



## Building a Resilient Future for Pastoralism - Exploring Commons, Climate, and Culture with a Youth Perspective

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India

Pastoralism, a traditional way of life that has been practised for centuries, **relies heavily on commons**—vast areas of land that cover over 54% of the Earth's surface. These lands, often unsuitable for traditional agriculture, are critical for the sustenance of pastoral communities. Beyond providing essential resources such as meat and milk, these regions are natural guardians of ecosystems. However, with **unpredictable climate patterns**—ranging from severe droughts and heatwaves to cyclones and erratic rainfall, glacier to land slides—pastoralists face increasing challenges that threaten their livelihoods, ecosystems, and cultures. Pastoralists' sustainable land use, efficient resource utilization, and mobility have historically enabled them to adapt to harsh conditions. These qualities are deeply rooted in their **cultural practices** and social structures, which emphasize livestock rearing and nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyles. Yet, today's younger generation faces a critical choice: maintain the traditions of pastoralism or pursue more modern lifestyles. This shift towards education and other career opportunities has created a knowledge gap, resulting in decreased transfer of traditional skills and understanding of the environment.

However, the **future of pastoralism** depends on youth, who are vital in balancing tradition with modernity. With their energy, flexibility, and openness to new technologies, they can ensure the sustainability of this ancient practice and occupation. In this context, the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) 2026 seeks to highlight the critical role pastoralists play in preserving cultural diversity, food security, and ecosystems. In preparation for IYRP 2026, SAPA (South Asia Pastoralist Alliance) proposes a **"Pastoralist Youth Fair" from June 21-23, 2024, in India**, bringing together approximately 100 plus young pastoralists from South and Central Asia. This event aims to foster knowledge exchange, collaboration, and discussion on issues related to **IYRP's themes of "Commons, Climate, and Culture."**

Despite their importance, pastoralists often have little representation in national or global policymaking, resulting in decisions that negatively impact their way of life. To address these gaps, the Maldhari Vikas Sangathan (MVS), emerging from the Maldhari Rural Action Group (MARAG), has organized the Pastoralist Parliament in Gujarat, India, since 2008. This unique initiative advocates for policy changes and proposes new initiatives to different Policy Commissions at Government level.

**The Pastoralist Parliament** serves as a platform where pastoralists can voice their concerns and engage in policymaking, emphasizing the inclusion of women and youth to strengthen their communities throughout the process. In preparation for IYRP 2026, SAPA, with the leadership and experience of MVS, plans to organize the next **Pastoralist Parliament alongside the Youth Consultation**. The goal is to foster community leadership and empower young pastoralists to advocate for their rights while preserving traditional practices. Emphasising "Commons, Climate, and Culture," these initiatives aim to create a knowledge hub for future generations and ensure a resilient future for pastoralism.

### **Strengths and Opportunities:**

Sustaining pastoralism is vital for several compelling reasons:

1. **Biodiversity Conservation:** Pastoralism promotes sustainable land use, contributing to the conservation of diverse ecosystems.
2. **Food Security:** It serves as a critical source of meat, milk, and other livestock products, enhancing food security in many regions.
3. **Cultural Diversity:** Preserving pastoralist traditions, languages, and identities enriches cultural diversity.
4. **Climate Resilience:** Pastoralism's adaptability to harsh environmental conditions sets an example for climate-resilient livelihoods.
5. **Rural Economy:** It stimulates the rural economy by generating employment opportunities and sustaining local markets.

### **Objectives:**

1. **Youth Empowerment:** Empower young pastoralists with knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to sustain and innovate within pastoral communities.
2. **Knowledge Exchange:** Facilitate the exchange of traditional and modern knowledge, strategies, and best practices among youth pastoralists.
3. **Celebration of Culture:** Celebrate the rich cultural heritage of pastoralism and promote pride in pastoral identity.
4. **Global Connectivity:** Foster connections among youth pastoralists from South Asian countries to create a regional network for mutual support and collaboration.
5. **Promotion of IYRP 2026:** Raise awareness about the significance of IYRP 2026 and the importance of pastoralism on a global scale.

### **Expected Outcomes:**

- Enhanced knowledge and skills among youth pastoralists.
- Strengthened networks and collaboration among young pastoralists.
- Increased awareness about the importance of pastoralism and IYRP 2026.
- Empowered youth pastoralists to take on leadership roles in their communities.

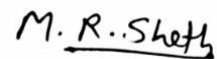
**Participation and Collaboration:**

SAPA invites young pastoralists aged 25-40 from South Asian countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka) and some Central Asian Countries to actively participate in this event. Along with the strong partnership of ILC – International Land coalition We also seek collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organizations, academic institutions, and partners interested in supporting youth pastoralists and sustainable pastoralism.

The SAPA Pastoralist Youth Fair 2024 is an opportunity to invest in the future of pastoralism in South Asia. By bringing together young pastoralists from across the region, we aim to celebrate their role as custodians of tradition and innovation. We look forward to your support and participation in this event, which will contribute to the sustainability and adaptability of pastoralism, not only in South Asian countries but also on a global scale. Together, we can ensure that the unique way of life cherished by pastoral communities, and the invaluable role of women within it, continues to thrive in the face of modern challenges.



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In 2015, SAPA emerged as a result of regional activities initiated by the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Pastoralists (WAMIP), with support from the FAO. During a global gathering, pastoralists, both individuals and groups, recognized the pressing need for a regional platform at the South Asian level to amplify their voices and collectively address regional issues. Presently, SAPA proudly boasts more than 25 members hailing from six South Asian countries, including India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka. This initiative is hosted by MARAG, one of the active and prominent members in India.

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