



ND Vaccine: Creating New Job Opportunities and Saving Poultry in India

Newcastle Disease (ND) vaccinators in Mayubhanj district of Odisha state in India can today look towards bright prospects. The demand for their services has not only spawned new employment opportunities within their locales, but has also helped farmers protect their poultry flocks which would routinely be ravaged by Newcastle disease outbreaks. In addition, the chance to become a poultry vaccinator and the income that comes along with it has empowered rural women, who can now use their hard earned money to invest in a better future for their families.

Access to ND vaccination training in Mayurbhanj district of Odisha has been facilitated by the Bhodal Milk Producers Cooperative Society (BMPCS), a local NGO and Heifer International in partnership with non-profit Global Alliance for Livestock Veterinary Medicines (GALVmed).

37-year-old, Govardhan Naik from Suryapada always wanted to set up his own business. A university graduate, he first heard of an opportunity to be an ND vaccinator through a friend. After a four day training course that covered vaccination and first aid, he ventured into the field as a trained vaccinator. This was about four years ago.

Govardhan gets his supplies of the ND vaccine from a market at a nearby town, Kosta. He has also procured a refrigerator to store the vaccines and a motorcycle to help him reach the farmers. He serves around 400 households vaccinating close to 5,000 chickens every month. Providing additional services such as deworming and first aid, Govardhan brings home a net income averaging INR 8,000 (US \$ 122) monthly, which has positively contributed to the economic well-being of his family.

His work as a vaccinator has brought him recognition from the locals and several of his friends have now shown an interest in the occupation, with one of them now an active vaccinator. "I will continue as a vaccinator even after this current project ends," he says, referring to the ongoing GALVmed sponsored initiative, much to the relief of numerous households who are grateful for his services and want him to continue.

The effects of the poultry vaccinators' work on the local economy are visible. When Govardhan first began vaccinating, an average village consisting of about 20 households would have a maximum of 70-80 chickens. After the first year of vaccination, the number skyrocketed to over 1,000. Farmers' earnings from poultry rearing increased.

"If you work as a vaccinator, you can have an independent enterprise," he adds.

A vial of the ND vaccine costs between INR 75 (US \$1.16) and INR 100 (US \$1.55). One vial can vaccinate up to 100 chickens. A vaccinator can charge INR 2 (US \$ 0.03) per vaccination. There is also additional little income derived from services such as deworming and first aid. For example, Govardhan earns another INR 3,000 or (US \$46) from these additional services.

The involvement of women as vaccinators has also contributed to their economic empowerment and participation in decision making within the family unit and their communities. Mamata Mandal, 42, from Tikayatpur village in Ras Gobindpur block, is one such vaccinator. Mamata first got to know about vaccination from Anup Behra, the team leader of Unnayana, a local NGO. Coming from a family that has traditionally reared poultry and having witnessed high mortality of the birds, she readily took up the occupation.

Mamata procures her supplies from a small shop, about 7 km away from her village. Carrying a cool box to store the vaccines, she serves around 250 households in a 3km radius and vaccinates around 5,000 birds. Her services get her an income of INR 3,000 (US \$ 46) every month. "With this income I can school my children and buy agricultural inputs for the farm," she says.

BMPCS started the programme with just 7,500 families in 2011. By December 2016, the NGO had already reached more than 175,000 households. Today BMPCS supports more than 320 vaccinators in the project area.

Heifer International's project was launched in September 2015. By May 2017, they had served as many as 62,316 households. Today, Heifer International supports more than 218 active vaccinators in the field.

Newcastle disease vaccination has helped turn around the lives of many individuals in Mayurbhanj. The vaccinators stand at the frontlines in the fight against the deadly poultry disease and their services are benefitting many smallholder farmers. And with a stable demand for their services, the vaccinators can hope for a better future.



Written by Deepak Bhadana with edit inputs from Prasenjit De