



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

Key findings from research in five equine owning communities in the Province of Punjab.



Working donkeys, mules and horses are important to women due to the multiple functions they perform.



Working equids lighten women's burden by reducing their labour and the heavy burden of household chores.



Working equids support women in generating income that benefits them directly and indirectly.



Working equids support women in carrying out social functions and increase their opportunities for community engagement.



A sick working equid or the loss of one has detrimental consequences on women and their families.



Women are the main keepers of working equine animals but have no access to training and extension services.

Introduction

There are over 4.7 million donkeys, mules and horses in Pakistan.ⁱ Ninety-five percent of them are working 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.ⁱ

Poverty is widespread in Pakistan and is particularly predominant in rural areas. As many as 58.7 million people in Pakistan are living in poverty.ⁱⁱ Nearly two thirds of the population live in rural parts of the country. In the Province of Punjab where the research was conducted, 19 percent of the households live below the poverty line and more than 70% of the households are landless.ⁱⁱ People largely rely on informal sectors such as agriculture, livestock keeping, transport and construction to make a living.

Working donkeys, horses and mules provide vital support to those people by transporting goods and people, generating direct income for their owners including women. It is estimated that over 12 million marginalised people, directly and indirectly, depend on working equids for a living in Pakistan.ⁱⁱⁱ Working equids also provide invaluable help to women who rely on them to lessen the burden of household chores. For women, those animals are also often those who feed their children and contribute to their access to education and healthcare.

In an effort to bring attention to the links between women and working equids, Brooke Pakistan met with women in order to hear their views and experiences of having those animals and the difference they make to their daily lives.

This policy briefing highlights the findings from a participatory piece of research carried out in five communities in Pakistan. 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 heavy domestic work, providing income, enabling them to play an important role in their communities (thereby enhancing their status), and providing savings by transporting goods, agricultural produce, water, firewood, animal feed and manure.

The briefing also highlights the devastating impact of the loss or sickness of a working equid on women and their families and the value of good equine welfare. The briefing concludes by making a set of recommendations aimed at Pakistan's policy makers and implementers and key advocacy stakeholders.



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



Multan

Key objectives and methodology of the research

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



The specific roles which working donkeys, horses and mules play in supporting women's lives;



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



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

The study was carried out in the province of Punjab during one week in February 2013. It was conducted through five women only Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and individual interviews. Groups included participants from both female and male headed households living in peri-urban and rural areas.



Pakistan

Location and profiles of communities

The research took place in five communities in the Province of Punjab in the districts of Lahore, Faisalabad, Gujranwala and Khanewal, where Brooke Pakistan operates.

- **Talianwala** and **Rasool Pura**, two tented communities located in the outskirts of Lahore and Faisalabad who earn a living through rubbish collection using donkey carts.
- **Chak Chakera**, a rural community situated in Faisalabad where families earn a living through milk production, agriculture and the transport of goods, including agricultural outputs using donkeys.
- **Purani Sabzi Mandiis**, a suburban area in the district of Multan, southern Punjab, where households rely on the transport of goods to the market and nearby villages as well as brick kiln work.
- **Bharthanwala**, a small village located in the Sialkot district, where people earn a living from farming (cultivating their own land or working as labour on other people's lands) or working in factories in Sialkot.



Use of working equids by women participating in focus groups and type of income generated



Transport of people for a fee



Transport of grains for a fee



Transport of agricultural produce for a fee



Transport/sale of animal feed and manure



Hire (donkey/horse)



Rubbish collection

Direct



Transport of agricultural produce (to market)

Indirect



Fetching water and firewood for own use



Transport of goods/household items from market



Transport of animal feed for household livestock



Personal transport for social events/ambulance



Transport of construction materials for own use



Transport of pesticides and seeds to the field

Saving

Key findings:

1.

Working equine animals are very important to women.

While working donkeys, mules and horses rarely make it onto the radar of policy makers and other development actors, for a large majority of the 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 - 4 out of 5 groups across all communities put their horses and donkeys in the first position.

The primary reason for women ranking working equids highly was due to their income generation role. In the rubbish collection communities particularly, donkeys are the only source of income and families solely rely on them to earn money. But women also highlighted the multiple functions performed by equids alone and not by other livestock.

In particular, working donkeys and horses support women with household chores, and in performing social functions. In contrast the only function performed by other livestock when available (mainly buffaloes and goats) was primarily nutritional (milk) and in bad times, in the case of goats, monetary (sold for cash). Women told us of the importance of working equids for their other livestock as donkeys and horses carry fodder for all livestock.

2.

Women are the main keepers of working equine animals.

The research showed that women are the primary and traditional care givers for livestock, including working equids, mainly within the household compound but also tending to production livestock such as cattle and goats outside their homes.

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

Hamida Bibi, 50, Rasool Pura

The research also found that women use working equids for multiple purposes. All of the five groups said that working equids were used for income generation. In urban areas, rubbish collection is the main means of livelihoods 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.

“We are very poor people and can’t afford a donkey by ourselves so we have bought one donkey by sharing money and we share it in our work. We use it to go to work together and to bring fodder. We don’t know about stitching or embroidery, the only work we know is working in the fields so we have to go there using a donkey.”

Jamila Bibi, 50, Purani Sabzi Mandiis

3.

Women have no access to equine training and extension services.

Despite their primary role in caring for equids the fact that they use working equids themselves, when asked about their sources of knowledge, the women we met told us they did not have access to any kind of education and training. Their knowledge was acquired through looking after the donkeys and horses themselves or from their husbands who benefited from being involved in working equine welfare groups established by Brooke Pakistan.

Yet 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. 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

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

CELDAC is a partnership between the United Nations Development Programme and Nestle Pakistan that built women’s capacity in veterinary skills, enabling them to become LLWs. LLWs were provided with four weeks of training on basic livestock health management and extension services. The project focused on women working with cattle, sheep and goats. The project runs in 22 districts of Punjab and Sindh provinces.

The Brooke Pakistan has been training LLWs on equine management and primary treatment including wound dressing and heat stress management. 144 LLWs have so far been trained, 106 of which are in Punjab and 38 of which are in Sindh Province.

Assumptions about women’s access to training and extension services which rely on cultural factors were dismissed by women themselves. 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.

4.

Working equids lighten women’s burden by reducing their labour and the heavy burden of household chores.

Women highlighted the importance of working equids to support them in carrying out household chores, in particular transport of goods, fodder, water and crops from the field to the market or from the market to their homes. This saves them a lot of time and they are better able to care for their children and tend to other tasks within the home.

‘Our donkeys are everything to us. Thanks to them the cycle of our houses runs. Without them we would suffer physically due to the extensive walking we would have to do everyday.’

Participant from Rasool Pura

In Cha Chakera, participants told us that women who have a donkey cart can bring wood and fodder home in one hour and 30 minutes whilst it takes four hours for women who do not have a donkey. This was echoed by another group in Barthanwala, 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.

Therefore when an equid dies or is sick, it has a significant impact on women.

“Without a donkey life is hard”

Kausar Bibi, 40, Talianwala

“Without a donkey we have to walk to get to work and we get very tired so we can’t work properly and we come back home late and we are not able to do the other chores”

Rabia, 45, Purani Sabzi Mandiis

5.

Working equids 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 was clearly acknowledged by all the women we interviewed. All the groups we spoke to use working equids for direct income generation either as the main source of income (rubbish collection communities) or as one of their sources of direct income generation.

“Donkeys earn their food themselves and even earn for us.”

Nadia, 27, Talianwala

Whilst some women we spoke to are not involved in generating direct income, they do still support family earning through indirect income earned by working equids used for homestead purposes, which result in savings particularly with regards to transport costs.

The reliance of women and their families on working equids means that the sickness or death of an animal has a major impact on income and therefore on the benefits they bring to women. Women have to use various kinds of coping strategies, including borrowing money, selling other livestock animals or taking up a loan to buy another donkey or horse and therefore become indebted.

“If our donkey dies, we feel bad because it has spent a long time with us and has done a lot for us, but the actual grief is about losing our source of income.”

Jamila Bibi, 50, Purani Sabzi Mandiis

“My donkey died last month and now I don’t have any work or source of income.”

Rani Bibi, 45, Rasool Pura

CASE STUDY

IQBAL BIBI, 34, CHA CHAKERA

Iqbal Bibi has been using a donkey cart since she got married, twenty years ago. The donkey cart is her family’s only 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 her 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

Faisalabad



6.

Working equids support women in carrying out social functions and increase their opportunities for community engagement

Working equids do not only provide economic benefits but social advantages as well. Women told us that working equids that they use or own 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, for example taking people to the hospital.

The social benefits of donkey and horse ownership were less important in the rubbish collection communities due to the pressure of work. In other communities, women told us that lending donkeys and horses in time of need or to help neighbours and relatives is common. Some women also see sharing their donkeys as an opportunity to meet their friends.

Conclusion

The research shone a light on the critical importance of working equids in women’s lives and the extent to which they rely on them for support in fulfilling their many roles within the household and the wider community.

For women from equine owning communities, the health and welfare of these animals are essential. A sick or a dead donkey or horse will have dramatic consequences for women and their families. Some women compared losing an animal to losing a limb.

Working equids in poor health are impaired in their ability to benefit women optimally, 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. Therefore good equine welfare is not a luxury but a necessity for women and their families. Without their help, women’s burden increases, income decreases and women are less able to perform social functions, which in turn affects their status in the community.

Recommendations

1.

The departments in charge of Livestock in all the regions of Pakistan should consider working equids as critical and valuable livestock for people's food security and livelihoods.

Working donkeys, horses and mules are at the cornerstone of tens of thousands of families' livelihoods in Pakistan and provide a support system for women. Therefore the health and welfare needs of those animals should be adequately addressed by government policies and programmes alongside with other livestock. This includes allocating sufficient budget for equine drugs, including working equids in vaccination campaigns and other livestock initiatives, and providing training on equine health and welfare for government vets and livestock technicians.

2.

The departments in charge of Livestock in all the regions of Pakistan and donor agencies should give greater priority to ensuring women's access to extension services.

Appropriate emphasis should be put on increasing the number of women being trained and employed as "agents of change". Training and information related to livestock keeping must take women into account and specifically incorporate equine health and welfare, including husbandry.



healthy working animals
for the world's poorest communities

Brooke Hospital for Animals – Pakistan Head Office
9/295 Sarwar Road, Lahore Cantt, Pakistan, Postal Code 54810
email: info@thebrooke.org.pk
www.thebrooke.org.pk

3.

Animal Welfare legislation which specifically includes working equine animals should be adopted and effectively implemented through targeted and accessible awareness campaigns aimed at owners, users and carers.

These awareness campaigns should specifically include women as women can be powerful advocates and need to be included in those campaigns.

4.

A dialogue between community based and non-governmental organisations working on gender and livestock, and organisations concerned with working equine welfare, should be initiated to better understand and explore the opportunities and benefits of collaborating on their mutual agendas.

These organisations currently operate in silos which leads to missed opportunities for engaging women from equine owning communities, leaving them outside the scope existing initiatives.

References:

- i Pakistan Livestock Census, 2006
- ii SDPI, Clustered Deprivation, 2014
- iii Socio-economic survey by University of Punjab, 2006

