

VOICES FROM WOMEN  
International Report

May 2014

# Invisible Helpers


**Women's views on the contributions of working donkeys, horses and mules to their lives.**

Key findings from research in Ethiopia, Kenya, India and Pakistan.



healthy working animals  
for the world's poorest communities

voices  
from  
women



by Dr Delphine Valette

### Acknowledgements:

The author would like to thank the Voices from Women research teams in Brooke Ethiopia, Brooke India, Brooke Pakistan, KENDAT and Brooke East Africa in Kenya for their dedication and hard work on the project, and for their help in the development of this report.

Thank you to Dorcas Pratt, Andreea Goncalves, Dr Melissa Upjohn and Dr Karen Reed for their comments on the various drafts of this report. Thank you to Dr Joy Pritchard for helping develop the questionnaire used for the research and to Melissa Upjohn for supporting the Voices from Women research. Thank you to Jennifer Titmuss for proofreading the report.

A special thank you to all of the women who participated in this research and provided their stories and insights. All quotes, personal details and photographs found in this report are published with the consent of the participants.

© The Brooke 2014. All rights reserved. Contents may be reproduced or distributed on a not-for-profit basis or quoted for media and related purposes if properly credited; but reproduction for commercial purposes requires the prior permission of the Brooke. This report is not for commercial sale.

All photographs courtesy of Delphine Valette/The Brooke

- 4 Foreword
- 6 Executive Summary
- 8 Introduction
- 15 Voices from Women
- 17 Research Locations and Snapshot Community Profiles

### Research findings

- 22 **Section 1**  
Working equids are important to women
- 24 **Section 2**  
Women are the main keepers of working equids
- 26 **Section 3**  
Women use working equids
- 28 **Section 4**  
Women have limited access to equine training and extension services
- 33 **Section 5**  
The Benefits and Contributions of Working Equine Animals to the Lives of Women
- 45 Conclusion
- 46 Recommendations
- 47 References

Second Chorko FTC Turomborā Village, Ethiopia

# Foreword

In rural societies, where local culture and traditions are still strongly rooted, responsibilities and tasks are often assigned to women and men on the basis of traditional gender roles. Women are often in charge of a large variety of labour intensive activities in agriculture. These duties coupled with their responsibilities at household level make a substantial work load that often, especially in the case of younger girls, prevent them from pursuing an adequate education and self-development.

FAO recognises that working equids play a fundamental role by lessening women's work burden and by improving women's and families' livelihoods through their direct and indirect contributions. For example, their work provides support to food security and poverty reduction through their role in income generation activities. Horses, mules and donkeys are multipurpose: they provide draught and load-bearing power, as well as other outputs such as manure.

Equids are used for soil tillage, they create synergy between nutrient cycles, farming and marketing systems, and enable women to transport goods, harvests and market products. For the very above reason, FAO has an animal welfare programme to better contribute to the

global welfare issues in collaboration with all stakeholders involved in this valuable initiative. We believe by doing so in our respective areas of competency, we can better serve the disfavoured animals and the community at large.

Yet, working equids remain largely invisible in the eyes of decision and policy makers, civil society, and donors, and also of those who rely on and care for them. Working horses, donkeys and mules are often excluded from the definition of "livestock", which may lead to them being excluded from critical interventions such as vaccination campaigns and other animal health related initiatives. This is particularly the case with donkeys due to the fact that they are less expensive and more resistant to different diseases and environmental stress. They are mostly used by resource-poor communities under intense heat and difficult terrain, with less provision for their welfare.

The lack of recognition of their importance and their chronic neglect by institutions and governments also means depriving women of the additional benefits they could obtain from them.

**FAO highly values the commitment of the Brooke on this important matter, in search of the right solutions to holistically improve the welfare of working equids, including their body condition, health, nutrition, handling and well-being.**

**We therefore welcome this report that we believe will represent a significant step towards the recognition of equids' unique contribution to women's empowerment and towards human development. We hope it will contribute towards making working equids more visible and better cared for by all.**

**Dr Berhe G. Tekola**  
Director

Animal Production and Health Division  
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



Mahavan, Mathura, India

# Executive Summary

In 2011 there were an estimated 112 million working equine animals in the world, with 43 million donkeys, 11 million mules, and 58 million horses. The large majority of these animals live in developing countries and provide daily support to hundreds of millions of poor households by doing a wide range of work in both urban and rural areas.

They have multiple functions, one of which is to earn money that is used by families to feed themselves, pay for goods, enrol children in schools and pay for healthcare.

Women also depend on working equids - especially donkeys - for income generation, help with physically demanding household chores, as well as access to social opportunities such as membership of community groups.

The Voices from Women research project was initiated at the Brooke in 2013 to explore the contributions of working horses, mules and donkeys to the lives of women from the perspectives of the women themselves. It aims to give women who live and work with these animals a voice and a platform to express their personal experiences and opinions, their needs and wants.

This report is based on research carried out in four countries in Africa (Ethiopia, Kenya) and South Asia (India, Pakistan). Through focus group discussions and interviews, we gathered women's opinions on and experiences of the contributions that working donkeys, horses and mules make to their lives. This report highlights the key findings from the research.

In particular it shows the extent to which women rely on working equine animals for support in fulfilling their many roles within the household and the wider community. This includes help with domestic drudgery, providing an income for women and their families and enabling savings by providing transport for goods, water, firewood, animal feed, manure and other produce.

Their role also extends to the social sphere of women's lives, as they raise women's status in the community and provide them with opportunities to make their voices heard and to access loan and business opportunities.

The research highlights the devastating impact of the loss or sickness of a working equid on women and their families. It shows the importance of good equine welfare, as working equids in poor health, be it because they are overworked, suffer wounds, foot problems, or are not provided with adequate harnessing and access to nutritious food, shelter and water, are impaired in their ability to benefit women optimally. Therefore good equine welfare is not a luxury but a necessity for women and their families.

The report concludes by making a set of recommendations aimed at national and international policy makers and implementers:

## 1.

**A clear link in policy and practice should be drawn between working equine welfare and human development.**

Working equids provide a significant number of benefits to women and their families. Although good equine welfare is sometimes seen as a luxury by development actors, it is a necessity as it has direct implications for people's welfare including women's and their families' access to food, education and healthcare.

## 2.

**Working donkeys, mules and horses must be recognised in gender and livestock policy and programming.**

Such recognition means, in practice, the inclusion of working equids among the animal species considered in livestock interventions aimed at women - something that does not generally happen currently.

## 3.

**Greater emphasis should be put on gender analysis and women's participation in the development of livestock-related interventions aimed at women.**

The current gaps in understanding and reflecting women's priorities with respect to livestock keeping means that important opportunities for effective interventions are being missed.

National governments, donors and UN agencies including FAO and IFAD involved in gender and livestock related projects and interventions must assess gender roles and specific needs with regards to livestock within the targeted community.

## 4.

**The body of evidence on the roles of working equids in women's lives must be increased.**

A much deeper understanding of the specific roles of working equids in women's lives is needed in order to enable programme design and implementation that meets women's expectations and that caters to their needs. Therefore, governments, INGOs and think tanks involved in livestock and gender related research should conduct further studies in order to better understand the multiple functions performed by working equids and their roles in supporting women as well as the benefits of good equine welfare to women's lives.

## 5.

**Women's access to training and extension services must be improved.**

Women in working equine communities are the primary care takers of donkeys, horses and mules. Governments and donors should give greater priority to ensuring women's access to extension services and appropriate emphasis should be put on increasing the number of women being trained and employed as "agents of change" at community level. Working equine welfare should also be included in livestock and agriculture training and extension services.



## Introduction

Halaba, Ethiopia

## Working Equine Population

Donkeys, together with horses and mules, serve as the legs, backs, arms and heads of millions of women throughout the developing world.

There is very little recent data on working equine populations across the globe. In 2011 there were an estimated 112 million working equids in the world, with 43 million donkeys, 11 million mules, and 58 million horses<sup>i</sup>, the majority of which live in developing countries, providing daily support to hundreds of millions of poor households by doing a wide range of work in both urban and rural areas. This includes transporting goods by pack or cart, draught and being ridden in both domestic and industrial settings.

The numbers of working equids, particularly donkeys, have been going up in some developing countries<sup>i</sup> as their importance is heightened by increases in human populations, global economic issues such as fuel price rises and climate change.

These animals help entire communities and more often than not, are either the sole or one of the main sources of income for families. Over 95% of donkeys in the world are kept for work.<sup>ii</sup> A Brooke study found that in developing countries the money earned by each working equid can support between 5 and 20 family members.<sup>iii</sup>

Aside from being breadwinners, working equine animals, in particular donkeys, provide vital support for women to fulfil various roles, including to lighten the burden of their household chores.

Despite their critical importance as livestock assets for poor communities and as a “support system” for women, working equine animals are notably absent in most livestock related debates and initiatives including policies and programmes seeking to address the needs and priorities of women as livestock keepers and carers.

## Working Equids: The Invisible Livestock

Nearly one billion livestock are kept by more than 600 million small farmers and herders in rural areas around the world.<sup>iv</sup> Ninety-five percent of these farmers live below the poverty line and rely on their animals to survive.<sup>v</sup>

Literature on the contribution of livestock to livelihoods has only rarely included or focused on working (non food or fibre production) animals. This includes most studies measuring the quantitative (i.e. financial) contributions of livestock to livelihoods and national economies<sup>vi</sup>, which have been primarily limited to oxen, camels and cattle and framed in terms of animal traction to improve crop production.<sup>vii</sup>

Available research on working equids has been limited to small studies focusing primarily on donkeys and by a limited number of people - mostly academics - with much of the evidence available published in Paul Starkey and Denis Fielding's "Donkeys, People and Development: A Resource Book".<sup>viii</sup>

The exception comes from small studies such as that carried out by Brooke Ethiopia:<sup>ix</sup>

**“In the livestock sector equines (...) are the engines that power rural as well as urban economic development. The most important feature of animal transport in Ethiopia is the use of donkeys, horses and mules (...) They transport a huge diversity of loads ranging from people, agricultural produce, food and water to building materials, such as timber, stone, bricks and even iron sheets and girders. They have multiple functions, which are not limited to economic aspects, but are also related to socio-cultural issues.**

**Practically all of the equines kept in Ethiopia are used for transportation of both humans and materials/goods at some point in their lives, and so make a significant contribution to the livelihoods of most of its citizens. Equines have reduced the domestic transport burden of rural people, especially women, and have created employment and income-generation opportunities for many people. The important role of horses, donkeys and mules in Ethiopia is often unrecognised or under-rated by the individuals, organisations and institutions that allocate resources and make policies, laws and practices.”**



Multan, Pakistan

The multi-functional role of working animals is only exceptionally recognised and primarily in country specific studies.<sup>x</sup>

This gap in research is reflected both at policy and programmatic level. While working equine animals are not necessarily excluded from donors' and policy makers' definition of "livestock", they are rarely acknowledged, as the emphasis is on animals that primarily produce "food or fibre outputs". As a result they remain largely absent from livestock related policies, standards, guidelines, programmatic interventions, livestock statistics (including FAOSTAT which lists equids but not specifically working equids), and animal health systems (including human resources and budgets).

This translates to working donkeys, mules and horses being excluded from livestock vaccination campaigns and their healthcare needs not being addressed, with equine specific drugs rarely being made available. The lack of attention to equine welfare is reflected in the training of vets and paravets which rarely includes an equine element.

The chronic lack of attention to working equine animals in particular in relevant human development debates may be explained by a number of factors.

The main one is the assumption that if animals do not perform what are perceived as "livestock functions" - in particular if they do not produce "food or fibre outputs" (such as meat, wool or milk) - they do not carry a quantifiable value (monetary or nutritional) which benefits people's food security and livelihoods. The role of working donkeys, mules and horses is therefore seen as secondary, even if their labour contributes significantly to the income of the household and is often paramount to the survival of other livestock in the household as the working equine animal carries fodder and water for food production animals.

Secondly, if one looks at the overall livestock inventory, the number of working equids is comparatively small. Their critical role in agricultural systems and small urban and rural businesses as well as some countries' transport infrastructure therefore goes largely unrecognised by decision makers and implementers involved in relevant sectors. This is an important oversight and a missed opportunity to address livelihoods strategies which millions of families in the developing world depend on.

## Livestock functions of working equine animals

(classification based on Dorward et al, 2005)<sup>xi</sup>

Livestock functions can broadly be categorised according to their contributions to production (or income), buffering, savings, insurance, consumption and social integration (or benefits). These contributions often overlap, and are considered in terms of direct and indirect contributions, a distinction which is particularly relevant in the context of working equine animals due to their role in the homestead.

### Income

The financial contributions of working equids can be direct and indirect. Direct contributions are derived from the transport of goods and people for a fee, from being hired out to users for taxi services, carting, pack work, and agricultural work, and in some cases from selling foals. Indirect contributions are obtained through the transport of goods such as homemade goods and agricultural produce (crops, grains, milk) to markets, cooperative and nearby locations to be sold. Working equids also transport farm inputs (seeds, fertilisers) from market to home and fields for cultivation.

In addition, working equids bring value through savings generated by the efficient transport of water, animal feed, agricultural produce, household goods and people for the benefit of the household.

### Insurance

Working equids, donkeys in particular due to their resilience, can be valuable livestock assets in case of natural shocks. In the case of drought-affected areas, donkeys will be the animals used to fetch water from water points or to move an entire family and their belongings when they have lost their home.

### Buffering

Households may decide to invest in a new or additional working equine animal as an investment when income is available or production exceeds consumption.

### Social benefits

Working equids play an important role in enabling poor households to fulfil social obligations, tightening links in the communities for example through borrowing, enabling owners and their families to acquire a more important status in the community, and to form owners or carers groups. They also provide ambulance and school transport services for the sick and children and contribute to community projects, which allows equine owners to play a greater role in their community.

### Saving

When used for income generation activities, working equine animals provide regular cash some of which can be invested to be spent later, or they can be used for unexpected expenses, serving as a "safety net" for households. Equids also generate money that is used to contribute to regular saving and community credit schemes.

Equine forms of transport also remain cheaper than fuel based transport due to the relative costs of purchase and maintenance as compared to those for a motorised vehicle and the rise in fuel prices saw a renewed interest and an increase in donkey use in some countries including Kenya and Ethiopia.<sup>xii</sup>

By excluding working equine animals as livestock assets in their policies and programmes, policy makers perpetuate an over-simplistic and incomplete response towards addressing livestock as a pathway out of poverty.



## Women and working equine animals

An estimated two-thirds of poor livestock keepers - approximately 400 million people - are women.<sup>xiii</sup>

Whilst the role of women in livestock keeping has been gaining attention in recent years amongst international organisations, donors, and policy makers - partly as a driver to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (1,3), it has so far largely failed to materialise into needs-based livestock related programmes and policies.<sup>xiv</sup>

Livestock initiatives aimed at women have mainly been directed at specific food producing species such as poultry, small ruminants, and dairy cows, with which women have been traditionally associated. They have also focused on a strong productivity/income generation perspective with little attention to the broader and multi-functional roles of non food production livestock in the lives of women.<sup>xv</sup>

In addition, a large number of new initiatives continue to depict the roles and responsibilities of women in livestock keeping as being primarily responsible for small livestock management such as poultry, pigs and goats, and marketing of milk and other livestock products, despite evidence to the contrary.<sup>xv</sup>

This common perception and these assumptions often result from a lack of gender analysis at planning level.

This leads to misconceptions about gender relations in livestock keeping including around decision making and ownership (i.e. a woman may not own livestock assets but still earn an income from it and/or be the main user), as well as perceived priorities, preferences, and needs for women.<sup>xiv</sup>

The role of livestock in supporting women has received increasing attention from international organisations such as the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, GALVMed, the International Food Policy Research Institute, and the International Livestock Research Institute over the past few years. INGOs working on livelihoods and agriculture have also developed the gender element of their work and campaigns such as Concern Worldwide's Unheard Voices have contributed to drawing attention to the unacknowledged role of women in livestock keeping and production.<sup>xvi</sup>

There has however been very little attention given to women's use and access to working equids and the contributions of donkeys, mules and horses to their lives and even less interest in asking women for their views on this matter. At best the role of working equids, primarily donkeys, is referred to in relation to the reduction of household drudgery but their role in income generation or social benefits that benefit women has not been considered. Working equids have generally not been included in training interventions on mainstreaming gender in livestock programmes and have been given very little or no consideration in livestock projects aimed at women.

The role of working donkeys, mules and horses in the lives of women was explored in a literature review carried out for the Brooke in 2010.<sup>xvii</sup> "The role of working donkeys, mules and horses in the lives of women: a review of their contribution to women's pathways out of poverty", set the context for the Voices from Women research by providing an overview of the contributions of those animals in the personal, financial and social spheres of women's lives. The review specifically covered: the reduction of labour and drudgery of daily household tasks; direct and indirect income generation; and social, status and health benefits associated with ownership of a working equid. The review further set out the key gender-differentiated aspects of working equine use: women's access to and control of working equine animals as household assets and their access to extension services including training.



**voices  
from  
women**

The Voices from Women research project was initiated at the Brooke in 2013 to explore the role of working donkeys, mules and horses in supporting the lives of women from the perspectives of the women themselves, and considers the role of women in the management of these animals.

It aims to give women who live and work with these animals a voice and a platform to express their experiences and opinions, as well as their needs and wants.

Through women's personal stories and views, the research exposes a much more nuanced picture of women's priorities and roles with regards to livestock than that which is currently depicted by research and policy. It highlights the critical need for stakeholders involved in gender and livestock policy and programmes to listen to women themselves in order to better understand their needs and priorities and how to best respond to them.



## Framework and objectives of the research

The Voices from Women research used the UK Department for International Development (DFID) sustainable livelihoods framework. DFID's categorisation of livelihoods assets (human, natural, financial, physical and social) was considered from a gender perspective in the context of working donkeys, mules and horses.

### The main objectives of the research were to understand from the women's perspective:



The specific roles that working donkeys, mules and horses play in supporting the lives of women across four countries.



The role of women in the use and management of working equids.



How the welfare status of working equids affects the amount and type of support they provide to women.

## Report data gathering method and analysis

The research was qualitative in nature and was based around women-only focus group discussions (FGD) in four countries in Africa and South Asia. A questionnaire containing closed and open-ended questions was developed and used to lead the discussions.

The field research took place between February and October 2013 in selected equine owning communities in Ethiopia, India, Kenya and Pakistan. The communities were chosen to reflect the various roles of women and working equine animals in both rural and peri-urban areas. Between five and seven FGDs of up to 12 women were held in each country and individual interviews with women identified during the FGDs were carried out to form case studies. 259 women took part in the research with the following representation: 58 women in Ethiopia, 88 women in India, 53 women in Kenya, 60 women in Pakistan. Seven FGDs were conducted in India whilst five FGDs were carried out in each of the other countries.

In focusing on a small number of communities in the four countries, the research does not aim to be comprehensive, but instead to present a cross-country snapshot of the mutual relationship between women and working equids gained from listening first hand to women's views and experiences.

The findings challenge some assumptions and preconceived ideas about livestock and gender roles within the households by considering four main areas: use and management of the animals, income generation, household tasks, and social benefits.

The report uses data from FGDs and individual interviews to show the critical importance of working equids in supporting women and their families at various levels. From this it provides recommendations for action aimed at relevant policy stakeholders.

## Research Locations & Snapshot Community Profiles





Focus group locations

## Ethiopia

Ethiopia has the largest equine population in the world after China, with around 9 million animals.<sup>xviii</sup> Donkeys make up the majority of working equine animals (6.75 million), followed by horses (1.91 million) and mules (0.35 million). These animals are the most important livestock in the farming and transport system of the country.<sup>xix</sup> They provide a lifeline for 85% of Ethiopians who live in rural areas<sup>xx</sup> and depend on subsistence farming to make a living and produce enough food to survive. The rapid growth in Ethiopia's population has resulted in increased demands for working equids for the transport of goods and people in some areas.<sup>xxi</sup>

The study was carried out in the Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) in Halaba in October 2013. SNNPR is overwhelmingly rural, with only 8% of the population living in urban areas.<sup>xxii</sup> People rely primarily on mixed farming (crop and livestock production) for income generation, with sale of crops being the main income source, followed by sale of livestock and livestock products, gharry horse and donkey cart rent, petty trade, casual labour and land rent.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Access to markets for many farmers in the zone is inadequate due to poor infrastructure and lack of affordable transportation. In addition, a good local market information network is lacking. Cart donkeys and gharry horses are primarily used in the area to transport goods and people for an income as well as for homestead purposes including transporting water, goods, farm produce and manure, animal feed and personal transportation.

Five FGDs and 3 individual interviews were conducted in poor communities in the outskirts of Halaba. All groups relied on the same means of livelihoods consisting of crop production (including maize, sorghum, pepper, teff and millet), equids (gharry horses - transport of people by owner or most often users and cart donkey transport of people and goods; renting out horses or donkeys), and wage labour. Participants owned donkeys and horses, and were from male headed households only.



Focus group locations

## Kenya

The main equine population in Kenya is made up of donkeys, accounting for around 1.8 million animals in 2009<sup>xxiv</sup> and it is believed the donkey population is on the increase in parts of Kenya such as the Rift Valley and the Central region, where people who previously did not use these animals are now resorting to them for transport purposes.<sup>xxv</sup>

Agriculture (smallholder farming) is the single most important sector in the Kenyan economy and contributes approximately to 25% of GDP.<sup>xxvi</sup>

More than three quarters of the population live in rural areas and derive their livelihoods, directly or indirectly from agriculture.<sup>xxvii</sup> Subsistence farming is the primary - and often the only - source of livelihood for about 70% of rural women.<sup>xxviii</sup>

In areas where donkeys are used, they are owned by smallholder farmers, pastoralists and micro-entrepreneurs in the transport sector. Donkeys in rural areas are primarily used for farm work and support to other livestock by carrying water and animal feed or taking sick animals to health posts.

Donkey carts or pack donkeys remain the main means of transport that is cheap and suitable for rural terrain, as well as poor or non-existing roads. The use of donkeys in the outskirts of major towns has gained prominence, especially in the water vending business and in the residential construction industry. Experience from the field shows that several factors, including recurrent droughts and increased fuel prices, explain the increased use of donkeys.

The study was carried out in June 2013 in districts where the Kenya Network for Dissemination of Agricultural Technologies (KENDAT), a partner of Brooke East Africa, operates. Five focus groups comprising women from both female and male headed households took place in districts in the Nyandarua, Kiambu and Kirinyaga Counties, namely Limuru, Kikuyu. The main means of livelihoods in the research areas were subsistence farming and goat, cattle and chicken rearing for additional income or agriculture (crop production) with two areas near Mwea growing rice. The use of donkeys for homestead purposes in the research locations vary between 80% and 100%.



Focus group locations

# India

There are over 1.1 million equids in India.<sup>xxix</sup> Horses make up just over 50% of the equine population, followed by donkeys (37%) and mules (12%). The majority of equids are found in the northern part of the country, with the largest concentration of animals found in Uttar Pradesh, where the research took place, and Jammu and Kashmir.

Around 87% of working equids in India are found in rural areas<sup>xxx</sup> where they are mainly used for pulling carts or as pack animals in the agricultural and construction sectors (particularly bricks), and for the transportation of people. Agriculture constitutes the main means of livelihoods for the majority of the Indian population and 84% of women rely on farming for their livelihoods in rural India.<sup>xxxi</sup> The brick kiln industry (the 2nd largest in the world after China) provides seasonal work for equine owning communities with families migrating and working for six months of every year in the kilns. Women and children provide manual labour whilst men transport bricks. Income generating activities from working equids are performed by men except for the case of female headed households. Working equids are also used by women for homestead purposes such

as transporting household goods, water and wood for the household. The research was conducted in the state of Uttar Pradesh in March 2013. Seven FGDs were conducted in the districts of Mathura, Noida/Delhi, Meerut, Saharanpur, Bijnore, Raebareilly and Lucknow. The locations comprised rural and peri-urban areas and communities who use working equids as the main or one of the main sources of income, primarily through transport of goods including pottery, bricks and other construction materials, people, and vegetables through mobile shops. Two communities are involved in brick kiln work for 6 months of the year when families work in the kilns and men use mules and horses to transport bricks. They use the animals for transporting goods and people for a fee the rest of the year but earn most of their income during the brick kiln season.

Groups included participants from both female and male headed households living in peri-urban and rural areas. The groups were formed of members of Women's Equine Welfare Groups formed with the support of The Brooke India, in order to engage women as agents of change for equine welfare in their communities.



Focus group locations

# Pakistan

95% percent of the 4.8 million<sup>xxxii</sup> equine population in Pakistan consist of working equids, a majority of which (4.3 million) are donkeys. Nearly half of the equine population can be found in Punjab with 2.4 million animals, of which over 2.2 million are donkeys.

It is estimated that over 4 million families in Pakistan depend on working equine animals for a living.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Working equine animals are mainly used for the transportation of people and goods and play a critical income generating role in the brick kiln and agriculture industries, in which women are involved. In addition, working equids are used for homestead purposes such as fetching water and wood, as well as transporting household goods and animal feed.

The research was conducted in the province of Punjab in February 2013. Five FGDs were conducted in the districts of Lahore, Faisalabad, Gujranwala, and Khanewal. Groups included participants from both female and male headed households.

The research locations included communities with diverse means of livelihood and various uses of working equids.

Women use donkeys to earn money in two peri-urban communities, where families earn a living through rubbish collection and in two rural communities, where households rely on working equids for the transport and sale of goods, agricultural outputs and animal feed to the market or nearby villages, as well as seasonal brick kiln work. In the third rural community, households earn a living through farming (cultivating their own land or working as labour on other people's lands) or working in factories in Sialkot. Working equids are used to transport grains and vegetables from and to Sialkot and nearby adjoining villages to be sold. Women are not directly involved in income generating activities with equids unless they need to provide for their families. In the fourth community women farmers use donkey carts to reach their workplaces and some use them to carry green fodder back to the community and sell it.



## Research findings

### Working equids are important to women

While working donkeys, mules and horses rarely make it on the radar of policy makers and other development actors, for a large majority of women we interviewed they were one of the most, if not the most important livestock in their households.

When asked to rank their livestock, including working equids, 77% of the groups we interviewed (17 out of 22 groups) across all four countries put their horses, mules and donkeys in the first position. All groups in India and Kenya ranked working equids first.

**"I put the donkey first because it works all year round more than an ox."**

*Hatiya Mohammed, 35, Hamata, Sidae Village, Ethiopia*

Women across all groups gave similar reasons for this ranking. The primary one was to do with the income generation role of the animals, in particular the regular - often daily - income brought home by them. This was especially important for households who rely solely on the animals for income. In the case of donkeys, the women we spoke to also emphasised their affordability and low maintenance requirements in comparison to other livestock.

**"Horses earn money and help us survive."**

*Mamta, 28, Multannagar, Meerut, India*

**"We are of no use without a donkey."**

*Participant from Pakistan*

**"If I was asked I would prefer my dowry to be paid as donkeys instead of cows."**

*Joyce Ndegwa, 24, Kamuchege Women's Group, Kenya*

**"A donkey brings money for us, not the buffalo."**

*Rekha, 20, Mahavan, India*

**"Even though donkeys are smaller they make more money for us."**

*Guddi, 30, widow, Mahavan, India*

Working equids were also ranked first compared to other livestock by 91% of the groups (20 out of 22), for their role in helping with household chores. This was particularly important for women whose donkeys are not used for income generation but kept in the homestead.

Oxen were ranked first in three of the five Focus Groups in Ethiopia mostly due to their use for farming activities but not elsewhere. Cows and buffaloes were ranked second by most women's groups as they provide milk for home consumption and sale.

Finally women ranked goats third as they can be sold to provide instant cash in times of need, as well as providing meat and milk.

Women who did not rank working donkeys, mules and horses first acknowledged that they were however critically important for their more valuable livestock as they carry animal feed and water for other livestock. In Kenya women also observed that many families buy other farm animals, especially cows (which are more expensive than donkeys) using money earned by their donkeys.



Multannagar, Meerut, India

# 2

## Research findings

### Women are the main keepers of working equids

#### 2.1

#### Women have a say in the purchase of livestock

It is often assumed that women have little say in household decisions that relate to the acquisition of an animal, as well as ownership and use of livestock.

In the context of working equids, the research found that the gender divisions of labour in these women's communities across the four countries are not as clear cut as often presumed. When asked who makes decisions when purchasing animals, over 80% of the groups (18 out of 22) said that they were consulted and 50% (11 groups out of 22) told us that the decision on the purchase was mutually agreed.

Overall it is undeniable that women do participate in decision making with regards to livestock including working equids. In a large majority of cases, women told us that they give advice to their husbands about the species and sex of the animals to be purchased.

In Kenya, the women we spoke to are the main livestock keepers and in many cases, are the ones making the decision, particularly in the case of donkeys. In Mwea, women told us that a donkey is often one of the first things a woman gets as a gift from her husband immediately after marriage.

In Ethiopia some women told us they put pressure on their husbands to get a donkey and in Pakistan they are also proactive and in some cases ask for a donkey so that they can contribute more to family income. In female headed households, women make the decisions, even if in some cases they will discuss the purchase of an animal with their children.

#### 2.2

#### Women care for working equids

In the communities we visited, women are the primary and traditional care givers for livestock, mainly within the household compound but also tending to production livestock such as cattle and goats outside their homes.

Working equids too are primarily looked after by women although children also help. All of the women we spoke to highlighted their role as care givers to donkeys, mules and horses, providing feed and water, and cleaning shelters. Only the women from the Talianwala rubbish collection community in Pakistan told us that feeding the animals was done by men.

**"A man can never use a donkey when I am available. He will not pick a donkey and go fetch water. That is my role."**

*Margaret Njoki, 50, Kenton Women's Group, Kenya*

**"I always recognise if anything wrong has been done to the donkeys. If they have been whipped a lot or are tired, they are immediately released from their harnesses and they come to me, which makes me notice that something is wrong."**

**"I will then talk to my husband and tell him politely to either stop whipping them or give them a day of rest."**

*Mercy Nyawira, 21, Mutithi, Kenya*



However, women's role in caring for working equids also extends outside their homes as they are often responsible for taking them grazing alongside other livestock. This is commonly done in Kenya where donkeys help with household chores such as fetching water and firewood and collecting feed for other animals.

The research showed women to have a strong voice when it comes to advocating for their working equids with their husbands or other men using a sick equid. Some groups we interviewed said that they do not allow animals to be worked when they are sick, until they have recovered.

In India, where The Brooke has facilitated the formation of Women's Equine Welfare Groups, some women's groups sometimes use fines if men use sick equids.

There were differences between countries in the role of women in caring for sick equids. In Pakistan and India all groups said that in male headed households, both women and men are involved in taking care of a sick animal and decisions regarding treatment are taken jointly. However, women provide advice on whether to call a vet or other local health providers, and usually provide first aid. In India, women are responsible for

giving first aid (eye cleaning, wound cleaning and application of medicine), whilst men sometimes give animals secondary medical treatment prescribed by a health professional. In Kenya and Ethiopia, healthcare is largely given by women. Most of the time men will take the sick animal to the vet but the woman will administer the treatment. Widows are solely responsible for the care of their equids and will seek treatment when needed.

**"The man of the house ensures that the donkey gets medical treatment but it is the women who notice when their donkey is sick and give them good care."**

*Ergo Yassin, 37, Gedeba, Ethiopia*

**"When my horse was sick I walked 25 kms to buy medicine."**

*Ramshri, 45, Widow, Bala, Raebareilly, India*

# 3

## Research findings

### Women use working equids

Although there is an assumption that women do not generally manage larger livestock, the research showed they use and drive working equids for household chores, income generation and social events.

In the Voices from Women countries, the use of a working equid by a woman is informed by several factors, some of which were found across all four countries.

All of the women we interviewed told us they used working equids for household chores. In India the general rule is that only women from female headed households (widows, single women, or women whose husbands are sick and unable to work) can use working equids for income generation. This is due to cultural factors, the time spent on household chores and child care, as well as the type of work involved, particularly in sectors which involve heavy lifting (for example, women do not load animals with bricks in the kilns).


In Pakistan all of the five groups said that they used donkeys for income generation. In urban areas, rubbish collection is the main means of livelihood of the communities we visited and women as well as men and children are involved in collecting rubbish. In rural areas, women use donkey carts to transport agricultural produce to the market or animal feed to local farmers.

**“When I drive my donkey cart I feel very proud and I can drive it like my husband.”**

Hamida Bibi, 50, Rasool Pura, Pakistan

In Kenya and Ethiopia, the use of donkeys by women is primarily confined to household chores although some women use their animals for income generation work such as collecting and selling water, sale of manure, animal feed, seeds and fertilisers and taking milk to the cooperatives. Female equine ownership and use is most prevalent in rural settings. For example, in the rural area of Limuru, Kenya, women own and use donkeys for work whilst in Mwea town, donkey carts are primarily owned and driven by men but women use them for household work.

## Use of working equids by women participating in focus groups

	Direct						Indirect				Saving														
	Transport of people for a fee	Transport of construction materials	Transport of grains for a fee	Transport of agricultural produce for a fee	Transport/sale of animal feed and manure	Transport/sale of firewood/water	Hire (donkey/horse)	Foal rearing and selling	Rubbish collection	Transport of bricks in brick kilns	Transport of pottery to market	Transport of agricultural produce (to market)	Transport of grains to/from milling houses	Transport of milk to cooperatives	Fetching water and firewood for own use	Transport of goods/household items from market	Transport of dung cakes and clay for own use	Transport of animal feed for household livestock	Transport of grain & agricultural produce for own use	Personal transport for social events/ambulance	Transport of sick animals to health clinics	Transport of construction materials for own use	Transport of manure to field	Transport of pesticides and seeds to the field	
																									
<b>Ethiopia</b>																									
<b>Kenya</b>																									
<b>India</b>																									
<b>Pakistan</b>																									



Halaba, Ethiopia

# 4

## Research findings

### Women have limited access to equine training and extension services

Despite women's role in managing and keeping working equine animals, our study found that there is little or no access for women to education and training on equine health and welfare, including husbandry practices and diseases. Few services are available outside specialised agencies like The Brooke to increase and strengthen capacity and skills in working equine welfare amongst communities.

A large majority of the women we interviewed expressed strong interest and motivation in getting information and training that would enable them to better look after their animals and tend to their healthcare needs.

When asked about their sources of knowledge, women in Pakistan did not have access to any kind of education and training. Their knowledge was acquired through looking after the equids themselves or from their husbands who benefited from being involved in working equine welfare groups established by Brooke Pakistan. They told us that whilst their participation in training sessions would have to be discussed with their husbands, they would have an opportunity to attend. Only one group (from the rubbish collection community in Talianwala) did not express a wish to be trained. Most women we interviewed in rural areas were interested in attending training and being engaged in equine welfare related activities.

#### Women as Agents of Change

##### Lady Livestock Workers in Pakistan

Brooke Pakistan has been working with the Community Empowerment through Livestock Development and Credit (CELDAC) project to train rural women in equine management and primary treatment in their respective communities.

CELDAC is a partnership between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Nestle Pakistan that teaches veterinary skills to women, enabling them to become "Lady Livestock Workers" (LLWs). The project runs in 22 districts of Punjab and Sindh provinces. The project focuses on women working with cattle, sheep and goats. 144 LLWs have so far been trained, 106 of which are in Punjab. LLWs were provided with training on basic livestock health management and extension services. The Brooke Pakistan has been training LLWs on equine management and primary treatment including wound dressing and heat stress management.

In India, women said that their main sources of information and knowledge were initially traditional practices but the formation of women's equine groups at Brooke India's initiative gave them an opportunity to strengthen their skills and adapt some of the traditional methods they used. Women stated that belonging to such groups allowed them to gain critical knowledge on how to look after their equids but also to have opportunities for loans through the groups' savings.

**"We have learnt everything from Brooke India - before we were unaware."**

*Guddi, 30, Mahavan, India*



*Mahavan, Mathura, India*

In Kenya most groups listed Brooke East Africa's partner KENDAT's Heshimu Punda (Respect the Donkey) training and educational programmes as the main sources of knowledge and education, followed by some basic information from government livestock workers and local animal health providers. Women are mainly engaged through self-help or equine groups that are mixed or female only. The groups get training on equine management and husbandry practices.

**"I have learnt so much and although I may not have the strength to work with the donkey, my mind and knowledge on handling a donkey is much stronger and I can impart this knowledge to others."**

*Mary Wanjiru, 67, Kenton Women's Group, Kenya*

#### Women as Agents of Change

##### Women's Equine Welfare Groups (India)

Brooke India has facilitated the formation of 259 Women's Equine Welfare Groups whose primary functions are to improve equine care, increase communities' awareness and knowledge of equine needs, and improve attitudes towards equids.

Women receive training on group management as well specific training and support on equine welfare and treatment including first aid, treatment and prevention of major diseases, feeding management and good husbandry practices (stable hygiene, importance of shade and shelter, watering).

The groups get the support of Brooke India's veterinary community mobilisers. They also have a saving function with loans available to their members. Loans can be used towards equine care and purchase of an equid as well as for other purposes such as ceremonies or in times of need. Money collected is also used for the bulk purchase of animal feed. The groups provide women with a platform to share their views and learn from each other about equine treatments and equine needs and husbandry. They also give women a voice in the community and raise their status by enabling them to act as a group. Finally, the groups deal with women's issues and give women support to address problems they are struggling to conquer alone.



In Ethiopia, the women we interviewed told us that the only source of knowledge was the training received from women “Agents of Change” trained by Brooke Ethiopia either through community based organisations or the Farmer Training Centers (FTCs).

Across all the FGDs in Ethiopia women expressed an interest in training, but mentioned the challenges they face in accessing such training (workload, childcare and the location of training sessions).

**“I am happy to get any kind of training that enables me to improve the care and handling of equines.”**

*Nuritu Kedir, 1st Ashoka, Ethiopia*

**“Other than the Brooke, we have never seen anyone giving education about equines.”**

*Bontu Habib, Hamata, Ethiopia*

**“I have a pack donkey that helps me with chores. Brooke Ethiopia taught me how to give improved feeding (bran with oil). After being trained we are now able to improve feeding and management. Now I know how to handle equids.”**

*Muslima Edris, 2nd Choroko, Ethiopia*

**“Before The Brooke’s intervention, we don’t have the opportunity to join equine welfare group. After the Brooke we got the knowledge and skills on how to improve husbandry practices.”**

*Muslima Nuriye, 2nd Choroko, Ethiopia*

## Women as Agents of Change

Halaba, Ethiopia

Brooke Ethiopia forms equine women’s groups who receive training and support on good equine welfare and husbandry using Farmer Training Centers (FTCs) set up by the government as part of its rural development programme. The training uses a cascade approach (Training of Trainers): Development Agents (DAs) are trained and then train a number of farmers as Change Agents who then train other farmers who also become Change Agents.

The FTCs are selected by the Brooke on the basis of the equine population in the area as well as the severity of health and welfare problems, the role of the animals in providing income to families and the commitment demonstrated by DAs in providing extension packages to the farmers in the area.

In addition to training men, Brooke Ethiopia has also specifically focused on training women, through community-based organisations’ existing credit and saving groups. Whilst it is difficult to involve women in interventions mainly targeted at men due to cultural factors, working through existing women’s groups has enabled Brooke Ethiopia to successfully engage and train women.



# 5

## Research findings

### The Benefits and Contributions of Working Equine Animals to the Lives of Women

Working equine animals play a critical role in supporting women and their families. They perform multiple functions which relate directly to the various roles of women. Within the context of this research we have categorised the contributions of these animals under three categories: reduction of women's labour and the drudgery of household chores; direct and indirect income generation; and social status and health benefits.

**"The donkey affects each and every aspect of my life as a woman. On a typical day the donkey fetches water, which I use to do the laundry, to do the dishes, to clean the house and for bathing."**

**It also fetches sawdust which I use to cook all meals, then I hire it out and it brings in income on a daily basis that I use to buy flour for the evening meal. In other words, I eat, drink, dress, live off the donkey and more so as a woman and one not employed, I work hand in hand with the donkey. Basically the donkey is like me but to plainly put it, the donkey is me."**

*Lucy Waititu, 23, Kamuchege, Mwea, Kenya*

**"I am lacking words to fully explain how grateful I am and how really my life depends on donkeys."**

*Faith Wamalwa Kinyua, 29, Mutithi, Mwea, Kenya*



Wanja, Halaba, Ethiopia



Gedeba, Halaba, Ethiopia

**“Donkeys are lifeline for us women.**

**Life without a donkey is like a mountain that you don't dare to climb. It is particularly difficult to lose a donkey once you are used to having its help.”**

*Worke Ayano, 37, Wanja, Ethiopia*

## Use of donkeys, mules and horses by women for household chores

### Collecting and transporting:

- Water for homestead use including for other livestock
- Firewood for own use
- Grains to and from milling house
- Fodder for other livestock
- Construction materials for house
- Manure
- Household goods from market to home

## 5.1 Lightening Women's Burden: Reduction of labour and drudgery of household chores

“Women are most affiliated to the donkey, because it relieves them of back-breaking chores such as fetching water and collecting firewood.”

*Wambui C. et al (2004)<sup>xxxiii</sup>*

Without exception all groups told us about the positive difference that working equine animals make to their daily household chores. The household tasks they carry out were almost identical across the four countries and primarily involved transport of goods for homestead use.

**“They help us take produce to the market, go to the milling house, fetch water and for transportation.”**

*Lubu Jelde, 29, Hamata, Ethiopia*

**“Donkeys help us live a “digital” life. They give us peace of mind. This is because they facilitate so many chores, making them easier to handle, faster to implement and simpler to do. We do not have to go the analogue way; for example fetching water from the river on our backs or carrying firewood on our heads.”**

*Mercy Nyawira, 43, Mutithi, Kenya*

**“Living without a donkey is like living with a broken leg. You cannot accomplish much.”**

*Ruth Mueni, 48, Nachu, Kenya*

**“With donkeys, our work becomes easier and quicker.”**

*Guddi, 30, Mahavan, India*

**“I will use my donkey for anything I need”**

*Nuritu Hassen, 30, Wanja, Ethiopia*

**“Having a donkey gives me peace of mind as I know I can comfortably handle all household chores with its support.”**

*Joyce Ndegwa, 24, Kamuchege, Mwea, Kenya*

Good equine welfare is critical with all women emphasising the negative impact that the loss or lack of working equine animals would have or has had on their lives.

**“I have to go to the river four or more times in one day to fetch enough water to cover all household chores.”**

*Participant from Mutithi, Kenya*

**“The death of a donkey spells doom (...) Household chores increase and become unmanageable. Our home and children become dirty and our children are shunned at school.”**

*Jane Muthoni, 33, Nachu, Kenya*

**“I will be forced to do all the work my donkey used to do, so I won't have time for my children and other household chores.”**

*Munira Akmel, 37, 1st Ashoka, Gidano village, Ethiopia*

## 5.2 Working equids support women's capacity to care for their children

During our discussions women often brought up how working equids' help saves them time which can be spent with their children, whereas women who have no help end up tired and stressed with little time to care for children.

**“Thanks to my donkey I have more time to take care of my children. My donkey is just my backbone. It solves all my household problems”**

*Emete Yassin, 30, 2nd Choroko, Turombora village, Ethiopia*

**“If there is a donkey in the house, the mother carries her child on her back and lets the donkey carry other stuff such as water or crops. But if she doesn't have a donkey she has to leave the child behind at home even when there is no one to look after the baby, as she has to carry the load herself. So donkeys have a huge contribution in caring for babies.”**

*Medina Hussen, 35, Gedeba, Ethiopia*

**“I don't want to have my children out of sight so I will carry my children on my back and pack my donkey to go the milling house or to fetch water.”**

*Nuritu Hassen, 30 Wanja, Ethiopia*

In Chak Chakera, Pakistan, participants told us that women who have a donkey cart can bring wood and fodder home in one hour and thirty minutes whilst it takes four hours for women who do not have a donkey.

This was echoed by another group in Barthanwala, Pakistan who also said that donkey carts can transport a whole month's worth of firewood in a single day, whereas women who carry wood on their heads have to fetch it every day. In Kenya women told us that having a donkey to help with household chores means they get more rest and are less stressed.

**“When donkeys are sick workload increases and we have less time for our families. During this time there are more arguments within the family and even fighting as everyone is stressed. Children have to work too, reducing their study time.”**

*Participant from Mutithi, Kenya*

Women also emphasised the daily nature of the support provided by their equine animals both in terms of income and in terms of their help for their household tasks.

**“I send my children to school because I have a donkey. After the children have gone to school, I can quickly bring water and other household items and I have time to prepare food and take care of my baby.”**

*Shegu Someno, Gedeba, Ethiopia*

**“Having a donkey feels like having a tap in my home. I am confident that I won't run out of water”**

*Sefiya Hebiso, 37, 2nd Choroko, Ethiopia*

### 5.3

## Working equids help women care for other livestock

In communities engaged in livestock production, women highlighted that the help provided by working equids with household chores also benefits the other livestock they are looking after. They usually transport feed and water for the other animals, as well as taking sick small livestock such as calves, sheep or goats to health clinics. In effect, they enable families to keep other animals. This aspect came out particularly strongly in Kenya where it was mentioned in all the focus groups.

**"We use donkeys to take sick animals to health services. Once my calf got sick and I used my donkey cart to take her to the health post. People in the health post helped me carry the calf down from the cart. I had to take her to the health post for three consecutive days and she got better. She has grown to be a heifer."**

*Ergo Yassin, 37, Gedeba, Ethiopia*

**"Farming is made possible by donkeys. All household animals rely on donkeys which are the ones carrying and bringing feed and water for cows, chickens, sheep and goats."**

*Participant from Tharuni's Women Group, Kenya*



*Kikuyu Nachu, Kenya*

**"A donkey supports all other animals. This is because the money brought in by the donkey is used to purchase other animals. It is also used to buy feed for other animals on the farm and the donkey carries that feed."**

*Participant from Mutithi's Women Group, Kenya*

### 5.4

## Working equine animals support women in generating income that benefits them directly and indirectly

The critical importance and financial contributions of working equids to women themselves and their families were unequivocally acknowledged and illustrated by 97% of the women we met. Out of 259 women, only 8 (all in Ethiopia) did not use working equids for direct income generation work but used them for homestead purposes only.

All the women we interviewed were involved in one or more types of direct or indirect income generation work. Whilst some women may not be generating direct income per se, they do support family earning through indirect income work and through the use of the animals for homestead purposes, which result in savings particularly with regards to transport costs. Direct income generation by working equids is a lifeline for female headed households.

**"A few years back a woman in our village transported bricks in the cart for 3 years when her husband died."**

*Babita, 32, Bhaila, India*

The income generating role of the working equids was mentioned by all women whose animals are earning money - particularly directly as the indirect income and savings generated by working equids were not always thought of or acknowledged by women themselves. Even when working equids are not the primary direct means of income, women also told us that they are just as important or more important than other sources, as the income they produce is regular and disposable.

**"Donkeys earn their food themselves and even earn for us."**

*Nadia, 27, Talianwala, Pakistan*

**"We are living because of these donkeys. We work with them and earn money and live."**

*Kela, 42, Mahavan, India*

**"Our living is primarily dependent on them and if we don't take care of their needs our family cannot survive."**

*Umesh, 30, Noida, India*

**"They earn money and help us survive."**

*Mamta, 28, Multannaga, India*

**"Donkeys help with household chores and also bring us money."**

*Sunete Tulicha, 1st Ashoka, Gidano village, Ethiopia*



*Mahatwa Village, Lucknow, India*

**"They are our identity and our source of income. Not having one means no food for the family."**

*Dhanraj, 38, widow, Bala Village, India*



*Sidae Village, Hamata, Ethiopia*

## CASE STUDY

PHYLLIS WANJA, 37, KAMUCHEGE, MWEA, KENYA

Phyllis has been working with donkeys for the last 10 years. Initially with her husband they used to do casual jobs in their neighbours' farms earning Ksh 70 (US\$0.80) each per day which could not cater for their basic needs. On seeing that people with donkeys were doing well and that everything in the community concerning transport depended on donkeys, she managed to persuade her husband to save for and buy a donkey.

They first used it to carry manure to their farm then started using it for income by transporting water for a fee, which became a booming business, enabling them to buy a second donkey so as to be able to serve all their customers.

Currently with three donkeys they manage to fetch ten drums of water by 8:00 in the morning. They make an average of Ksh 40,000 (\$473) a month.

The money they get from donkeys has enabled them to purchase two plots of land for farming. They also bought a second donkey cart thus serving many customers at the same time, which in turn helped Phyllis make many friends.

**"I am short of words to describe all the benefits of a donkey. It has reached a point where I will just say the way we tell God, 'This far it's through your power and will', for donkeys mean a lot in my life."**

*Phyllis Wanja, Kamuchege, Mwea, Kenya*

## CASE STUDY

RAZIA BIBI, 60, TALIANWALA, PAKISTAN

Razia is a 60 year old woman who lives in the Talianwala community. She lost her husband 18 years ago and has been working to earn an income for her family ever since. She has been taking care of her children and was able to fulfil their needs by collecting rubbish with her donkey cart which is her only source of income.

Her donkey died a few months ago and she has bought a new one by borrowing money from the contractor which she collects the rubbish for.

The money from the donkey is deducted from her weekly income.



*Razia Bibi,  
Talianwala, Pakistan*

Income earned from working equids goes directly towards paying for the family's needs including food, household expenses, school fees, children's clothes, as well as purchase of other livestock and healthcare.

*Dorcas Wanjiku, Ndiguini,  
Limuru, Kenya*



**"I will always be grateful to the donkey as it educated my son."**

*Dorcas Wanjiku, 42, Ndiguini,  
Limuru, Kenya*

**"Previously I could not afford to even feed my family. Now not only can I feed them but I can afford a balanced diet, thanks to the donkey."**

*Teresia Wangari, 43, Kamuchege, Mwea, Kenya*

**"I use the income from my donkey to pay school fees as well as to buy clothes, soap, and household items."**

*Bontu Musa, 1st Ashoka, Gidano village, Ethiopia*

**"I use the income from my donkey to buy gas, salt, rice, and chicken and eggs for the children, as well as onions and oil. I get the rest of the foods from my backyard."**

*Leila Hassen, 1st Ashoka, Gidano Village, Ethiopia*

*Ergo Yassin,  
Gedeba, Ethiopia*



## CASE STUDY

IQBAL BIBI, 34, CHA CHAKERA, PAKISTAN

Iqbal Bibi has been using a donkey cart since she got married, twenty years ago. The donkey cart is her family's source of income. Her husband is sick and cannot work so she is the bread winner. She uses her donkey to travel and find work in the fields looking for dung daily from the surrounding areas where people have kept buffalos. She gets it for free or for a fee.

She uses dung to make dung cakes which she then sells to the market or villages nearby using the donkey cart. One cart of dung costs her around Rs 150 (\$1.40) and a cart of dung cakes give us Rs 300-400 (\$2.86-3.80) so she makes a profit of Rs 150-250 (\$1.43-2.38). She also uses the donkey cart to earn extra income by transporting goods for people for a fee, earning Rs 35-40 (\$0.33-0.38) per load.

The earnings from the donkey are used to buy flour, oil, clothes and bangles for her children, bread and dry cakes for her husband. She has also used the money to take up a loan from her land owner and purchased two young buffalos.

Iqbal Bibi told us how she always thinks about how important the donkey is for her and her family and how it helps run her home. Her donkey provides income and therefore food and she makes sure that it receives food and is being treated well to live happily. If donkeys are happy, they will work happily.



Iqbal Bibi,  
Cha Chakera, Pakistan

Income earned from equids benefits women directly including by paying for maternity expenses.

**"If my baby could speak, she would tell her life as a child of a donkey. The maternity fees I paid while I was pregnant came from income brought by my donkey. When I delivered my daughter, I was able to pay for the Statutory National Health Insurance Fund through money earned by my donkey, which catered for all the delivery fees. My child eats, dresses and lives off income from my donkey."**

*Lucy Waititu, 23, Kamuchege, Mwea, Kenya*

**"We pay our monthly contributions to our social groups using the money we get from our horses and donkeys."**

*Zeniya Erketo, Gedeba, Ethiopia*

As with household chores, working equine animals' sickness or death has a major impact on income and therefore on the benefits they bring to women. Women have to use various kinds of coping of strategies, including renting donkeys, borrowing money or taking up a loan, or selling crops and other livestock animals.

**"When my donkey died the blow was big, as I had to come out of the social groups, as I had nothing that was bringing a daily income for me. Cleanliness in my home was a challenge, because the amount of water that I can carry on my back cannot be enough for livestock and household chores. The produce that I used to harvest drastically went down, for lack of manure. I could not afford hiring someone's donkey to take manure to my farm, because this was very expensive. Hence straining my finances."**

*Beatrice Njeri, 53, Ndiguini Village, Nachu, Kenya*

## CASE STUDY

MARY MUKUBA, 54, WIDOW, THARUNI, LIMURU, KENYA

Mary owned a donkey for over 12 years but it died in 2006. She used it to fetch feed for her cows, as well as to transport water and wood and carry manure from the homestead to the farm. She also used it to harvest and carry produce from the farm home for storage and to the market.

The loss of her donkey has had a massive impact on her life. From an income point of view, she used to be able to save around Ksh 600 (\$6.95) per day as her donkey carried the wood and animal feed she needed for free, whereas now she has to spend over Ksh 350 (\$4.05) per day to buy grass from neighbours for her cows. She also has to buy firewood that costs over Ksh 250 (\$2.90) per day. She has continued working however with tremendous strain.

She has to get the support of her son who has a family of his own and her daughter who is in college. During harvest she gets the assistance of other women to load her cart. She then pulls the cart from the front while the other women push from the back up until they get home.

The heavy duties have taken a heavy toll on her health, resulting in leg and back injury. She now walks with a limp. She has been in and out of hospital for these issues as well as mental stress but there is hope as she is saving to buy another donkey, more than 7 years after hers died.

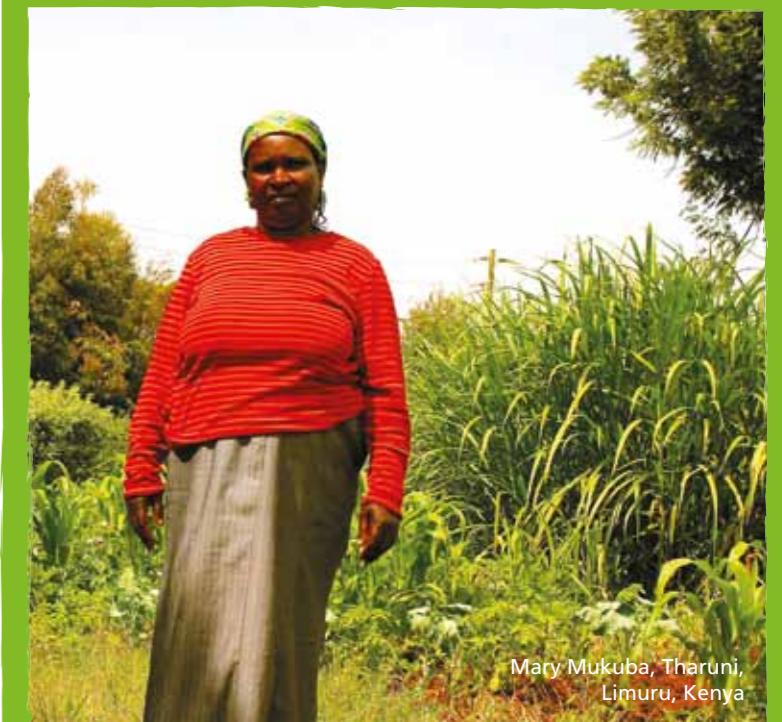
**"It is a pain to live a single day without a donkey. That is because donkeys are the base for our life. So if we lose our donkey, we will buy another one by selling one of our calves, goats, sheep or even a heifer."**

*Urgo Yassin, Gedeba, Ethiopia*

Women told us of the impact on the family's ability to afford expenses, including access to food and children's education. People are forced to cut down on essentials such as tea, vegetables and fruits, they purchase smaller quantities of wheat flour, sugar, potatoes, kerosene and salt, and they reduce the number of meals.

**"My donkey [who died 3 months ago] was my only source of income and its death has hit me and my family very hard. The donkey helped carry Napier grass for the cows, which in turn produced a lot of milk that was sold to neighbours and dairy co-operative societies. With the donkey no longer available to carry feed, our cows are not well fed and milk production has reduced. Thus income from milk has also been affected. Our access to food has also been affected. I am no longer able to purchase fruits on a daily basis and we have to make do with having fruits once per week or at times none. Items such as sugar are luxuries limited to times when we have access to extra money. Taking sugarless tea is now a common norm in my house."**

*Pauline Wachira, 39 Tharuni, Limuru, Kenya*



Mary Mukuba, Tharuni,  
Limuru, Kenya

## 5.5

### Working equine animals support women in carrying out social functions and increase their opportunities for community engagement

The study found that working equine animals that are used or owned by women play an important role in supporting them to carry out social functions and raise their status in the community. This is because these animals are assets that bring income and are also paramount in facilitating transportation for both equine and non-equine owners including in case of emergencies.

Across all four countries, a large majority of women we spoke to lend their animals for free to neighbours and relatives in times of need, for social functions, as well as in case of emergencies.

Only the two rubbish collection groups in Pakistan told us they never lend their animals as they are used purely for business and there are virtually no social connections in their communities. Two groups in India and one group in Ethiopia told us they only lend their animals in case of emergencies.

**"I have a donkey cart and some times I will transport my neighbour's grain to the milling house for free."**

*Sediya Jemal, 2nd Choroko, Ethiopia*

**"On market days, we give a free transportation service to our neighbours and relatives."**

*Bontu Habib, Hamata, Sidae Village, Ethiopia*

**"When they are building a school we send our gharry horses to transport water and wood for the construction for free. We also participate when there is a road construction and other development work in our village."**

*Tuba Shebamud, Wanja, Ababora village, Ethiopia*

Income from equine work is used by women to join social groups requiring payment of a monthly contribution which is used by women in times of need through loans or payment for important events in their lives. Women told us they see such groups as extremely important in enabling them to contribute to the community's life and as a result giving them a sense of pride.

**"Donkeys help us join working groups so that when someone needs a soft loan she uses her donkey as security and is able to access the loan. Through this way we can say that donkeys have the utmost contribution to our development."**

*Participant from Kamuchege group, Kenya*

**"When you assist your fellow community members with your donkey at no charge you end up being respected by the community."**

*Participant from Tharuni's Women Group, Kenya*

**"The fact that we help and contribute to the community makes us more respected."**

*Participant from Mutithi's Women Group, Kenya*

**"Having a donkey and contributing to social work makes us noticeable and accepted within the social circles. For instance in case of a death in the village, we volunteer our donkeys to assist transport e.g. the tent, chairs, water, food. This makes our role socially acceptable due to owning a donkey."**

*Participant from Mutithi's Women Group*

In India, Women's Equine Welfare Groups empower women and enable them to make decisions and act based on their needs. These groups also provide women members loans with minimum interest in times of need, for example to purchase a new animal or cart, feed or harness.

## CASE STUDY

RESHMA, MAHATWA VILLAGE, LUCKNOW, INDIA

Reshma is a young woman who took the lead in forming an Equine Welfare Group in her community. She and other interested women asked the Block Development Officer for a loan that is available to families living below the poverty line.

They were granted a loan of Rs 250,000, half of it subsidised, as the Office was impressed by their proposal and the leadership and commitment of Reshma.

Reshma has been leading the group and has been taught by a Brooke Veterinary Assistant Community Mobiliser how to inject a horse and is responsible for giving First Aid to sick equids in her community.



Reshma, 22, Lucknow, India



Tools Reshma made to educate other women and people in the community

Virtually all women belonging to self-help or other social groups told us that a sick or dead working equid has a major impact on their ability to carry out social functions. Women told us that the community comes to expect help in times of need and as a result, when a woman is not able to pay her financial contribution to the group it results in her and her family's status being lessened in the community.

Only one group in India (Shadipur Baruki Village, Bijnor, India) told us that an animal's sickness or death does not change their status in the community.

**"Social status is nothing but having regular income and money."**

*Participant from Noida, India*

**"Most people consider you as higher status because you earn extra cash."**

*Eyaya Bobeio, 2nd Choroko, Ethiopia*

**"If you have something people respect you so those people who own equids get respect."**

*Beyida Kedir, Gedeba, Ethiopia*

**"With no source of income I have also had to terminate my membership from some social groups as I could no longer pay the membership fees. I used to be a member of three groups but now I only belong to one."**

**Sometimes I cannot raise enough money to pay for the monthly membership so I have to do some menial jobs to raise the money. This group is important to me as it serves as a saving group."**

*Pauline Wachira, 39 Tharuni, Limuru, Kenya*



Talianwala FG, Pakistan

## Conclusion

In their own words, across communities in four countries and two continents, women told us of the critical importance of working equine animals in their lives and the extent to which they rely on them for support in fulfilling their many roles within the household and the wider community.

Working equids relieve women of much of the drudgery and exhaustion associated with collecting and carrying firewood and water and other daily household chores. They provide for women and their families, by generating direct income and enabling women and their families to earn money through transport of goods for sale to markets and villages. They contribute to a significant amount of savings by providing free transport for goods, water, firewood, animal feed, manure and other produce.

Their role also extends to the social sphere of women's lives as they raise women's status in the community and provide them with opportunities to make their voices heard and to access loan and business opportunities. Finally, they help women care for other livestock by carrying feed and water and taking sick animals to the clinic. The multiple roles that working horses, donkeys and mules perform mean that they work daily throughout the year with little rest and very little consideration of their needs. As a woman participant told us, "a donkey's work never stops", a striking parallel to the well-known "a woman's work is never done".

For women from equine owning communities, these animals are essential or, as some women put it, they are an additional member of the family or an additional limb of the body. Their welfare is therefore critical. Working equids in poor welfare, be it because they are overworked, suffer wounds or foot problems, or are not provided with adequate harnessing and access to nutritious food, shelter and water, are impaired in their ability to benefit women and their families optimally.

Without their help, women's burden increases, affecting them both physically and in their capacity to care for their children. Income goes down and extra expenses add to families' financial burden, leading to women having to adopt coping strategies that affect their families' access to food, their children's education and well-being, and their access to and involvement in women's groups and social functions.

Yet, none of the current policy and programmatic work aimed at women livestock keepers - be it driven by international institutions, donors or international non-governmental organisations working in human development - focuses on women's reliance on working equids in their daily lives and the importance of ensuring that their health and welfare are adequately addressed. Because working equine animals provide daily vital help and support to women and their families, they deserve to benefit from adequate medical treatment, to have access to shelter, nutritious food, water, rest and not to be exposed to beating and injuries.

This is why listening to women's voices through this research is an important step towards addressing the gap in knowledge that underlies the exclusion of working equids from policy and programming related to livestock in general but also to women and livestock.

Women told us their views, stories and experiences. We hope that this report will be a portal for them to be listened to and to identify neglected needs that can inform a useful tool for decision and policy makers involved in design and implementation of livestock policy and programmes.

# Recommendations

## 1.

**A clear link in policy and practice should be drawn between working equine welfare and human development.**

Working equids provide a significant number of benefits to women and their families. Although good equine welfare is sometimes seen as a luxury by development actors, it is a necessity as it has direct implications for people's welfare including women's and their families' access to food, education, and healthcare.

## 2.

**Working donkeys, mules and horses must be recognised in gender and livestock policy and programming.**

Such recognition means, in practice, the inclusion of working equids among the animal species considered in livestock interventions aimed at women - something that does not generally happen currently.

## 3.

**Greater emphasis should be put on gender analysis and women's participation in the development of livestock-related interventions aimed at women.**

The current gaps in understanding and reflecting women's priorities with respect to livestock keeping means that important opportunities for effective interventions are being missed.

National governments, donors and UN agencies including FAO and IFAD involved in gender and livestock related projects and interventions must assess gender roles and specific needs with regards to livestock within the targeted community.

## 4.

**The body of evidence on the roles of working equids in women's lives must be increased.**

A much deeper understanding of the specific roles of working equids in women's lives is needed in order to enable programme design and implementation that meets women's expectations and that caters to their needs. Therefore, governments, INGOs and think tanks involved in livestock and gender related research should conduct further studies in order to better understand the multiple functions performed by working equids and their roles in supporting women as well as the benefits of good equine welfare to women's lives.

## 5.

**Women's access to training and extension services must be improved.**

Women in working equine communities are the primary care takers of donkeys, horses and mules. Governments and donors should give greater priority to ensuring women's access to extension services and appropriate emphasis should be put on increasing the number of women being trained and employed as "agents of change" at community level. Working equine welfare should also be included in livestock and agriculture training and extension services.

# References

- i* Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), FAOSTAT 2011.
- ii* Starkey, P. and Starkey M. (2000), "Regional and world trends in donkey populations", pp 10-21 in: Starkey, P. and Fielding, D. (eds), Donkeys, people and development, Animal Traction Network for Eastern and Southern Africa (ATNESA).
- iii* The Brooke (2007), Bearing a Heavy Burden.
- iv* IFAD (2004), Livestock Services: Tending to a poverty-free future.
- v* UN Resources for Speakers on Global issues, Rural Poverty in the Developing World - <https://www.un.org/en/globalissues/briefingpapers/ruralpov/developingworld.shtml>
- vi* See for example: Upton, M. (2004), The Role of Livestock in Economic Development and Poverty Reduction, Pro-Poor Livestock Policy Initiative Working Paper No. 10, FAO.
- vii* Otte, J., Costales, A., Dijkman, J., Pica-Ciamarra, U., Robinson, T., Ahuja, V., Ly, C. and Roland-Holst, D. (2012), Livestock sector development for poverty reduction: an economic and policy perspective - Livestock's many virtues, FAO.
- viii* Starkey, P. and Fielding, D. (eds) (2000), Donkeys, people and development, ATNESA.
- ix* Brooke Ethiopia (2011), Donkeys, horses and mules - their contributions to people's livelihoods in Ethiopia.
- x* Mburu, S., Zaibet L., Fall A., Ndiwa N. (2012), The role of working animals in the livelihoods of rural communities in West Africa, International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI).
- xi* Dorward A., Anderson S., Nava, Y., Pattison, J., Paz, R., Rushton, J. and Sanchez Vera, E. (2005), A Guide to indicators and methods for assessing the contribution of livestock keeping to the livelihoods of the poor, Department of Agricultural Sciences, Imperial College London.
- xii* Evidence from the field.
- xiii* FAO (2009), The State of Food and Agriculture 2009, Livestock in the balance.
- xiv* Swanepoel, F., Stroebel, A. and Moyo, S. (2010), et al., The Role of Livestock in Developing Communities: Enhancing Multifunctionality, The Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation.
- xv* Kristjansson, P., Waters-Bayer, A., Johnson, N., Tipilda, A., Njuki, J., Balteneck, I., Grace, D. and MacMillan, S. (2010), Livestock and Women's Livelihoods: A Review of the Recent Evidence, Discussion Paper No. 20, ILRI.
- xvi* See <https://www.concern.net/en/get-involved/campaign-with-us/unheard-voices>.
- xvii* Pritchard, J.C. (2010), The role of working donkeys, mules and horses in the lives of women: a review of their contribution to women's pathways out of poverty, The Brooke (unpublished).
- xviii* Ethiopia Central Statistics Agency (2013).
- xix* Biffa, D. and Woldemeskkel, M. (2006), Causes and Factors Associated With Occurrence of External Injuries in Working Equines in Ethiopia, International Journal of Applied Research in Veterinary Medicine, Vol 4, No 1, 1-7.
- xx* Gebre-Selassie, S. (2004), The Roles of Agriculture in the Development Process: Recent Experiences and Lessons from Ethiopia, African Association of Agricultural Economists, Proceedings of the Inaugural Symposium, 6 to 8 December 2004, Grand Regency Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya.
- xxi* Zeit, D. (2005), ETHIOPIA: Rural economy threatened by neglect of donkeys, IRIN News.
- xxii* Research-inspired Policy and Practice Learning in Ethiopia and the Nile region (RIPPLE) (Former website accessed 2013).
- xxiii* Brooke Ethiopia (2013), Drought Assessment.
- xxiv* Kenya Livestock Census (2009).
- xxv* Heshimu Punda (2011), Knowledge gaps on donkey use and livelihood improvement: KENDAT/Brooke Heshimu Punda experiences, FAO/The Brooke Electronic Consultation on the role, impact and welfare of working animals (traction and transport).
- xxvi* Alila, P. and Atieno, R (2006), Agricultural Policy in Kenya: Issues and Processes, A paper for the Future Agriculture Consortium workshop, Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi, 20-22 March 2006.
- xxvii* <http://www.ruralpovertyportal.org/country/home/tags/kenya>
- xxviii* IFAD (2013), Enabling poor rural people to overcome poverty in Kenya.
- xxix* India Livestock Census (2007).
- xxx* Krishna Rao, E. (2006), Role of Women in Agriculture: A Micro Level Study, Journal of Global Economy, Vol 2, Issue 2, 107-118.
- xxxi* Pakistan Livestock Census (2006).
- xxxii* Socio-economic survey by University of Punjab (2006).
- xxxiii* Wambui, C., Abdulrazak, S., Ondiek, J. and Ogore, P. (2004), Role and management of donkeys at farm level in Nakuru district, Kenya, Draught Animal News No. 41, University of Edinburgh.
- xxxiv* Miller, B. A. (2011), The Gender and Social Dimensions to Livestock Keeping in Africa: Implications for Animal Health Interventions, GALVmed.



**"Working equids support women in developing countries in many different ways, and in return women provide care for those animals. This bond should be acknowledged and this report represents a good step in order to achieve a sustainable and holistic approach to improving the lives of both animal and human."**

*Andrea Gavinelli, Head of Unit, Animal Welfare, DG SANCO, European Commission*

**"Women are the invisible workforce of economies and households. Working donkeys, mules and horses are their invisible helpers. The Voices from Women report provides evidence of the critical support provided by those animals to women and their families, as told by women. It puts women at the forefront by using their experiences and their views, and sets out clear recommendations that can benefit women and improve the welfare of the animals they rely on daily."**

*Petra Ingram, CEO, The Brooke*

**"Donkeys are key productive assets for one of Concern Worldwide's most important beneficiary groups, poor women. These valuable animals assist them with household chores and provide income generating opportunities through transport of goods and people. The benefits women can draw from them depend on the animal's wellbeing and thus the husbandry capacity of the owners. This report comes in time to mobilise more support for this neglected sector in development aid."**

*Dominic MacSorley, CEO, Concern Worldwide*



Halaba, Ethiopia



healthy working animals  
for the world's poorest communities

Brooke

2nd Floor, The Hallmark Building, 52-56 Leadenhall Street, London, EC3A 2BJ

Tel: +44 (0)20 3012 3456 [www.thebrooke.org](http://www.thebrooke.org)

Registered Charity No: 1085760



This report is printed using Edixion Offset, a FSC® certified paper.

Design co-x.co.uk