

Partnering for Change: Link Research to Societal Challenges

Video Transcript

An Ethiopian One Health initiative

[Prof. Dr. Jakob Zinsstag] The Jijiga University One Health Initiative, in short JOHI, is a good case example of how transdisciplinary methods are used when it comes to addressing health care for mobile pastoralists. I'm happy to welcome Mohammed Ibrahim, who is a PhD student from Jijiga University. Welcome to this session.

So before we started, we involved community members, we involved local authorities, but also federal Ethiopian authorities. How did you select these stakeholders?

[Mohammed Ibrahim Abdikadir] Yeah, these stakeholders are very crucial for the implementation of the project and we included all those very important for our project. For example, we selected the pastoral community themselves who we are targeting, the local authorities that administer the woreda, the zonal administration, and even the council administrations in zonal level. And we also included the regional sector bureaus as well as the federal offices that are mainly concerned on the project for One Health. And this is the main importance of these stakeholders – is to be in a cooperation, because this One Health itself is a cooperation approach. And we should have to start with all stakeholders that are concerned for the project. That's why we included all those stakeholders that are important for us in the project.

[Prof. Dr. Jakob Zinsstag] Thank you. After that workshop, we went together to the field. I still remember driving to this pastoralist camp in Adadle woreda. What was the benefit of going to the field together?

[Mohammed Ibrahim Abdikadir] What we did is very unique, because we are using an active participatory in which we are not going to bring our project from top to bottom rather than from the bottom to top. We visited the pastoral communities themselves and we were together with the zonal administration, and the woreda administration, and all the JJU or Jijiga University staff. Why we do this visit is, first, to be engaged with the community and to have a good collaboration with the local administrations so that our project will go smoothly without any obstacles. And this will also give opportunity for the community to feel an ownership of the project so that we can have a very good trust with the community.

In addition to that, when you go to the area, it's not only what they tell you, but you can also observe the major problems in the area. And that visit gives us an opportunity to have to sit together with the community to discuss different issues that we can feel are the real challenge in the area, so that we can rethink if there is any point that we didn't mention or raised so that we can include within our project.



[Prof. Dr. Jakob Zinsstag] Besides improving the health of the pastoralists, we wanted to really build up research capacity at Jijiga University and we selected students to study in Switzerland. You were among the first batch of PhD students to come to Switzerland. How was this for you to be in Switzerland and how did this influence your research?

[Mohammed Ibrahim Abdikadir] Coming to Switzerland – that was my first time to be in Europe. And it was a good experience, especially when we went to the Eiger – the mountain – in which was my first time to see a mountain covered by snow for my first time. And what I liked also was the landscape, the food variety of the different students and the staff of our department, and the long walking on the mountain-- that snow. If I come to what concerned about the research and what I benefit from it is just to look at what major research issues can be raised rather than just focusing what do you know or in the context. And it made me to think proud-- in a proud way.

[Prof. Dr. Jakob Zinsstag] So what happened when you returned from Switzerland? You started your fieldwork?

[Mohammed Ibrahim Abdikadir] Yes. When I had my classes here in the first semester, I went back home and then we started to-- for the data collection in the field and to process our research. And we went to Adadle woreda as a group and this is the major important thing in One Health approach. We were composed of different disciplines that went together by using one vehicle doing our research in the same study area with our different disciplines, which can decrease the cost of the field itself. So that's what we did after we go back home.

[Prof. Dr. Jakob Zinsstag] And after some time, the academic supervisors come to visit you to see how you did the fieldwork. And how well could you create a relationship between the supervisors and the communities?

[Mohammed Ibrahim Abdikadir] When the supervisors came to the study area, that is a very important thing, because the supervisors can see where I will do my research and how the pastoral community, how those communities live in that area. And it also gives them a chance to see the willingness and the collaboration. And it also created a mutual understanding between the supervisors and the community by asking questions, and answering, and also to forward what they have as a problem in their situation.

[Prof. Dr. Jakob Zinsstag] I hope we could explain how a participatory transdisciplinary project can be set up. We look forward to reading your comments and suggestions.