First Animal Welfare Technical Meeting to Develop and Prioritize Animal Welfare Key Issues and Intervention Areas for Africa

AU-IBAR: MAKING ANIMAL WELFARE AND HUMAN WELLBEING OUR PRINCIPAL GOAL IN AFRICA

Fish Eagle Inn, Naivasha 27th-29th July 2015
1. Introduction

In 2014, the African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) began enhancing focus on animal welfare (AW) in order to position it as a leading technical institution of African Union Commission (AUC) in the field of animal welfare. It is in this context that “Compliance with animal welfare standards” was included as one of the key result areas in its strategic plan 2014-2017 with the ultimate goal of enhancing the compliance of African Member States (MS) with animal welfare standards.

The focus will involve providing technical and institutional support to Regional Economic Communities (RECs) and AU MSs in understanding, reviewing and contributing to AW standards setting process as well as including animal welfare matters in their national policies, legislations, strategies and programs related to the development and utilization of animal resources.

In order to identify and prioritize key issues and intervention areas on AW and to develop an issues paper (IP) for the continental AW stakeholder consultative meeting, AU-IBAR organized in close partnership with World Animal Protection and The Brooke the first animal welfare technical meeting held on 27th to 29th July 2015 at the Fish Eagle Inn, Naivasha, Kenya.

2. Opening ceremony

The meeting was officially opened by the Director A-IBAR professor Ahmed Elsawalhy, who welcomed all participants to the meeting and wished them fruitful deliberations.

The Director commended the existing partnership between World Animal Protection and other partners and emphasized the need for Africa to lead the way in promoting AW and for AU-IBAR to take the lead by providing leadership and resources. The director, however, observed that promotion of AW has not received adequate attention and resources especially in areas of policies and legislation; while much attention has been concentrated in the areas of companion and draught animals it may provide useful experience.

The Director said that in order to fill any existing gaps and improve advocacy, policy/strategy and legislation in animal welfare; AU-BAR has taken AW as a key result area. This will lead to enhanced compliance of AW in Member States (MS).

In his remarks, the OIE Sub-Regional Representative for Eastern Africa, Dr. Walter Masiga indicated that animal welfare was first identified as a priority in the OIE Strategic Plan 2001-2005 and emphasized the role of OIE as the international reference organization in providing standards, recommendations and guidelines covering animal welfare practices. He said that many OIE standards and actions have been developed and that the scope of AW developed by OIE provides a suitable framework for developing actions for AW. He emphasized the fact that AW standards should be science based, copying and pasting AW regulations from other regions may lead to negative effects in terms of adoption and implementation.
Dr. Bouna Diop, Regional Manager of FAO ECTAD for East Africa, in his speech, looked at AW as an ethical good and said that in the recent past, AW area has attracted increasing concern related to the requirements of AW standards in production and consumerism. Studies have quantified the economic value of AW and proved that if improved, it can contribute to economic wellbeing. It is also evident that any systematic attention to best practices in production systems can lead to increased productivity.

The Africa Director, World Animal Protection, Mr. Tennyson Williams focused his speech that the misconception of animal welfare is a western concept. He said that unfortunately the twisted notion is misleading and there is need to examine its source in order to deal with it. This misconception he said is part of the genesis of problems related to harnessing the full potential of Africa’s animal resources. As such, there is need to put AW on Africa’s development agenda.

In his speech, The Brooke Eastern Africa Regional Representative, Fred Ochieng while quoting from the book by George Orwell (‘The Animal Farm’) explained how the animal’s perceptions on their poor welfare status is akin to the realities of today where many of the welfare problems facing animals can be associated with negligence, poor handling and practices as well as abuse by owners and users. Fred called on members present to strive to impact positively on the policy and legislative environments affecting the welfare of animals, recognize their contribution to the economy, and strive to make a difference to improve the welfare of all animals. He emphasized the need for stronger participation and collaboration particularly amongst all AW organizations.

2. Objectives of the technical meeting

The overall objective of the retreat was to initiate the development of an AW agenda for Africa with special emphasis on the increasing importance of compliance with OIE AW standards.

The specific objectives were to:

- identify key issues of AW in Africa
- identify key issues of AW in livestock marketing and trade including at the quarantine stations
- prioritize key issues of AW in Africa;
- identify key interventions on AW in Africa;
- develop an AW issues paper (IP);
- discuss plans for the AW continental stakeholder consultative meeting;
- discuss and adopt the TORs for the proposed African Platform for Animal Welfare (APAW).

3. Participants


4. Proceedings of the meeting
Proceedings of the three day meeting enabled participants to address the various topics in the agenda that included:

- The context of Animal Welfare in Africa (Livelihoods, Poverty Alleviation, Wealth Creation)
- Animal Production and AW in Africa
- AW and livestock trade and marketing in Africa
- AW activities of the OIE of relevance to Africa
- Aquatic AW: Issues and challenges for biosecurity and food safety
- Status of Animal welfare in Africa
- Presentation of ARIS e-forum discussion outcomes
- AW and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)
- Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (UDAW)
- Animal welfare standards of the OIE and work programme of the AW working group.
- FAO AW activities in Africa and AW global perspectives
- Animal welfare policy landscaping and analysis in Africa
- Mainstreaming AW in AU Livestock development Agenda (LiDeSA)

During working group sessions, participants debated the key issues and priorities and identified possible intervention areas to promote animal welfare agenda across the continent. The continental stakeholder consultative meeting for the establishment of African Platform for Animal Welfare (APAW) was also discussed.

Following fruitful discussions, the meeting agreed on key AW issues and road map as summarized below:

4.1. Key Animal Welfare Issues and Priorities for Africa

*Animal welfare* (AW) is a growing concern that is gradually gaining relevance and application in social, economic, political and legal sectors. From further reflection within the current definition of AW set by OIE, it is evident that some aspects of AW have been practiced over time in different African systems and cultures, though at varying levels, and that continues to add value to an ongoing debate on what constitutes “animal welfare”. Currently, there exist different institutions and organizations, both in the public and private sectors, that have adopted AW within their mandates and endeavor to advance the development of best practices in AW. The developed countries have shown considerable implementation of AW practices and continue to influence the international adoption of these practices (e.g. through import requirements).

To a large extent, the increased attention granted to AW in these countries is a result of the empowerment of consumers with animal ethics considerations and trade aspects putting more pressure on the rest of the world to address such animal welfare issues. In line with this realization, animal welfare stakeholders in Africa are faced with a critical question: that of identifying key animal welfare issues in Africa and interventions to address them. The meeting participants however noted that the animal production context and conservation arrangements, amongst others, in Africa, have unique
specificities that should be considered in advancing the AW agenda. Animal welfare approaches in Africa “should not be a cut and paste affair” of what is being done in the developed countries. This approach is in line with OIE standards, which focus on outcome-based welfare indicators, rather than prescriptive input or management based indicators, in keeping with the principle of “equivalence”.

Key issues were identified and grouped in twelve (12) themes that represent the key concerns for animal welfare in Africa.

A road map was developed and an ad-hoc working group was formed to further work on the identified key issues and priority areas to prepare the IP for the continental stakeholder meeting.

6. Acknowledgement

The participants expressed their sincere gratitude to AU-IBAR for organizing this 1st face-to-face technical meeting on animal welfare. They also thanked all the technical partners represented: FAO, OIE, World Animal Protection, The Brooke, ANAW, PAAWA, The Donkey Sanctuary and IUCN for their contribution to the success of this event.