

# Sustainable animal welfare: community-led action for improving care and livelihoods

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## Why does the health of working animals matter?

Working animals – horses, donkeys, camels, bullocks and yaks – support the livelihoods of millions of rural and urban families throughout the world. Assuring good animal health and husbandry reduces a family’s livelihood vulnerability and increases their coping abilities. But unlike livestock that produce milk, meat, eggs or wool, working animals have no visible output and their productivity is not usually measured (invisible) in the analysis of agricultural production (see Box 1). Consequently, the role and value of working animals is often overlooked by the international development sector and policy makers. Yet the loss of a working animal, or the cost of treatment for injuries and disease, causes major stress to the livelihoods of households who are dependent upon them.

### Box 1: The roles of working animals

Working animals are animals that pull or carry goods or people. They play a variety of roles:

- Providing a primary source of income by transporting people and goods for a fee. For many landless people, working animals are the main source of income and seen as more reliable than alternatives such as daily wage labour.
- Supporting agricultural activities such as ploughing and transporting feed or water for livestock, and providing essential access to markets by transporting agricultural products.
- Reducing the labour and drudgery of daily domestic household tasks, particularly collecting water and firewood by women and elderly people. Using working animals reduces the time spent on domestic activities and provides women with an opportunity for income generation.

Here, we describe our work with The Brooke India, a charity dedicated to improving the lives of working equine animals (horses, donkeys and mules) and the communities who depend on them.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Brooke is an international animal welfare organisation with country offices across Africa, Asia and Latin America. Since 2001, The Brooke India has been working with animal-owning communities directly and partner organisations in four states: Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. The Brooke India now works with 10 direct and 20 partner units in 30 districts in eight states.

Over the last seven years, The Brooke India has made a gradual transformation from providing primarily curative veterinary treatment towards a preventative approach. We are promoting community-led action to improve animal care, management and work practices while also building the capacity of local veterinary and animal health providers to manage emergency cases. Our aim is to create collective responsibility within the community to sustainably improve the care of working animals – while reducing the vulnerability of households whose livelihoods depend on them.

### **How The Brooke India's approach evolved**

The Brooke India began operations by delivering free animal treatment from clinics at fixed locations in Delhi, Hyderabad and Jaipur. This required a high input of veterinary doctors' time and focused on primary and first aid treatment. However, the number of equine animals treated was relatively low and the approach created dependency among their owners, who began to expect free services and inputs.

Based on successes in other sectors, we decided to use participatory approaches to enable animal-owning communities to analyse the health and husbandry of their animals and make sustainable welfare improvements. In 2006, we recruited a number of community development specialists and trained all staff in participatory methods. We moved from service delivery at fixed locations to a more village-based approach, attending emergency calls at the owner's home or work. We also established district unit offices with managers with development sector experience, moving from mainly veterinary technical staff to a multidisciplinary team. We replaced educational sessions with community meetings and engaged working animal owners by adopting and adapting a variety of PRA tools, such as village mapping, seasonality analysis and

matrix ranking. The animal owners developed action plans for their particular village and identified solutions for working animal problems such as adequate rest and good nutrition.

Using these tools gave owners and stakeholders an awareness of their animals' welfare – but field experience showed that the most important health and welfare issues of working animals were still not being addressed. Field staff saw limited action by the owners and clinical records showed repeated cases of wounds, dehydration and eye, hoof and skin problems in animals from the same location.

We realised that our major challenge was how to change the mindsets of the animal-owning communities from being recipients of The Brooke's curative services to adopting their own preventive practices. To do this, the district teams started to search for a participatory methodology which would put the animals' needs and feelings at the centre of analysis.

### **Piloting participatory animal needs assessments**

Our teams decided to initiate a pilot project, aiming to develop an effective participatory process to engage animal owners in 40 villages with about 650 animals. This was gradually increased to 78 villages with 1335 animals.

Together with the community, each district unit designed a process. The welfare needs of working animals vary widely depending on context. Because of this, the animal needs assessment process is very specific to each community. So our teams were given the freedom to test whatever the community came up with, because the most important outcome we sought was community action. Our teams used a large variety of PRA tools and several have been adapted, focusing on the environment, work patterns and welfare needs of draft and pack animals. Where we identified gaps, novel tools were developed (see Box 2).



**Box 2: The participatory process: steps and tools**

**Step 1: Building rapport and forming animal owner groups**

**Purpose:** to understand the community better, gain trust in each other and create an atmosphere ready for change.

- (i) Building a rapport with the animal-owning community
- (ii) Forming and strengthening an animal owners' group

- Tools**
- Mapping
  - Daily activity schedule
  - Gender activity analysis
  - Historical timeline
  - Animal welfare snakes and ladders game
  - Dependency analysis
  - Credit analysis
  - Seasonal analysis

**Step 2: Shared vision and collective perspective**

**Purpose:** to identify common animal welfare goals within the group.

Identifying issues relating to:

- (i) the livelihoods and working systems of animal owners
- (ii) the lives of working animals
- (iii) animal-related service providers and resources

- Tools**
- Mobility map
  - Venn diagram
  - Daily activity schedule
  - Gender activity analysis
  - Seasonal analysis
  - Gender access and control profile
  - Changing trend analysis
  - Animal welfare and disease mapping
  - Animal disease Venn diagram
  - Daily activity schedule of the animal
  - Dependency analysis
  - Animal body mapping
  - Animal welfare practice gap analysis
  - Animal-related service and resource mapping
  - Mobility mapping
  - Pair-wise ranking
  - Matrix scoring of animal-related service providers
  - Cost-benefit analysis of animal-related service providers

**Step 3: Participatory animal welfare needs assessment (PWNA)**

**Purpose:** to look at the present welfare status of working animals, by bringing the animal itself to the centre of the group's analysis.

- (i) Analysing how animals feel and what they need for their well-being
- (ii) Generating a list of animal-based and resource-based indicators for welfare and agreeing how they will be scored
- (iii) Observing animals and recording their welfare status

- Tools**
- Matrix ranking animal welfare issues
  - 'If I were a horse'
  - How to increase the value of my animal
  - Animal feelings analysis
  - Animal body mapping
  - Animal welfare practice gap analysis
  - Animal welfare transect walk

**Step 4: Community action planning**

**Purpose:** to move the group from their new awareness of animal welfare issues towards individual and collective action for improvement.

- (i) Prioritising welfare issues important to working animals and their owners
- (ii) Root cause analysis of welfare issues
- (iii) Preparing a collective plan of action to improve the issues

- Tools**
- Pair-wise ranking
  - Matrix scoring or matrix ranking
  - Historical timeline
  - Three-pile sorting
  - Animal welfare story with a gap
  - Problem horse
  - Animal welfare cause and effect diagram

**Box 2 (continued)**

**Step 5: Action and reflection**

**Purpose:** to facilitate the group to implement their community action plan, monitor it regularly and reflect on their findings and experiences together.

- (i) Implementing and monitoring activities in the community action plan
- (ii) Participatory monitoring of animal welfare changes, creating a cycle of reflection and action

**Tools**

- Pair-wise ranking
- Matrix scoring or matrix ranking
- Animal welfare transect walk
- Problem horse, pre-post analysis
- Animal welfare cause and effect diagram

**Step 6: Self-evaluation and gradual withdrawal of regular support**

**Purpose:** to assess the longer term impact of the group's efforts, see positive changes in animal welfare and reflect on issues which may need continuing support.

- (i) Self-evaluation
- (ii) Gradual withdrawal of regular support

**Tools**

- Changing trend analysis and before-and-after analysis
- Group inter-loaning analysis
- Success and failure stories

Photo: Ashok Kumar, The Brooke India



Self-help group members in Hiranwada village doing the 'If I were a horse' exercise, Muzaffarnagar district, Uttar Pradesh, India in 2009.

Figure 2: Practice gap analysis done by Sona-arjunpur villagers, Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India in 2007

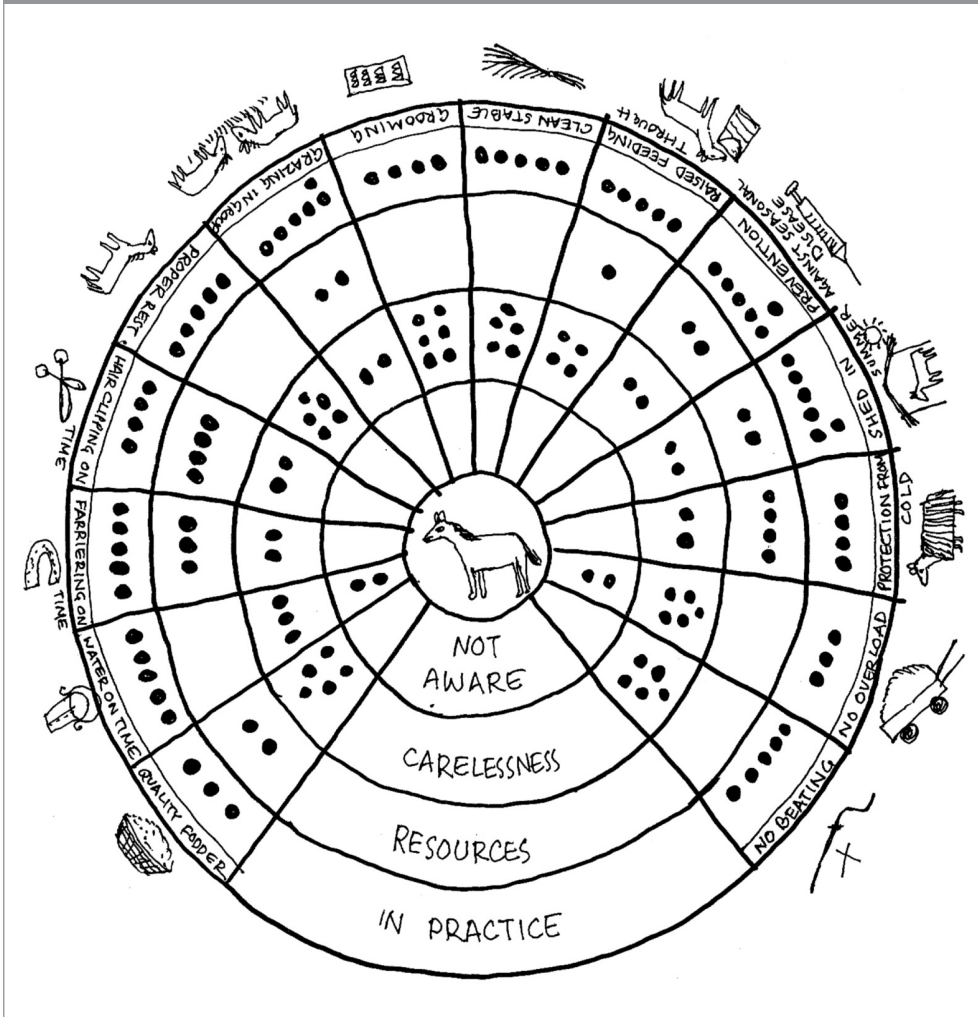


Illustration: Amitabh Pandey

They did not understand why researchers had included or excluded certain animal observations from the assessment and therefore had no ownership of the process. Owners did not agree with some parameters used for the assessment and some were suspicious about recording observations of their animals without fully understanding what was happening. We realised that an animal welfare needs assessment methodology had to be developed with the owners' full involvement.

The PWNA tool is the basis for a group-based reflection and action process

in which the community itself identifies health and husbandry risks and assesses the physical signs and behaviour of the animal related to these. Based on this assessment they agree on collective and individual action to improve their animals' health and husbandry. The process is based and builds on local people's capabilities and wisdom. The process is dynamic and cyclical and, although PWNA provides a rough framework for each community, the detailed action and reflection process differs regarding tools used and timeframe.

Figure 3: Example of a PWNA traffic light chart

○-GOOD    ⊙-MEDIUM    ●-BAD








Body Parts	Indicators	Umar	Islam	Zahi	Emad	Awad	Sayed	Mena	Walia
<b>LEGS</b> 	Twisted Hoof	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Swelling Hind	⊙	○	○	○	○	○	●	●
	Foot Canker	○	●	○	○	●	○	●	●
	Injury/Wound	●	○	⊙	⊙	●	○	●	●
	Lameness	○	●	○	○	●	○	●	○
	Stiff Legs	○	○	○	○	●	○	●	⊙
<b>EYES</b> 	One Eyed	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Whitiness of Eye	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	⊙
	Tears	⊙	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Wound	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	●
<b>EARS</b> 	Cut or Broken	○	●	○	○	○	○	○	●
	Dumb	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	Droppings From Ears	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Fever	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<b>MOUTH</b> 	Teeth for Age Determination	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Flat tongue	○	●	○	●	○	○	○	○
	Like Snake	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Cut	⊙	○	○	○	○	○	○	●
	Suffocation	○	●	⊙	○	○	○	○	●
	Hair round on fore head	○	⊙	⊙	○	○	○	●	○
<b>BACK</b> 	Wound	○	●	○	○	●	○	●	●
	Equal back	○	○	○	○	○	○	●	○
	Broken bone	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
<b>TAIL</b> 	Wound	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Fatty	●	●	○	○	○	○	●	●
	Maggots	○	●	○	○	○	○	●	○
<b>STOMACH</b> 	Ribs	○	⊙	●	○	●	○	○	○
	Wound	⊙	●	○	○	○	○	●	●
	Big belly	○	⊙	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Low fat	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Illustration: Martha Hardy, GC illustrations

Photo: Rampal, The Brooke India

Traffic light chart from Faridpur village, Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh, India in 2008.

The basis of PWNA is either the ‘If I were a horse’ tool (Figure 1) or the practice gap analysis tool (Figure 2). These tools help the group to:

- identify the needs of working animals;
- analyse how far those needs are met by their owners and other service-providers;
- analyse the effects on working animals when their basic needs are not fulfilled; and
- identify visible signs (animal-based indicators) against each need.

The tools move owners from looking only at animal-related resources and services, to looking at the animal itself and what this tells them about its welfare. For example, in Khanjarpur village, a group of owners solved the problem of persistent withers wounds in their horses. Through the PWNA action and reflection process they found a mismatch between animal size and saddle design.

In the practice gap analysis, the reasons for not fulfilling the animal’s expectations

are analysed in more depth. It forms the basis for developing indicators of good and poor welfare in a format that enables animal owners themselves to assess animal welfare. Figure 3 and the photo above show a traffic light scoring system developed by an animal owners’ group for assessing indicators.

The innovations were inspired by the holistic worldwide view analyses tool developed by Ravi Jayakaran and published in an earlier issue of *Participatory Learning and Action* (2007). After several members of our team saw the circular visualisation of this tool they adapted it to create a centre of analysis with the animal in the middle, and they found that many communities found it easy to understand and use.

### Overview of the participatory process

Step 1: Building rapport and forming animal owners groups

Step 1 brings the animal-owning community together, building confidence in their



ability to bring about positive change and mobilising interested partners for action. These include animal owners, users and carers, local organisations and influential individuals such as the village chief or teachers. We start forming groups of animal owners through entry point activities such as initiating a savings group, or mobilising a community-led tetanus vaccination. At this stage, group members identify a local leader whom they call *ashwan mitra* (equine friend).

### Step 2: Shared vision and collective perspective

Step 2 aims to create a shared perspective of the group's own situation by analysing:

- their livelihood and working systems;
- the lives of their animals and current health and husbandry practices; and
- animal-related service-providers (such as local health providers, farriers, cart makers, medical stores and feed sellers) and resources (such as feed, water, grazing, shoes, harness and medicines) available within their community.

### Step 3: Participatory animal welfare needs assessment

The next step looks specifically at the present health and husbandry status of working animals, by bringing the animal itself to the centre of the group's analysis. The group builds a common understanding of its welfare, based on the animal's needs and feelings. We enable them to recognise how aspects of good and poor health and husbandry are expressed in an animal's appearance and behaviour. To do this, our teams developed specific tools such as 'If I were a horse' (see Figure 1). The group summarises issues into animal-, resource- and management practice-based indicators in a format that enables owners to assess an animal's welfare themselves. The group decides on a scoring system and criteria for each indicator, usually a traffic light indicator (red for poor, yellow for moderate and green for good welfare or no welfare prob-

lem). Owners assess all the animals in the village or area using a transect walk technique, checking animal welfare against the list of indicators agreed. The traffic light chart and its summary give a clear picture of the welfare of individual animals and of the resource and management issues affecting the group (see Figure 3).

### Step 4: Community action planning

The group then discusses and analyses the traffic light charts, identifying and prioritising the issues important to working animals and their owners. The group conducts a root cause analysis of the prioritised issues and makes a time-bound action plan for individual as well as collective action for improvement.

### Step 5: Reflection and action

The fifth step aims to facilitate the group to implement their community action plan, monitor it regularly and reflect on their findings and experiences together. The group critically appraises the performance of both the individual members and the group as a whole. These positive, constructive appraisals translate action into learning, which in turn translates into

#### Box 3: The Brooke India's programming approach

- Building the problem-solving capacities of communities who own working animals by fostering a participatory community-led process.
- Forming and strengthening functional local community self-help groups.
- Promoting group savings and establishing federations at district/block level.
- Improving the accessibility, availability, affordability and use of local resources and service providers including farriery (horse shoeing), harness-making, cart-making, feed and fodder.
- Enhancing the capacity and use of local veterinary services to provide accessible, acceptable, available and affordable treatment for working equine animals.
- Promoting use of and increased access to other development schemes by the animal-owning communities.
- Sensitising wider society to the value and role of working animals.

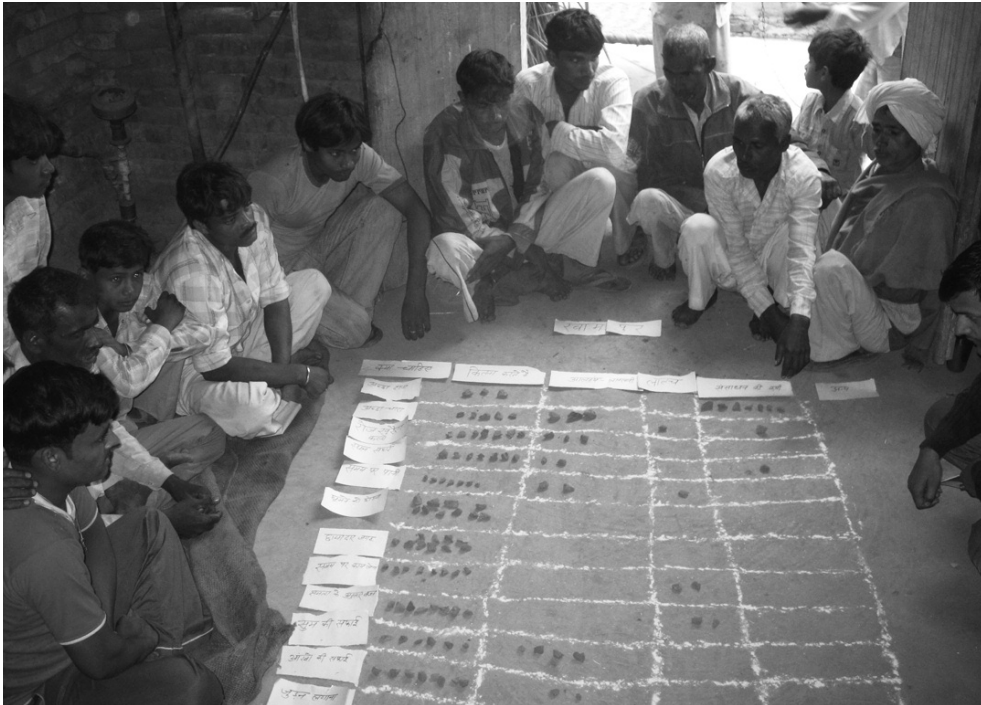


Photo: Ashok Kumar, The Brooke India

Practice gap analysis done by Rajpur Khampur villagers of Baghpat district, Uttar Pradesh, India in 2009.

further action. The group repeats the transect walk at regular intervals to assess the result of their actions and agrees on new actions. In this way, the process becomes a cycle of action and reflection.

#### Step 6: Self-evaluation and gradual withdrawal of regular support

In the final step, the group assesses the longer term impact of its efforts to improve working animal welfare after 12–18 months and at the end-point (3 to 4 years) before initiating the phase-down process. This enables group members to see positive changing trends in working animal welfare and reflect on any issues which may need further action. During this phase, our community facilitator agrees with the group how much external support the community will need in future.

#### Reflecting on The Brooke India's experiences

In 2008, we shared the process with six new local partner NGOs in central Uttar

Pradesh. These partners have long-standing experience of working with deprived communities and with their help the participatory process has developed even further into our current programmatic approach (see Box 3). For example, a key strategy is forming welfare self-help groups (WSHGs) for empowering members of marginalised equine-owning families. These are groups of 10–20 men or women – irrespective of caste – who usually live in the same village. They come together with a commitment to improve the welfare of their animals through collective action. The binding force behind such groups is the opportunity for group credit and savings.

Since 2011, The Brooke India field teams also cluster groups at block level using meetings and workshops with representatives of individual groups. These associations can take action which would not be possible for groups acting in isolation, addressing issues related to services, transportation fees, availability

Photo: Sughar Singh, The Brooke India



**A self-help group conducting an animal transect walk, assessing the animal and its living environment, in Khanpur village, Meerut district, Uttar Pradesh, India in 2009.**

of credit and resources. Many of the animal-owning communities are marginalised groups and the federations provide them with a stronger voice in society.

Our initial desire to work in a more participatory way with working animal owners led to a process of institutional learning and change, which also brought many challenges. Recruiting community specialists (recent university graduates in social sciences) and conducting PRA training for veterinary teams did not lead immediately to a change in attitude for our field teams. Although the teams were required to use a bottom-up approach in their work, initially there was a lack of clarity on the approach and insufficient practical field support, which the teams needed to work with the animal owners effectively. Also, senior management was not confident that using participatory tools would improve animal welfare. However, the positive results of the pilot brought about policy changes at management level and a radical change in staffing

and operation of the district units. Local, multidisciplinary teams were recruited with solid practical experience in working with communities at village level.

Regular reflection and learning workshops with field staff were crucial for developing the process and tools. It allowed us to learn what worked and what did not, and inspire and give recognition to our field staff. Sharing was encouraged within and between the district teams, providing a mechanism for peer influence. These sessions also provided senior managers with an informal monitoring system and triggered staff to continue their search for appropriate tools and methodologies for community-led action.

The evolution of these animal-centric tools over the years has also created radical changes in community analysis and motivation for action. The legacy of providing free treatment for animals over many years led to huge challenges for the field teams. But while the new approach



Photo: Sughar Singh, The Brooke India

**Animal owners in Khanpur village documenting their assessment using a traffic light monitoring chart.**

involves short-term costs (e.g. effort, time, money or productivity), it is already resulting in longer-term change for animals and their owners. During the pilot project, field teams learnt that improvements in welfare were only seen when the owners identified and analysed the animals' needs themselves.

Through debate and cross-checking using animal-based welfare indicators, issues are clearly highlighted so that animal owners are motivated to develop action plans to resolve them. The teams also discovered that the collective nature of the process is essential, as group observation of each member's animals created peer pressure to act.

Using these tools is a process of mutual learning, between the animal owner groups

and between owners and The Brooke field teams. Providing veterinary services at a certain place and time is a fairly controlled process. It is much more complex to work with animal owners at the community level and address working animals' welfare from a more holistic livelihood perspective. This requires using multidisciplinary teams where the community facilitator plays a key role, having less control over field teams as working hours are not fixed, and a completely new way of monitoring activities. For example, we found that treatment records could no longer capture the nature of the work, or the direct result of the teams' efforts. This was a major change in how The Brooke India operated and involved changing the attitude of veterinary technical staff who believed that only veterinary interven-

tions could improve working animals' health and welfare. Intensively involving veterinary staff in action and reflection workshops and visits to showcase successes in the field has limited their resistance, but has not removed it completely.

In terms of sustainability, the community action and reflection process is currently used in 2687 villages, 2624 brick kiln communities and 242 tonga stands communities in 30 district units distributed in eight states. Several of these groups are now doing PWNA action and reflection processes without field team support. The welfare groups have federated into 48 associations in the past year, and about 36 have adopted the process of conducting PWNA in all villages once or twice a year. These assessments are based on common parameters decided democratically by all members of the welfare groups.

### Final thoughts

The Brooke India sees working animal welfare as integral to people's livelihoods. It is one of the many development challenges that individual families face. Our approach contributes to creating more resources (assets) and opportunities at

household level to improve their livelihoods as a whole, and there is increasing evidence that this approach works. For example, an analysis of the expenditure of savings of 1300 equine welfare self-help groups shows a direct benefit to the animal as well as to the family: 54% of savings are used for purposes such as veterinary treatment, animal feed and cart repairs, while 46% are used for household expenses such as children's education, payment for weddings and funerals, and other domestic needs.

Many animal health and husbandry problems have been solved through this community-led process: in all communities, we have seen less animal mortality and morbidity, fewer and less severe wounds, better body condition of animals, fewer hoof-related issues, and many more changes. Communities have also been able to address chronic or persistent welfare problems.

Finally, although the PWNA action and reflection process has been developed and tested mainly in and with communities owning horses, mules and donkeys, we believe that the tools can also be adapted for use in improving the health and welfare of general livestock.

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The collective action process and further adaptations and methodological innovations are documented in a field guide for community facilitators called *Sharing the load: a guide to improving the welfare of working animals through collective action*. Practical Action Publishing in association with The Brooke, January 2011. Please contact: kimberly.wells@thebrooke.org for the English printed version. Also available in French, Arabic and Spanish from The Brooke website [www.thebrooke.org](http://www.thebrooke.org). Please contact one of The Brooke India authors of this article for the Hindi version. See our In Touch section for more details.

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