**FAO Call for Submissions of good practice on ‘Community engagement for inclusive rural transformation and gender equality’**

Submission by:

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Brooke is an international NGO that operates in approximately 15 countries on four continents, with offices in the UK, Senegal (covering West Africa), Ethiopia, Kenya (covering East Africa), India, Pakistan and Nicaragua (covering Latin America and Caribbean). The mission of Brooke is to improve the lives of working animals (horses, donkeys and mules) whose work underpins livelihoods and food security of people living in poverty who are rendered vulnerable.

Brooke uses community development approaches to engage communities in our areas of operations in order to improve the health and welfare of working animals in a sustainable, locally driven manner. When the context allows and communities are willing to come together for a collective action, Brooke facilitates equine reliant communities to be organised in groups. When the context is not conducive for group formation, through the engagement of the communities, Brooke works through community-selected/identified change agents as intermediaries to mobilise communities to cascade positive change. We use participatory and learning tools to support reflection and learning and to generate solutions from within.

Brooke works by direct implementation through its local field-based staff working closely with communities, and a network of partner organisations who are based within the communities, know them well and have their trust. The partners often already have established projects in the community and Brooke joins in to add an animal welfare component to an existing successful intervention around livelihoods.

Brooke uses the Human Behaviour Change approach to improve animal welfare practices within communities. We do it by creating spaces for communities to come together, reflect, identify problems and using the COM-B model to identify behaviour drivers to support human behaviours that affect animal health and welfare.

A special emphasis is placed on a link to income generation, since poverty is one of the most significant barriers to animal welfare where Brooke operates. We work with the community to generate and/ or improve their own livelihoods opportunities, for instance through offering training in harness or cart making or fodder production and selling to support groups’ sustainability.

Gender is a key cornerstone of our approach, since women are usually the main stakeholders in equine care, and work with equine animals (especially in transport of produce and fetching water). Women receive participatory training in equine welfare and animal husbandry, and are supported to form Women’s Equine Groups that share good practices and set up microfinance savings schemes that the whole group can use to pay for veterinary care. Such activities have multiple benefits: improved animal welfare, improved incomes and greater empowerment of women.

Children are future as well as current agents of change within communities. They often have responsibility for caring for animals, especially donkeys. Convening Donkey Care Clubs within communities helps children learn about good welfare practices through participatory methods (such as visual arts and drama) and cascade the learning across the community.

This approach to community development improves community cohesion, empowers women and boosts local livelihoods in a sustainable way.

Brooke has created an open-access online resource called Communities for Animals (C4A) that outlines our approach and offers a variety of tools for community engagement and participatory learning. [HOME - Communities for Animals | The Brooke](https://communitiesforanimals.thebrooke.org/en/)