

AFRICAN UNION / INTERAFRICAN BUREAU FOR ANIMAL RESOURCES



The international community invests many million euros each year in combating animal diseases in Africa. Not without a degree of self-interest because, in our world of global interconnections, diseases such as contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, bird flu, and, most recently, swine flu can spread rapidly. Hans-Jürgen Scholl works at the African Union's Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources, ensuring that international funds are properly channelled.

Scholl is a modest 59-year-old from the Franconia region of Bavaria who tells it like it is: 'I am a bean counter,' he says of himself, for example. For two years, he has been supporting the African Union in establishing a sound financial management system and a reliable reporting system at the Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU/IBAR). 'Without professional standards of financial management there can be no transparency, without transparency the donors have no trust, and without the trust of potential donors there is no money,' says Scholl summing up the reason for his placement in a nutshell. The request for financial expertise came from AU/IBAR itself, as did the explicit wish that the position be filled by an expert from Germany. Hans-Jürgen Scholl was just the right person for AU/IBAR.

At the moment, 70% of the money that lands up in AU/IBAR's accounts for the implementation of various projects comes from the European Union. The rest comes from other international and national development organisations and from individual governments. AU/IBAR was founded in 1951 as a coordinating authority to combat cattle plague in Africa and is now one of the African Union's largest sub-organisations. Since it was set up, AU/IBAR has not only had to deal with numerous trans-border animal diseases such as foot and mouth disease or most re-

cently swine flu and bird flu; it now has other areas of responsibility. They include improving food safety, animal husbandry, marketing of animal products, and the introduction and monitoring of international standards. With this, AU/IBAR is aiming to safeguard Africa's food supply, liberate the continent from the drip feed of international emergency food aid and from cheap imports and improve the economic situation of the population. But AU/IBAR's work also benefits human health, since people often live in close quarters with animals. There is a clear link between protecting animal health and human health in the case of bird flu and swine flu for example, which can be transmitted from animals to people.

'The aim of my placement here is to make AU/IBAR's work even more effective by putting its financial management and reporting system on a professional footing. Increased transparency and reliability will not only increase the trust of international donors, but also the trust of Africans in their own abilities.'

Hans-Jürgen Scholl, CIM expert at AU/IBAR
www.au-ibar.org

Winds of change

'Forty-seven countries from the Mediterranean to the southern tip of Africa – that is the area we cover. In many regions there are no vets, just what are known as community-based animal health workers, who have been through a training course. They are often the first people to identify diseases, which they must report to their national authorities to ensure that the information is then passed on to AU/IBAR. There has already been an improvement in reporting to AU/IBAR in recent years, but there are still large gaps in the system. AU/IBAR can identify foci of disease and put appropriate measures in place only if the entire information chain works properly,' says Hans-Jürgen Scholl, making the immense challenge patently clear. By comparison, his personal challenge seems the lesser one. By establishing more transparent and systematic financial management and reporting systems, the German management expert aims to satisfy the requirements of individual donors and those of the African Union and at the same time optimise collaboration and information sharing in project management across 47 countries.

If you ask Scholl how he envisages that happening in practice, he does not talk in terms of grand objectives such as harmonisation and aid effectiveness. Instead he lists the small, specific reforms that he and his finance team have initiated at AU/IBAR in the last two years and which ultimately lead to greater effectiveness. 'We have introduced standardised software for project management and bookkeeping for the first time. All project managers and bookkeepers in all the countries now have to use the same

software. They have to report monthly on the progress of projects and on the budget situation. That enables us to identify technical and financial bottlenecks and discrepancies in good time and respond accordingly – for example, by reallocating money that is not needed in one place to somewhere else where there is a shortfall,' says Scholl.

Conscientiousness and creativity

At the request of individual donors, Hans-Jürgen Scholl also carries out financial analyses. He is in a certain sense the 'neutral' person at AU/IBAR. His first project management job took him to Nigeria at the age of 31. Trying to pull the wool over the eyes of someone with 27 years of international professional experience is no easy task. But despite all the international guidelines and necessary conscientiousness, Scholl and his team also have to display a great deal of creativity. 'Anyone who works conscientiously and meets deadlines receives a bonus payment,' he says, describing a creative solution that often helps. He continues: 'Sometimes even I am surprised that the latitude that the bookkeepers and administrative assistants now have and the mutual trust we have built up are not abused. In fact, the opposite is more likely to be true: everyone is really throwing themselves into the job and is hungry to know more. In the finance team, they are all staying behind at the moment to learn the new software or learn a new language. Everyone wants to get on and show what they can do,' says Scholl. He himself is content with his role behind the scenes and with his bean-counting job.

The participants

The **African Union's Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources** (AU/IBAR) has been mandated by various international and national organisations and donors to carry out projects to curb animal diseases and promote animal health in Africa. For this purpose, AU/IBAR also has joint offices in a number of African countries with the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). AU/IBAR also works in close collaboration with various agricultural research institutions, including, for example, the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), which is part of the **Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research** (CGIAR). CGIAR and AU/IBAR have the same objective: to solve urgent problems in agriculture and animal hus-

bandry with the overriding aim of reducing poverty and safeguarding the food supply.

The **Centre for International Migration and Development** (CIM) and the **Advisory Service on Agricultural Research for Development** (BEAF), which is a GIZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH) project, support these endeavours – for example by placing German experts at CGIAR's agricultural research centres and, as is the case with AU/IBAR, with their implementation partners and contributing to funding their deployment. Hans-Jürgen Scholl is one of 30 German experts who are currently using their specialised know-how in this context so that important scientific findings are ultimately translated into practice and lead to genuine development progress.