

Sustainable Development Goals

How the welfare of working equids delivers for development



**THE DONKEY
SANCTUARY**



WorldHorseWelfare



Transforming lives through working equid welfare

Many of the world's most urgent Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can be achieved by cost-effective and simple solutions that benefit some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in society. The most striking example is the welfare of working equids (horses, ponies, donkeys and mules).

The vast majority of the world's equid population remains working animals. An estimated 112 million working horses, ponies, donkeys and mules are essential to the livelihoods of some of the poorest communities in Africa, Asia and South/Central America. The traditional beast of burden, their socio-economic value is often taken for granted, with people taking advantage of their hardworking traits.

In rural areas, working equids are often used in farming and as transportation: they pull ploughs and carts, deliver goods to market, herd livestock and collect water from wells. In urban areas, they are mainly used in construction, transport of people and goods, and refuse collection. By enabling their owners to participate in work, they boost economic capacity, with further benefits from enabling education to promoting gender equality by allowing women to be economically active.

Simple interventions can empower owners to keep their working equids healthy and ensure their continued productive benefit. These interventions include improved access to good, affordable harnessing, hoof care and veterinary interventions, and, above all, the empowerment of their owners with better knowledge of equine management.

How SDGs relate to working equids

In 2015 the United Nations overhauled the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), previously identified to alleviate global poverty, hunger, illiteracy and disease, with 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



These SDGs look to build on the considerable success of the MDGs but also make good their shortcomings; the role of working equids can and should play a significant role here. On the following pages, we explain how...



Strengthening livelihoods

SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 17 (Partnerships for the goals)

Equid welfare improves livelihoods as horses, ponies, donkeys and mules increase the income and productivity of the poorest communities by enabling their owners to work. Support for livelihoods through equids is increasingly important in the more complex and nuanced partnerships that are needed to achieve 'the last mile'.

- In Mali, research¹ found that two thirds of donkey owners had incomes of more than three times the average monthly income per capita of US\$551.
- In Mexico, income generated just through working equids² in the farms studied was equivalent to 30% of the minimum daily wage, plus an additional saving from being able to use these equids for daily chores and transport that would normally incur a cost.
- In Ethiopia, rural households studied demonstrated a significant reliance on working equids for income and employment, with income generated by working equids contributing on average 14% of total family income³ – more than that generated by other livestock.
- In India, a study⁴ of the construction industry showed 80% of income was generated by working equids.
- In India, Pakistan, Kenya and Ethiopia, research⁵ highlighted that rural communities ranked working equids as their most important livestock, due to their capacity to provide and support income generation on a regular (often daily) basis.



Access to water

SDG 6 (Clean water and sanitation)

Compassion for equids means access to water. Millions of people across the world spend several hours every day collecting the precious resource of safe, clean water. Up to 200 million hours per day are spent collecting water by women and girls⁶. Livestock production is also dependent on ready access to water. The simple act of equids carrying water reduces the time required to access it.



Building resilience

SDG 2 (Zero hunger), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 13 (Climate action)

Strong equids build resilience. The extra income generated through working animals also allows people to save money, reinvest in growth and fund access to education⁷. Equids' ability to transport goods increases potential for wider access to quality nutrition in the community through local food markets. Equids are often the most valuable asset that people own and the largest expense if they need to be replaced. Protection of animals is therefore a key consideration within disaster preparedness and resilience. Donkeys and mules, in particular, are supremely suited to arid zones and support livelihoods to adapt to climate change:

- 93% of the income of Ethiopian farmers and 100% of the income of Mexican farmers who sold milk and crops, depended on the presence of working animals⁸.



Productive farming

SDG 2 (Zero hunger), SDG 12 (Responsible consumption and production)

As well as working equids increasing productivity by reducing the time and labour, they enable farmers to go 'the missing mile' to market, often in otherwise inaccessible areas. This ensures farmers can turn their crops to cash, while allowing the community to access more diverse foods. They also provide draught labour which, in one study⁹ of Mexican farms, was valued at US\$500 per farm annually. In some countries, equids are farmed for meat, milk or other products. Ensuring good practices for rearing, transporting and slaughtering animals can help create a better quality product for human consumption.



Empowering women

SDG 5 (Gender equality)

Healthy equids empower women. Evidence shows women often rely on working animals to do tasks they would otherwise have to perform themselves, from collecting water and tilling land to transporting goods. By enabling women to be economically active, they also increase their community status and personal resilience. This economic capability can prevent the worst forms of destitution for lone women¹⁰, whether working in rural or urban settings. Working equids can be found in some of the world's most marginalised, women-headed households, where families cannot afford to utilise the draught power of cattle.



Enabling education

SDG 4 (Quality education)

Caring for equids enables education for children. As well as providing the additional income, equids, by carrying out labour otherwise done by people, help parents give children the care and attention they need at home. Equids can also be the only available mode of transport for children to get to school in some of the world's most remote and rural communities¹¹.



Working together for the welfare of people and working equids

To improve the lives of people, it is essential to improve the lives of working equids; they boost the income and resilience of many of the most vulnerable communities. Yet the impact of these working equids is often compromised by poor health and nutrition and overwork. One Ethiopian study¹² showed that 54% of equids were thin, 93% had body lesions from poor handling, and 60% were lame. Simple interventions can transform not only their lives, but people who depend on them.

Measures to reduce poverty, end hunger, enable economic growth and promote gender equality will be more effective if we improve the welfare of working equids. The Donkey Sanctuary and World Horse Welfare are valuable and reliable partners at a local and national level. Global programmes, academic research and advocacy staff support professional expertise, leading to effective policy frameworks and language.

Cost-effective intervention models can transform equid welfare, with primary health care for equids and community training for their owners able to reach tens of thousands of equids within programmes.

Transferring knowledge

Knowledge transfer can empower owners and sustain productive benefits. Programmes can reach both owners and local women, with community training sessions for welfare-friendly harness design and farriery. These provide practical solutions to ensure pack saddles that fit properly, using cheap, locally available materials, and foot care to prevent lameness. It also provides income generation for those that are trained and their families. Local women can then become trainers for their communities, to ensure knowledge transfer is sustained.

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About The Donkey Sanctuary

The Donkey Sanctuary is a global organisation that works in almost 40 countries, collaborating with intergovernmental organisations, international institutions, governments and like-minded parties to advance welfare standards for working donkeys and mules through legislation, policy and good practices. We have reached more than 1.6 million donkeys and mules in the last year through programmes in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Americas and Australasia.



About World Horse Welfare

World Horse Welfare is a respected UK-based charity that has been improving the health and welfare of equines around the globe for 90 years. Our whole approach is practical, based on scientific evidence and our extensive experience, and focused on delivering lasting change, primarily through education and sharing of best practice. By working in partnership with equine owners, governments, universities and other organisations, the charity successfully improves equine care knowledge, skills and policies affecting equids of all kinds.

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