

The contribution of equids to the livelihoods of landless people in Indian brick kilns



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Introduction

Large numbers of equids owned by poor communities are engaged in the brick kiln industry transporting bricks by cart or pack (Figures 1 and 2) between November and June every year. This study aimed to investigate the contribution of equids to the livelihoods of these poor, marginalised communities.

Summary

- For those who don't have land, owning an equid can be an important source of income
- Brick kiln communities do not have an alternative source of income other than the brick kiln, or a source of loans other than the brick kiln owners
- Evidence of the equine contribution to livelihoods can be taken to policy makers to influence suitable protective legislation for both equids and their owners

Methods

Four equid owners were randomly-selected from each of 50 brick kilns in central Uttar Pradesh. Information was gathered on income patterns, workload and credit source using semi-structured questionnaires, focus group discussions, daily activity schedule, resource mapping, credit analysis and mobility mapping.



Figure 1: Cart animals working in a typical brick kiln scenario

Table 1: Numbers of bricks transported daily

	Approx number bricks/day (tonnes)	Approx body weight of equid (kg)	Total earnings per day (INRs)
Transportation by cart	4200 (10.5)	150 – 250	693
Transportation by pack	720 – 900 (1.8 – 2.3)	80 – 130	119 – 149

Results

- 200 equid owners participated in the study.
- 82% were completely dependent on working equids for their living.
- 20% indicated the entire family, including children, worked in the brick kiln.
- Each animal makes 13–15 round trips daily, carrying bricks that weigh 2.5kg each (Table 1). Each equid must travel at least 800m per round trip.
- Overall 80% of total annual income was equid-generated
- 24% indicated they found no employment outside the brick kiln season.

Conclusions

- For equid-owning communities, the brick kiln provides 6-8 months' work annually.
- Owners often take a loan from brick kiln owners to meet household expenses including those associated with their equid. The entire family work hard to repay the loan.
- Inability to repay loan may result in a perpetual debt cycle.
- Working equids are the means of direct income generation for landless members of the community and should therefore be recognised in legislation by policy makers.
- Equine welfare could be improved through sanctions, to reduce the animals' workload, and through government-funded emergency treatment facilities.
- Alternative opportunities for credit could be provided by government or NGOs.

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Figure 2: Pack animals working in a typical brick kiln scenario



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