Using photovoice as an M&E tool: Evidence of change from smallholder livestock producers' perspective in Vietnam

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Abstract

Photovoice, or storytelling through photos, is a participatory method which uses photography to enhance dialogues and discussions. Community members are given cameras to take photos of concerned topics. Under the CGIAR research program on livestock in Vietnam – "Livestock-led interventions towards equitable livelihoods and improved environment in the North-West Highlands of Vietnam (*Li-chăn*)", photovoice was used as a community-based monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tool with Thai and Hmong farmers, in Son La province, Vietnam. In Li-chan's photovoice study, 20 user-friendly cameras were given to 18 farmers and 2 commune veterinarians, to document livestock-related issues, identify how they traditionally raise livestock and evidence of change from project interventions around animal genetics, animal health & biosecurity, feeds and forages, environmental impacts, improved market linkages and collective action. The photovoice results gave insights on the effectiveness of promoted interventions, bottlenecks and opportunities to accelerate scaling. The study outputs showed evidence that farmers and veterinarians improved their knowledge on animal husbandry, including breeding, artificial insemination, biosecurity, farm management, improved forages, animal nutrition, feed preservation, erosion control, biomass recycling and benefits of collective action. Livestock-led innovations were adopted by farmers and reached policy makers at different levels. Photovoice was proved to be a suitable participatory method with the ethnic minority communities in Vietnam as it helped to overcome language barriers and stimulated active discussions amongst farmers. When working with ethnic minorities, photovoice methodology enables researchers and community members to become co-researchers and co-learners through equitably sharing of knowledge and experiences. In M&E of an integrated livestock development project, it can help to provide evidence of best-fit interventions in forms of photo and stories. It also helps to trigger wider adoption among community farmers and even further through reaching and influencing programme and policy makers.

Keywords: Community-based monitoring and evaluation, integrated livestock development, photovoice

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