



AFRICA ANIMAL WELFARE CONFERENCE

Policy Brief

Animals, Environment and Sustainable Development in 21st Century Africa: An Interlinked Approach

Introduction

In Africa, animals are deeply embedded in the lives and livelihoods of the communities that live and interact with them. That animals are an essential livelihood support in Africa cannot be overemphasized, though there appears a dearth of published information on how the welfare of these animals and communities are connected.

Interest in animal welfare as a concept is rapidly increasing in Africa, and the time has come to define animal welfare in terms of development. It is well known that Africa is currently enjoying a period of immense growth across various sectors, notably infrastructure, energy and agriculture (food security). These massive changes and investments offer a perfect opportunity to entrench the place of animals and consequently their welfare along the continent's development spectrum. It is recognized that rapid development in Africa, especially regarding infrastructure, has implications for the environment and animals.

There is a need to understand how animal welfare relates to development, considering the implications these megatrends may have on the environment, people and animals. In order to further this understanding, the Africa Animal Welfare Conference was held between 2nd and 4th September 2019 at the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Delegates discussed the direct and indirect role of animals in contributing towards supporting the aspirations of the Africa Union Agenda 2063 and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa.

The theme of this conference was "Animals, Environment and Sustainable Development in 21st Century Africa: An Interlinked Approach". Within this broad framework, the presentations and discussions at the conference were organized around eight sub-themes, which were as follows:

The linkages between animal welfare and the SDGs the threats of the donkey-skin trade to animal welfare across Africa; the implications of climate change, technology, research and training on the achievement of SDGs; the threat posed by wildlife poaching and the bushmeat trade; the initiatives and opportunities presented by regional/inter-governmental organizations; the attainment of good health and wellbeing through improved animal and public health systems; the role of the UN Environment Program (UNEP) and the place of civil society in the UN; and strategies for improving the governance and funding of civil society organizations for greater impact.

Animal Welfare & SDGs

In the presentations it emerged that animal welfare impacts all seventeen SDGs at different levels. These linkages between animal welfare and SDGs are such that whereas few of SDGs explicitly reference animals, ecosystems, or the natural world, many benefit from animal welfare and wildlife conservation. As such, the consideration of animals and their welfare is a valuable instrument to improve the long-term success, sustainability and attainment of the SDGs and improve the lives of people and animals in a holistic manner.

Policy recommendations

In recognition of these linkages and the potential for animal welfare to contribute to the attainment of SDGs, it was recommended:

- *Undertake a continuous monitoring of evidence of contribution of good animal welfare, collation of this evidence into a compelling scientific rationale, and then packaging the message into narratives that can easily be taken up and utilized for decision making throughout the value chain of human-animal interactions.*

- *Build a bottom-up country-led implementation of animal wellbeing within development projects.*

Donkey Slaughter and Skin Trade

There is strong evidence that shows that the socio-economic value of donkeys far outweighs the value and returns from the donkey skin trade. Further to this, the entire trade and slaughter of donkeys has been demonstrated to pose serious animal welfare concerns especially in handling, transportation and the slaughter process. The movement of donkeys across borders and poor handling of waste is a factor in disease transmission including zoonotic diseases from animal to humans hence impacting both human and environmental health. Key examples included donkey slaughter and carcasses of donkey in bush, aborted donkey fetus and poor waste disposal at the slaughter house.

Despite this, some governments have legalized the slaughter of donkeys and the export of their skins (and meat) to meet demand in China. The legalization of donkey slaughter by some countries poses an immediate threat to donkey populations given that the rate of slaughter by far exceeds the natural reproduction rate. The licensing of donkey abattoirs coupled with illegal slaughter has also resulted in an increase in theft of donkeys from families that most need them, thereby pushing these families deeper into poverty.

Policy recommendation

To address these concerns, it was recommended that:

- *There is a need for more stringent regulation of international trade in donkey skins and meat forthwith, as this contributes to serious violations of animal welfare for donkeys and detrimental socio-economic impacts.*

Climate Change, Technology, Research & Training

Space-based technology offers a chance to improve animal welfare across the continent. There is also an opportunity to minimize the use of animals in educational programs which exposes thousands of animals to harmful practices. Training on animal welfare across several disciplines, especially in agricultural and animal

courses, can also help raise awareness while establishing a new breed of professionals who are more conscious of animal welfare.

The global climate emergency, exacerbated by human activities, is observed to increase the suffering of animals, at the cost of human development and environmental protection. There is also an acknowledged relationship between industrial agriculture and deforestation and biodiversity loss.

Policy recommendations

In recognition of these challenges and opportunities, it was recommended that:

- *All stakeholders at international, government, private, community and individual levels strive to find effective means and innovations to prevent and adapt to climate change, so as to mitigate against or reduce untold suffering on animals, people and their environment in Africa.*
- *Reform education policy to incorporate animal welfare as a cross-cutting issue in the development of a humane society and environmental protection,*
- *Incorporation of forestry in all discussions and interventions on wildlife conservation and animal welfare.*
- *Adopt ways of reducing suffering of animals which are subjected to inhumane conditions and circumstances used in development of technology, research, knowledge advancements and industrialization in Africa.*

Engagement with UN Environment

There was initial cynicism over the place of animal welfare within the United Nations Environment Program but this has since been overshadowed by rising recognition of the significance of animal welfare to the agenda of the UN. As such, the UN Environment Program and the bi-annual UN Environment Assembly now provide an ideal platform for the civil society to get the attention of UN Member States to address animal welfare issues. Whereas a number of civil society organizations are already engaging with UNEA, it has been noted that quite a number are only active in the period of the Assembly as they do not take part in setting the agenda for the assembly, nor in follow up to ensure resolutions

passed at the assembly are implemented in their countries.

Policy recommendation

To maximize on the opportunities presented both by UNEP and UNEA, it was recommended that:

- *Civil societies to table a resolution to UNEA through a member state that recognizes and affirms the contribution and*
- *significance of the welfare of animals to environmental protection, social justice and sustainable development of society.*

Bushmeat & Anti-Poaching

Illegal hunting of wildlife for bushmeat is prevalent in many countries across Africa. Most of the hunting methods used are cruel, inhumane and destructive. The demand for illegal bushmeat spreads across boundaries of countries and even continents and is driven by similar factors to other types of transboundary crimes. Bush meat was linked to compromising the achievement of SDGs especially one, eight and seventeen.

The most common types of destruction from bushmeat hunting is extinction of species, destruction of invaluable ecosystems and livelihoods - increases poverty - and risk to public health.

Policy recommendations

To address these concerns, it was recommended to:

- *Support the enforcement mechanisms for CITES, Convention on the Conservation on Migratory Species (CMS) and Ramsar Convention.*
- *Encourage an inclusive multi-sectorial approach in addressing illegal hunting including local communities.*
- *Undertake comprehensive research on poaching and the illegal bushmeat trade.*

Engagement with OIE, AU-IBAR

African intergovernmental organizations such as OIE, AU and IGAD are at the forefront in pushing for animal welfare on the continent. For instance, the Africa Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) spearheaded efforts to

develop the Animal Welfare Strategy for Africa as a way of consolidating synergy towards better Animal Welfare in Africa. Governments and Civil society in Africa are currently at various stages of domesticating the implementation of the Animal Welfare Strategy for Africa, coordinated through the Africa Platform for Animal Welfare (APAW). There is room to speed up and enhance the impact of their work.

Policy recommendations

In order to tap into the potential presented by these organizations, it was recommended that:

- *Governments support the implementation of the AWSA and the work of APAW, and mainstream animal welfare nationally.*
- *The resolutions of the conference to be shared with AU-IBAR for transmission to the member states.*

Attainment of Good Health & Well-Being Through Improved Animal & Public Health Systems

Factory farming poses numerous animal welfare, environmental and health challenges. Routine practices include extreme crowding, mutilations and production pressures that threaten animals' health and welfare. Farms facing disease outbreaks across the continent are using ineffective and cruel methods to cull affected or infected animals. There is needs to be strong measures to deal with our broken food and farming system, including an international policy agreement, standards and legislation.

Policy recommendations

In light of these challenges, it was recommended to:

- *Lobby governments for the enactment and enforcement of animal welfare standards and the adoption of international polices and standards on factory farming.*
- *Work towards a global agreement on regenerative agriculture, which is a conservation and rehabilitation approach to food and farming systems.*

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