support unit for field structures

iv. In the block level **Block Mission Management Unit (BMMU)** led by a Block Mission Manager (BMM) would be responsible for the co-ordination of block level A-HELPS.

v. In Panchayat level/Village level, the actual selection of A-HELPS will happen, as decided by SLSC following the processes of DAY-NRLM. As far as possible, existing SHG member who is already engaged in Animal

husbandry related activities would be chosen as A-HELP. Their overall activities will be monitored by the Community Based Organizations (CBOs), who will report the same to BMMU.

vi. For technical programmes like Vaccination or AI the A-HELPS will be monitored by the Village level Veterinary Officer/Doctor. However, there will not be any technical control by the veterinary officer.

vii. For technical control, the existing NRLM system will suffice. The MIS system developed under the DAHD will also serve as an important tool for monitoring the A-HELP.

5. Training

Capacity building of A-HELP is critical in enhancing her effectiveness. The existing training system of NRLM or the Department may be utilized for this. Post selection, the A-HELP will be provided additional training like Artificial Insemination, vaccination, ear tagging etc. as per the need by DAHD. A-HELP worker will also be provided skill enhancement training from time to time or as per requirement. Training and awareness materials will be provided to the NRLM and SRLMs from the DAHD and respective State/UTs AHDs.

5.1 Training Strategy

➤ **Induction Training:** After selection, A-HELP will have to undergo series of training episodes to acquire the necessary knowledge, skills and confidence for performing her spelled out roles. Considering range of functions and tasks to be performed induction training may be given for 2-3 months.

➤ **Training materials:** would be prepared according to the roles and responsibilities that the A-HELP would need to perform. Her envisaged functions and tasks will be expanded into a listing of competencies and the training material would be prepared accordingly. The training materials produced at the national level would be in the form of a general prototype which states may modify and adapt as per local needs.

➤ **Periodic Trainings:** After the induction training, periodic re-training will be held for about two days, once in every alternate month at appropriate level for all A-HELPS. During this training, interactive sessions will be held to help refresh and upgrade their knowledge and skills, troubleshoot problems they are facing, monitor their work and also for keeping up motivation and interest. A-HELPS will be compensated for attending these trainings.

➤ **On-the-job Training:** A-HELPS needs to have on the job support after training both during the initial training phase and

during the later periodic training phase, wherever, it is deemed necessary.

➤ **Training of trainers:** As per the existing NRLM training guidelines.

6. Compensation to A-HELP

- A-HELP would be an **honorary Agent** and would not receive any salary or honorarium. Her work would be so tailored that it does not interfere with her normal livelihood.
- However A-HELP could be compensated for her time in the following situations:
 - a) For the duration of her training both in terms of TA and DA. (so that her loss of livelihood for those days is partly compensated)
 - b) For participating in the monthly/bi-monthly training, as the case may be.
 - c) Wherever compensation has been provided for under different national programmes for undertaking specific livestock/ “One health” sector programmes with measurable outputs like vaccination and deworming, such tasks should be assigned to A-HELPS on priority (i.e. before it is offered to other village Agents) wherever they are in position.
 - d) Other than the above specific programmes, other programs like village level surveys, enumeration works etc., will also be performed by A-HELPS for which she would be compensated as applicable.
 - Group recognition/awards may also be considered
 - Non-monetary incentives e.g. Exposure visit, annual conventions etc can be considered.
 - A drug kit containing basic kits should be given
 - e) The SHG member identified as A-HELP worker will be compensated for ear tagging, data collection and INAPH entry as per the norms. They will also be provided equipment for data entry and ear tagging.
 - f) A-HELP will be eligible for compensation for the animals insured as per the program guidelines. A-HELP worker will also be eligible for compensation for supporting beneficiaries in loan applications/filling/uploading or tracking the progress of his/her applications as per DAHD norms.
 - g) A-HELP would be eligible to levy service charge for her services, the rates whereof could be decided by the SRLMs in consultation with the SAHDs.

7. Fund-Flow Mechanism

The funds for making the payments to A-HELP will flow from SAHD to the SRLMs after drawing State and central shares and SRLMs in turn will make payments through their channels. The compensation to A-HELP based on measurable outputs would be given under the overall supervision of DAY-NRLM, BMMU and concerned veterinary authority. The guidelines for such compensation would be provided by the District/State AHDs.

7.1 For the compensation money under the various national programmes / Schemes, the programmes have in built provisions for the payment of compensation. These compensations will be made in accordance with the programme guidelines. The incentive structure shall be done with mutual consent of DoRD and DAHD.

7.2 A-HELP would be entitled for TA / DA for attending training programmes. She would be given the amount at the venue itself.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation of this A-HELP model

An MIS will be maintained to monitor the progress of various activities undertaken by A-HELPS. GOI may set up following indicators for monitoring A-HELPS.

8.1 Process Indicators:

- Number of A-HELPS selected by due process;
- Number of A-HELPS received Induction training
- No of A-HELPS received follow-up trainings

8.2 Outcome Indicators: Focus will be on reduction of mortality and morbidity limited to the area of operation of A-HELP

- (a) % of calves/kids/lambs born
- (b) % of FMD/Other vaccinations done
- (c) % of nutritional supplements/ dewormers supplied
- (d) % of AI increased wherever applicable