How to make Livestock Case Studies

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# How to make Livestock Case Studies

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What is a Case Study?
A Case Study is a story using words and pictures, describing how a farming family is using improved methods of managing livestock. It shows what they do, how they do it, and how it has affected their livelihood.

What are Case Studies for?
The purpose of case studies is to show how farmers are improving their livestock management and productivity. Case studies can be used to:
1. Show and teach other farmers,
2. Inform project managers and project donors,
3. Train extension staff,
4. Give to the media (eg radio and TV) to promote improved livestock management practices.

Steps to Developing a Case Study

1. Farmer and topic selection

Who is the case study for?
Who is your case study meant to influence? Are they women farmers? Poor farmers? Farmers of a particular ethnic group? Farmers who want to raise goats? You need to make your case study similar to the farmers you want to influence (eg same ethnic group, poor farmer, woman farmer). You also need to make your case study in the same language (both oral and written).

What do they need to know?
Is your case study to show project donors how farmers are marketing their cattle? Maybe it is to show your colleagues some innovative things your farmers are doing? These audiences will need to see different information. You have to decide on your audience and the best information to present to them.

Find the right farmer
Once you know your audience, you can think about who would be the best farmer to use for the case study. You need to think carefully about which farmers to select for case studies. The farmer has to be gaining significant benefits.
For example, maybe they have made enough profit to build a new house or buy a motorbike, or they have enough time to start other enterprises, or they are able to send the children to school. Perhaps they are doing some interesting things with livestock production (e.g., changing from breeding pigs to buying in and fattening pigs for the market or housing goats and using the manure to make fertiliser).

2. Interviewing Farmers

Set up the interview

Once you have decided on a suitable farmer for the case study you need to interview them.

First contact them to ask if they are willing to participate. Explain what a Case Study is and what the topic for this one is. Tell them why you think they would be a good subject and who the audience is.

Explain what is involved (e.g., interview, looking at their production techniques, taking photos etc) and how long it will take (e.g., 2 to 3 hours). Offer payment for their time if this is possible. Make an appointment to visit and do the interview.

Prepare questions for the interview

Family information:

Record the farmer’s name, village, ethnic group, number of family members – children, men, and women. Ask who does the labour.

Before they joined the project:

Ask farmers about their livelihood situation before joining the project e.g., livelihood condition of families, crops and animal production, labor, family income. What kind of problems did they have? Why did they decide to participate with project?

What they did:

What activities did farmers do? (e.g., pasture growing, vaccination)

How did they do each activity? (show each step from starting to the end).

Did they do anything innovative, different or creative?

What was their kip input, output and profit? (i.e., cost of buying, cost of raising/fattening, price received)

The benefits of what they did:

What were the benefits? (E.g., labour saving, time saving, increased income, reduced disease, able to keep more livestock, better education for children, investment)

How have they spent the profit? (E.g., build a new house, buy a motorbike etc)

What changes did farmers make along the way to their livestock management?

What kind of problems did they solve?

Planning for the future

What plans have the family made for the next year and beyond?
How do they plan to help other families or villages?

Do the interview

- **Always be polite** and start by thanking the farmer for assisting with the case study.
- **Have your list of questions** with you so that you can check that you have covered everything.
- However, don’t just stick to the questions, be prepared to follow up if things are not clear or you notice something interesting (e.g., Why did you do that? What happened then? Where did you get that idea/information?)
- **Ask the farmer to show you everything** they have done and the steps they have taken:
  ~ Walk around with them and look.
  ~ Imagine that you are a farmer yourself and want to do this too – what would you need to know?
  ~ Take photos as you go.
  ~ Be enthusiastic and positive to encourage the farmer to give you all the information.
- **When you have finished**, thank the farmer for their time and tell them you will show them the Case Study when you have finished, to check. Give them the payment or a present.

Language and Recording

It is very important to use the farmer’s language. You may need to find someone from the village to translate, or take another extension officer with you.

Try to get some direct quotes from farmers by taking notes or using video on mobile phone. Be sure to record what the farmer actually said. If you can take a digital recorder or video you can record the interview (ask permission first) so that you can quote the farmer accurately.

Taking video and photos

Ask the farmer’s permission to take photos or video and say what they will be used for.

Take plenty of photos while you are there: you could easily take up to 50 photos to choose from later. Try also to organize to come back in different seasons to take more photos as things change over time.

Things to look out for to photograph are:

- **Introductory photos** – the farmer’s village, house, family members.
- ‘**Before’ photos** – livestock roaming free, animals in poor condition, farmer with only a few animals etc
- ‘**What the farmer did’ photos** - the animals, pastures, animal housing, water systems, the farmer
being active- preparing the soil, sowing forages, feeding livestock, cutting forages, vaccinating, collecting seed, collecting manure etc

- **Benefit photos** – the farmer building a new house, the farmer’s children going to school, something the farmer bought with profits, livestock in good condition etc.

- **Remember to make sure the farmer is in most of the photos!**

### 3. Writing up your Case Study

**Organise your information**

- Write out the information you have collected in the following sections:
  - **Introduction** – use the family information to introduce the farmer’s situation.
  - **Before** – what the family did before making the changes.
  - **What he/she did** – Outline what the farmer actually did, step-by-step. Include details about input/outputs and profits if the farmer has them.
  - **Benefits** – the results and benefits for the family
  - **Plans for the future**.

- Your case study should not be more than 2 pages long.

**Make your Case Study unique**

- Add a heading/title that will attract the attention of the audience.
- Add direct quotes from the farmer or family – this helps to make your case studies interesting, genuine and different from each other.
- Add photos that illustrate important points
- Add a thank-you to the farmer for participating, your name and date of producing the Case Study

**Translate your Case Study to suit your audience**

If the people you are trying to reach usually speak a different language from yours, find someone who can translate your Case Study into their language and script.

**Check your Case Study with the farmer**

Sit down with your case study farmer and check all of the information with him/her.

**Ready to go!**

Your Case Study is now ready to use. It should be

- interesting,
- unique,
- convey useful information that your audience can understand, and
- look attractive.
Here is an example of a case study:

**High income from Cattle fattening using forages**

Mr. Yongnengthor is 40 years old. He is from the Hmong ethnic minority in Sanekhing village, Khoun district, Xiengkhuang province. He has 9 family members with 3 labourers. His main activity is livestock rearing.

**Before:**

In previous times, Mr. Yongnengthor had no input in cattle production. He left his cattle in grassland (native pasture) and/or in the rice fields after harvesting. It was very difficult to manage the cattle herd. The problems he found were: 1) the cattle were thin, 2) inadequate feed in dry season, 3) death by diseases because the cattle were not vaccinated, 4) cattle were stolen 5) the mortality of calves was very high because of lack of milk and low growth rates. He walked for 3 hours to collect feed when the cattle were sick or calving.

**What he did:**

In 2006 the Capacity Building for Smallholder Livestock System project started in Sanekhing village. Mr.Yongnengthor’s family decided to participate in the project. The project gave him seed of stylo and grasses and the project staff advised him how to grow forages.

First he grew forages in a plot of 24 x 32 m². Before planting he ploughed and harrowed the land. He spaced rows at 40-50 cm and sowed the seed at 2-3 cm deep.

The pasture was growing very well after 45 days. He then began by fattening 1 cow; cutting pasture to feed his cow every day. After 3.5 months the cow was in good condition - very fat, hair and skin is bright. He sold this cow for 3,900,000 kips. Before fattening, he would have expected a price of around 3,000,000 kips.

Later he expanded the pens and improved the feed and water trough to suit 7 cattle. He bought 7 cattle from another area to fatten and he eventually sold for 21,000,000 kips. His profit was around 1,000,000 per head.

Now he has changed his whole system. He doesn’t leave the cattle in the forest, they are tied near the house and fed by grasses from the backyard pasture. He vaccinates every 6 months.

After further experiences through a cross visit at Nonghet, he changed his feeding system. Now he grows Guinea, Brizantha, Mulato, and Ruzi grasses. He mixes 30 kg cut grass with 1 bowl of rice bran, maize and tops of sugar cane, and gives fresh water.

**Benefits:**

- Easy to collect grasses to feed the cattle.
- Cattle grow every fast and can sell after fattening 2.5-3 months.
- Not too far to collect feed - has enough time to do other work.
- Cattle are not dead or sick by diseases.
- He can transfer the new technologies to other farmers.
- Able to save money for improving livelihood - enough money to send the children to school.

**Plans for the future:**

- He will expand the pasture for 8-10 head per fattening period,
- Producing cattle for marketing, and
- Produce pigs.

Prepared by Mr. Neuakhom Theppanid, with thanks to Mr Yongnengthor and family, May 2009.