



WorldHorseWelfare



**THE DONKEY
SANCTUARY**



**WORKING ANIMALS ALLIANCE TO
ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE, PUBLIC
HEALTH ISSUES AND ACHIEVE THE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

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INTRODUCTION

Climate and environmental-related crises have grown quickly and prominently over the past few years. Increases in air and water pollution, biodiversity loss, deforestation, accelerated sea level rise and severe heatwaves demonstrate the cumulative impact and devastating effects of climate change. Alongside these issues, we have recently experienced a marked increase in the occurrence and spread of infectious diseases, mainly caused by environmental, demographic and social changes. Animal species are inherent repositories of contagious agents that generate “zoonoses”, infectious diseases that are transmissible from animals to humans. In 2015 governments prepared a roadmap on how to address critical issues such as these through the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Many of the world’s most urgent SDGs, including those addressing climate crises, can be achieved using simple and inexpensive “ground-up” solutions, benefitting the poorest, most vulnerable and marginalized communities. Although a frequently unrecognised workforce, working animals can be an asset to attaining these goals. These animals play a significant part in helping to deliver the targets supporting education, climate change and adaptation, zero poverty, tackling inequalities, access to water and interlinkages between the SDGs.

With climate change and a rapid spread of diseases impacting on the livelihoods of the poorest, working animals will play a critical role in countries most affected. The Donkey Sanctuary and World Horse Welfare have been advocating for and promoting the role of working animals as critical assets both in helping communities protect their livelihoods and in addressing climatic-related disasters and pandemic crises.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEWS

The current national reporting guidelines do not contain any language regarding the contribution of working animals in delivering the targets of the SDGs. The Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia was one of the few governments whose Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) referred to working livestock as a critical issue for the economy of the country. Moreover, Sierra Leone referred to animals as “*extremely important to their survival*” when discussing the effects of climate change¹. The Donkey Sanctuary and World Horse Welfare are now developing some suggestions that may constitute an evidence-based structure member states can refer to when producing their VNR.



THE CONTRIBUTION OF WORKING ANIMALS TO LIVELIHOODS

An estimated 200 million working animals are essential to the livelihoods of some of the poorest communities worldwide. Utilised for their outward traits of stoicism and endurance, the socio-economic value of these animals and the long-term benefits of better health and welfare are often neglected in favour of immediate outputs. Strong working animals can play a crucial role in building resilience. Donkeys and mules, in particular, are better suited to arid zones and support livelihoods to adapt to climate change. They can assist with restoring income and productivity after a disaster and help their owners resume work.

In many low and middle income countries, people are highly dependent on draught animals. Most animal owners live in conditions of severe poverty, and working animals represent their biggest and most precious asset. Not only do they enable their owners to participate in work, boosting their economic capacity, but they also promote

gender equality, access to essential services and opportunity to take part in money saving schemes. Animal labour proves to be a particularly suitable and an accessible energy source to smallholders and family-level production. Working animals are the energy behind agricultural systems, generating essential income for their owners and enabling them to save tonnes of fuel yearly.

As a means of rural traction and transport, agricultural use of working animals is common. They help to tend land by pulling ploughs and carts, herd livestock, collect water and other supplies for production and deliver goods to market. In urban areas, they are also a reliable workforce, carrying people and goods as well as facilitating industry and local services including construction and refuse collection. Where cost or terrain restrictions mean that mechanical vehicles are not practical, working animal transport enables communities to utilise local food markets, increasing the potential for quality nutrition.

PROPOSAL

Create an informal group of stakeholders – including countries, international bodies, NGOs, academics, women, youth, farmers, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders – that work collectively towards achieving collaborative advantages.

The Alliance will be a living mechanism that will evolve progressively according to the demands of

the moment. It won't be characterised by a mere exchange of inputs but will imply the creation of new values together where stakeholders will appreciate each other's skills. Moreover, it will offer the parties opportunities and open new doors for producing encouraging results.

► OBJECTIVES

The Alliance aims to:

- 1** Emphasise the vital contribution working animals make in coping with the current climate change crisis;
- 2** Provide advice for countries which wish to report their progress when preparing their VNRs;
- 3** Co-host events at relevant intergovernmental meetings;
- 4** Co-ordinate actions to build and strengthen synergy across stakeholders, and will concretely contribute to the delivery of the SDGs, the Paris Climate Agreement and the implementation of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 - 2030;
- 5** Deliver mutual benefits for the members by providing a stronger voice for working animals as well as a system for countries to ease their implementation of the SDGs.

▶ ACTIVITIES

Participate in the following key engagements:

- 1 United Nations HLPF meetings;
- 2 United Nations Regional Commissions Fora;
- 3 UNFCCC COP United Nations Climate Change Conference;
- 4 Stockholm World Water Week;
- 5 World Data Forum;
- 6 Committee on Food Security Plenary;
- 7 The UN Secretary General's Food System Summit and its preparatory meetings;
- 8 World Water Forum.

To organise events on the role of working animals during the following events:

- 1 United Nations HLPF meetings;
- 2 United Nations Regional Commissions Fora;
- 3 UNFCCC COP United Nations Climate Change Conference;
- 4 Stockholm World Water Week;
- 5 Committee on Food Security Plenary.

To identify gaps in research to highlight working animals' contribution towards delivering the SDGs and climate change. This can include:

- 1 The development and piloting of a set of indicators for working animals;
- 2 The collection of case studies on the role of working animals in achieving the SDGs, mitigating the effects of climate change as well as of pandemic diseases;
- 3 The identification of gaps regarding the recognition of the contribution that working animals provide in helping to deliver the SDGs;
- 4 The development of a module for VNRs to ensure reporting on the SDGs and working animals.

To develop for the mid-term review of the SDGs in 2023 a report on working animals which would include:

- 1 Success stories;
- 2 Gaps that need to be addressed;
- 3 The role that working animals play in the interlinkages of the SDGs;
- 4 Organising a lunch event at future HLPFs in July or at Heads of State sessions in September.

Maximise the use of media by:

- 1 Producing newsletters at relevant events highlighting the role of working animals;
- 2 Producing podcasts that would be targeted at the relevant member states' media highlighting the role of those countries' officials;
- 3 Working with the UN Department of Global Communication and the Rome-based agencies in producing radio programmes on working animals.

► IMPACT

- Countries benefit from expanded wording to report against when preparing their VNRs to showcase their progress in the implantation of the SDGs;
- Countries with healthy working animals benefit from a more sustainable approach to agriculture in terms of energy and cost-efficiency and lower ecological disturbance;
- Communities benefit from boosted economic capacity: as a system of transport, working animals are integral to the production process, bringing resources and supporting trade, ensuring that products can reach marketplaces and offering a wider range of opportunity for work-based and social engagement;
- Communities are able to participate in saving schemes, which are particularly important for those who are unable to access more formal bank or insurance programs. This provides a safety net against unforeseen shock;
- Communities are ensured regular access to essential resources such as water and medical supplies. As an example, water collection of up to 20 panniers in one journey using a donkey and cart serves agricultural production, family life (drinking, washing and use within biogas fuel systems) and can generate additional household income through sales of surplus. As pack animals, working animals are able to bring medical supplies into otherwise inaccessible areas and transport people to clinics and hospitals;
- Communities benefit from a significant reduction in gender gaps as thanks to working animals, women are allowed to gain a degree of independence and financial resilience, improving their social standing as well as saving time and energy on labour tasks;
- Communities are efficiently supported by healthy working animals in restoring income and productivity after a disaster and can resume work;
- Communities benefit from healthier animals which prevent the development and dissemination of zoonoses;
- Working animals benefit from better welfare derived from higher recognition of the role they play in improving the livelihoods of people.

► DELIVERABLES

- 1 A global and stronger voice for working animals;
- 2 A set of targets to measure the impact that working animals have in delivering the SDGs;
- 3 A set of specific reporting lines for countries to use when preparing their VNRs;
- 4 A greater understanding and promotion of the role of working animals in the media;
- 5 Identification of gaps in the research on the role of working animals and relevant solution to address the issues.





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