

Effects of the donkey hide trade on the livelihoods of women in Kenya



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Background: The problem

Donkey hides are used in Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) called ejiao. Ejiao is believed to have a variety of health benefits including improved blood circulation and treatment for reproductive problems. The demand for ejiao is currently so high, the global donkey population is reportedly in decline, with many working donkeys in developing countries being used in the trade. Africa's donkey population is considered a key source for the trade; over the last few years donkey hides exported from sub-Saharan Africa to China have reportedly increased.



Across Africa donkeys are commonly used for a range of work. They play a significant role in the lives of smallholder farmers, particularly women, supporting their livelihoods contributing to Sustainable Development Goal 5 – Gender Equality.



Despite their contribution towards sustainable livelihoods, there are existing protection gaps in livestock policy in Kenya. The donkey hide trade poses a potential threat to the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

Donkeys are a livelihood asset for women

- Support domestic chores (fetch water, carry loads to and from markets, carry fuel wood)
- Source of income generation
- Provide draught power (ploughing)

Aim

The study aimed to explore the potential impact that the donkey hide trade has on the livelihoods of communities in Kenya (with a focus on women).

Methodology

- The research was conducted in February 2017 in Nakuru, Narok and Bomet counties in Kenya.
- Data was collected using interview based semi-structured questionnaires.
- Donkey and non-donkey owners were interviewed ($n=331$, $m=271$, $f=60$).

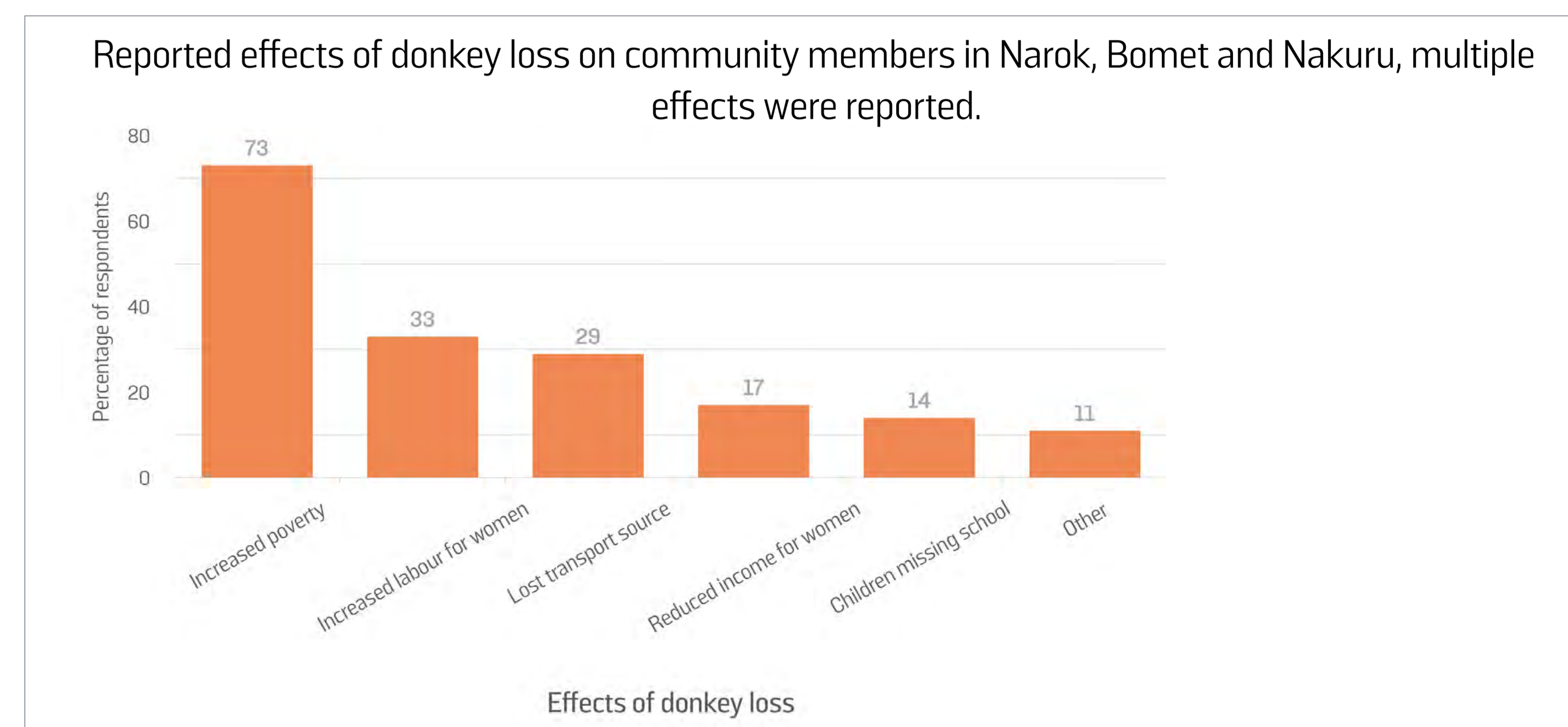
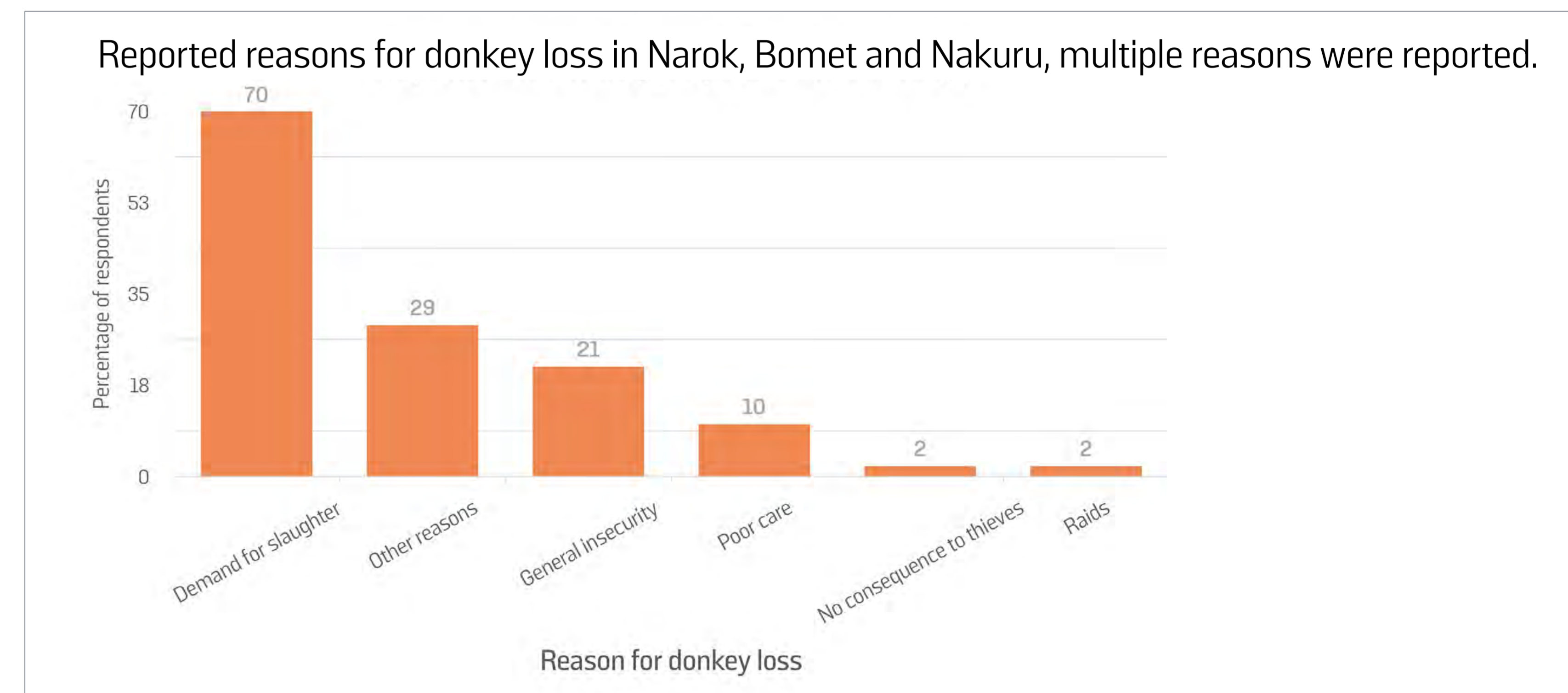
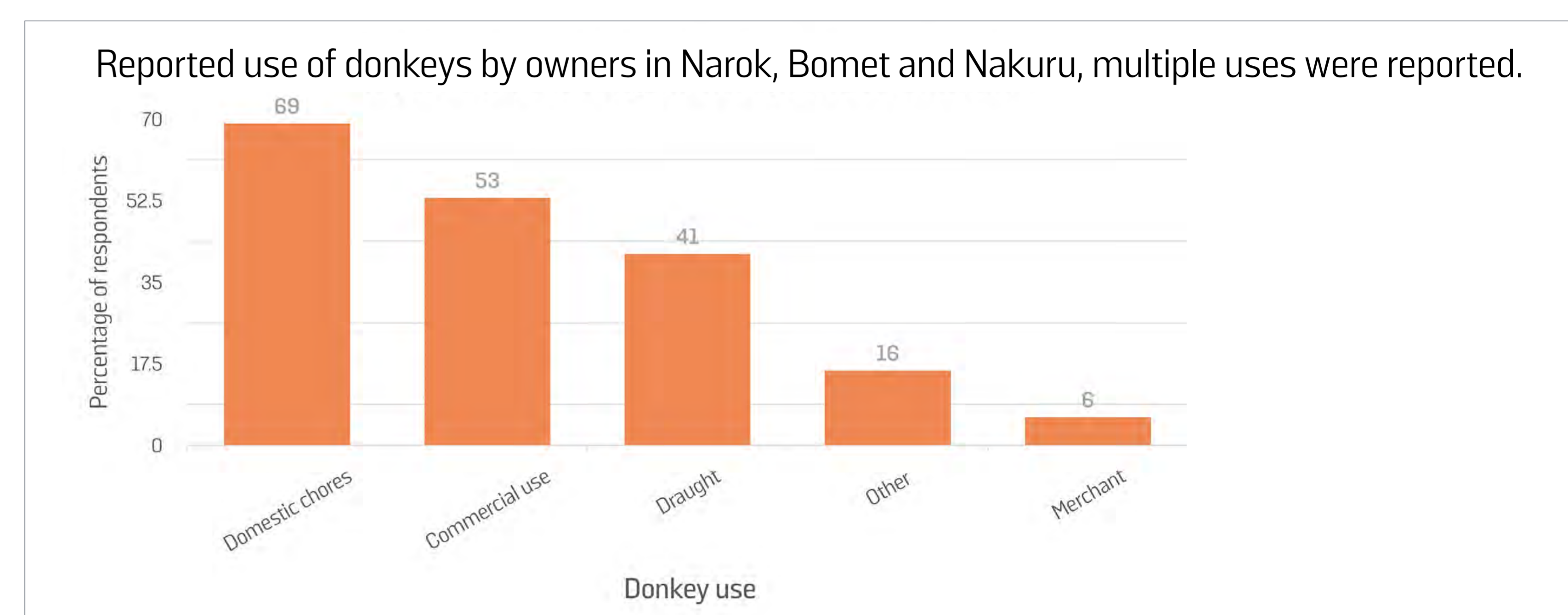
Conclusion

- The majority of donkey owners reported that they use their donkeys for domestic chores.
- When community members were asked the reasons for donkey loss, 70% reported it was due to demand for slaughter. However, community members did not specify the reason for slaughter.
- Donkey loss were reported to have a negative effect on women; increased labour for women was reported by 33% of respondents.

The results

"Donkeys help carry loads you can't carry on your back. Here you cannot survive without donkeys."

Female donkey owner in Nakok, Kenya



Recommendations

- Conduct further research to explore the effects of the donkey hide trade on the livelihoods and well-being of women and vulnerable groups in additional African countries.
- Promote the value of donkeys as a livelihood asset and develop gender inclusive strategies to ensure safety and mitigate loss.
- Develop sustainable donkey management policies, institutional innovations and laws geared towards protecting donkeys and their owners.

