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In Kenya, common equines are donkeys and horses. There are about 1,800,000 donkeys, which provide an essential source of tillage and transport resource. Many of these animals are owned and used by rural and peri-urban populace, who depend on them for their livelihoods. Unfortunately, approximately a third of the working donkey population is in poor welfare status: suffering from various diseases, injuries, malnutrition, hoof abnormalities and distress. Many of these cases result from abuse, negligence, inadequate resources, cultural beliefs and myths, conflict as well as natural calamities such as drought.

In recognition of the usefulness of these animals and their contribution to livelihoods, there have been a number of animal welfare organizations working with donkey owning communities to improve welfare of these animals. In order to address the challenges KENDAT/ Brooke’s Heshimu Punda (HP) program, has been working with communities to sustainably improve equine welfare in Kenya, in a measurable manner. Measurement of welfare focuses on the animal based measures, which can be seen in the physical, emotional and behavioural status of the animal. These parameters may be assessed directly through observation and measurements for presence, severity and prevalence within an equine population. Examples of such parameters include body condition score, wounds, lameness, dehydration, mucus membrane, ectoparasites and fear. The results are prioritized and used to identify key welfare needs which form welfare benchmarks and later informing the choice of prioritized interventions required in the development of long-term welfare improvement strategies. Repeated assessments following intervention is used to measure the success of such interventions towards achievement of good equine welfare.