



A brighter future for donkeys in Africa



Three donkeys in Senegal | Image: World Horse Welfare

The second Pan-African Donkey Conference (PADCo-2) was hosted by the African Union – InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire in late June 2025.

Over 250 significant players involved in African donkey welfare attended the conference. The meeting emphasised the importance of creating a united front across Africa to ban, and enforce the ban of the trade in donkey skins.

“Last year was the time for decision, this year is the time for action to begin.”

The Donkey Sanctuary.

The conference culminated in the formal endorsement of the Abidjan Declaration to preserve Africa's donkeys and uphold the moratorium on the trade.

African leaders vowed to

- enforce the existing ban on the donkey skin trade
- step up checks at ports and borders by bringing in regional task forces of police, vets and customs to patrol
- share intelligence across borders
- increase investment in breeding donkeys at community level to rebuild herds lost to the trade, and
- support the establishment of alternative livelihoods.

Where are we one year after the AU summit endorsed the moratorium on the skins trade in February 2024?



According to Brooke, Africa will lose half of its donkey population by 2040 unless the trade is stopped. To be effective, the moratorium must be adopted **AND** enforced by all AU member states. The role of governments and policy-makers is crucial.

<https://www.thebrooke.org/>

Extracts from a report commissioned by Brooke (© Brooke 2025) show the following:

- Countries such as Burkina Faso, Senegal, Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Tanzania, Kenya and Zimbabwe have imposed firm national bans, halting the operations of legal abattoirs and penalising exports of donkey skins.
- At the opposite end of the scale, Egypt and South Africa have legal export quotas in place while attempting to stop illicit trade.
- The situation in many other countries is fluid. Slaughterhouses may be closed down only to re-open, illegal slaughter is rife, donkey meat is sold as beef in markets.
- A number of primary smuggling corridors across the continent have been identified.

Clearly a united strategy is essential, with determination and political will as essential components.





Research round-up

A community-based approach for improving donkey welfare in Ethiopia

An integrated community-based programme was implemented to improve donkey welfare in Ethiopia. This study was in accordance with the international strategy of The Donkey Sanctuary between 2008 and 2016. It provides a blueprint for effective, sustainable support to communities, by external agencies.

Authors of the report were Bojia E. Duguma, Sally J. Price, and Stephen Blakeway.

Integrated participation

The participatory approach involved communities, service providers, Departments of Animal Health, Education, Transport, and local administrations. The programme integrated primary health care, harness improvement, community engagement, social behaviour change, and animal welfare education in schools.

An exit strategy aimed at ensuring sustainability was built into each part of the programme, with external support reducing as local capacity grew.

A companion article in our library describes one community within the same programme where the disease EZL (epizootic lymphangitis) in mules was a specific problem. <https://www.donkeysforafrica.org/Resources/PEL.pdf>



Improving donkey welfare in Ethiopia: Using a sustainable scalable integrated community-based approach

Read the full research article detailing this holistic approach, in our library at <https://www.donkeysforafrica.org/Resources/duguma-et-al-improving-donkey-welfare-in-ethiopia-using-a-sustainable-scalable-integrated-community-based-approach.pdf>



The importance of donkeys to communities

A number of recent publications illustrate the important role donkeys play in the lives of their communities, particularly for women.

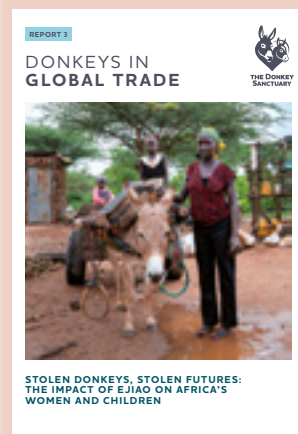
Stolen donkeys, stolen futures: The impact of ejiao on Africa's women and children - The Donkey Sanctuary

The report provides evidence that the trade in donkey skins is harming progress toward the UN Sustainable Development Goals and includes first-hand accounts of the economic, physical and emotional burden of losing a donkey.

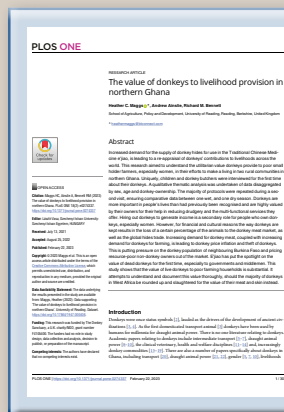
Stolen donkeys, stolen futures: The impact of ejiao on Africa's women and children - The Donkey Sanctuary

Read it in our library at <https://www.donkeysforafrica.org/Resources/donkeys-in-global-trade-report-3-stolen-donkeys-stolen-futures-2025.pdf> together

with earlier reports in the series *Donkeys in Global Trade*.



The value of donkeys to livelihood provision in northern Ghana - Heather C. Maggs, Andrew Ainslie, Richard M. Bennett.



The value of donkeys to livelihood provision in northern Ghana

Read the full paper in our library https://www.donkeysforafrica.org/Resources/journal_pone_0274337.pdf together with earlier research by the same authors, also in our library: https://www.donkeysforafrica.org/Resources/donkey_ownership.pdf

This study aimed to understand the utilitarian value of donkeys for poor small-holder farmers, especially women, in their efforts to make a living in two rural communities in northern Ghana. For the first time in such research, children and donkey butchers were included in the interviews.

Donkey owners and non-donkey owners alike all answered affirmatively to the question "Do you think donkeys reduce the work of men, women and children?"

In addition donkeys are valued as "priceless" and perceived as multi-purpose animals, according to the community members engaged in the study.

Clearly the impact of the skins trade on such communities will be huge.



Donkeys saved from illegal slaughter in Kitui County, Kenya



104 donkeys rescued by Caritas Kitui grazing at GASP, Kwa Vonza

Brooke East Africa and Caritas Kitui, the Development Department of the Catholic Diocese of Kitui, joined forces in this successful effort.



Ready for National Donkey Day 2025 at Caritas Kitui

- In November 2024 in Kitui Rural Sub-County, 41 donkeys were intercepted and impounded following reports from local donkey owners. Their herders were arrested and charged with handling suspected stolen goods and transporting animals without permits.
- In December 2024 two trucks carrying 60 donkeys were intercepted at Kanyonyo Junction on the Thika-Garissa Highway. The Border Control Unit swiftly intervened. Two truck drivers were arrested and charged with illegal transportation of livestock and animal cruelty.

A safe haven for rescued donkeys

All the rescued donkeys were housed and cared for at the Kwa Vonza Goats and Sheep (GASP) Centre, an agricultural farmland

owned by the Catholic Diocese of Kitui. Originally intended for rearing cattle, goats, and sheep, this land has now become a sanctuary for donkeys rescued from the donkey skins trade.

At the Sanctuary every donkey received comprehensive medical care to ensure optimal health. Three of the rescued mares gave birth to healthy foals. Sadly, five donkeys succumbed to health complications.

Strengthening security and surveillance

The resurgence of illegal donkey slaughterhouses prompted immediate action from stakeholders. Caritas Kitui, backed by Brooke East Africa, held a security briefing with key government agencies.

During this meeting, intelligence reports highlighted the underground operations of the illegal donkey trade and an increase in mass donkey movements. Caritas Kitui had already deployed community-level informants in high-risk areas, ensuring early detection and disruption of the donkey skins trade activities.

A hopeful future: rehoming the donkeys

Caritas Kitui, in collaboration with Brooke East Africa, is working on a rehoming program. The plan prioritises donkey owners who lost their animals to theft and slaughter. By providing rescued donkeys to responsible and compassionate families, the initiative aims to restore livelihoods while ensuring long-term welfare for the animals.

Refer to <https://caritaskitui.org/>



Dr. Geoffrey Kyalo, the SCVO from Kitui Rural Subcounty attending a wounded donkey



An 8-weeks old Lucky bonds with his mother at Kwa Vonza GASP farm



Veterinary training launched in The Gambia

Dr. Kebba Daffeh, President of the Gambia Veterinary Medical Association, has praised the introduction of a Bachelor's Degree programme in Veterinary Science at the University of The Gambia. This follows years of advocacy by various stakeholders.

In an interview with The Alkamba Times, Dr. Daffeh described the development as a "landmark achievement," emphasising the

urgent need for veterinary scientists in a country with only three qualified professionals currently employed by the government.

The Veterinary Science programme represents a beacon of hope for Gambia's livestock sector and rural communities. It paves the way for a more resilient and prosperous agricultural future by improving animal health, reducing disease transmission, and boosting livestock productivity.

Advisory panel for Donkeys for Africa

We are delighted at the positive responses we received after appealing for volunteers to form an Advisory Panel for DfA. This is a last call if any of you would like to be considered for inclusion. Of course we always welcome suggestions, submissions and reactions to keep this communication portal relevant and useful. Let us hear from you at editor@donkeysforafrica.org



Unique partnership established



Two donkeys with cropped ears | Image: Brooke

Brooke East Africa has announced its partnership with the Media Council of Kenya. This is a key step towards promoting ethical and professional reporting on animal welfare issues across Kenya.

The CEO of the Media Council, David Omwoyo, urged the media to move beyond human-centric narratives and emphasised the urgent need for animal welfare reporting.

"Animal rights advocacy is a cornerstone of a compassionate society," Omwoyo stated.

Regional Director of Brooke East Africa, Dr. Raphael Kinoti, noted the media's power to educate through accurate and impactful storytelling. He highlighted a significant research gap regarding donkeys and the need to address it through informed reporting.

"The media's role is crucial, especially in bridging the knowledge gap around donkeys, which are vital to women's livelihoods yet frequently overlooked."

This partnership is poised to champion animal welfare across Kenya, fostering a more compassionate and informed society.

From the Editor

The battle against the donkey skins trade wages on. Imposing a ban on the trade is one aspect, enforcing it is a challenge - and penalising transgressions is a further necessity. Alongside all this is the need to raise awareness of the threats to livelihoods, biosecurity and not least, animal welfare.

Examples of different ways to gain support against the trade, abound in this newsletter. Engage with the media, join forces with local and regional bodies with similar commitments, build up relationships with informants in communities, publicise the devastating consequences for owners when they lose donkeys. The human aspect is a powerful tool.

Above all – we cannot afford to become complacent. This is a battle against a deeply ingrained, centuries old belief system that has grown beyond its cultural aspects to become a multi-million industry. It is unaware or possibly unconcerned about the impact on ordinary people, animals and the environment.

Its global impact needs global reaction.



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