

Global Dialogue

Sustainable Mobility: Embracing Pastoralist Lifestyle

17th August 2023



Documented By: Advaita Dave
Supported By: Megha Seth

Table of Contents

Background:	1
Objective:	1
Participants:	1
Introduction:	2
Traditional Mobility Practices and Pastoralist Knowledge:	3
Policy and Advocacy for Sustainable Mobility:	4
Community Engagement and Empowerment under Pastoralist Mobility:	6
Challenges and Opportunities for Mobility in Pastoralist Communities:	7
International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) and its Relevance to Pastoralist Mobility:	8
Question & Answer Session:	10
Question 1:	10
Question 2:	11
Participant Comment:	11
Conclusion:	12

Background:

Pastoralism constitutes a time-honored lifestyle centered on tending livestock and utilizing grazing lands. Within South Asia, pastoralists adopt a range of strategies encompassing rangeland utilization, safeguarding, management, preservation, and conservation. Many of these pastoralists persist in their traditional way of life, which involves migrating alongside their animal herds. They have developed expertise in breeding and nurturing well-adapted breeds of animals like camels, cattle, sheep, goats, yaks, pigs, horses, and donkeys.

Through constant movement with their herds, pastoralists have honed the skill of being at the right place and time. Diverging from agricultural systems reliant on predictability and struggling to control natural settings, pastoralists gain advantages from the inherent variability of their environment. They select their locations based on the availability of grazing resources for their animals. This sustainable environmental approach hinges on the freedom of movement. To ensure the long-term viability of pastoralism, securing the mobility of these pastoral communities is imperative.

The mobility of pastoralists in South Asia stands as a distinct and venerable way of life, sculpted by the region's multifaceted geography and climatic conditions. Safeguarding this customary practice while tackling its challenges remains pivotal in upholding the ecological equilibrium and cultural diversity of the area.

Across South Asian nations including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and segments of Afghanistan and Bangladesh, pastoralist communities are prevalent. Embedded within the region's societal and cultural framework, their lifestyle has been molded by a diverse array of geographic and climatic elements.

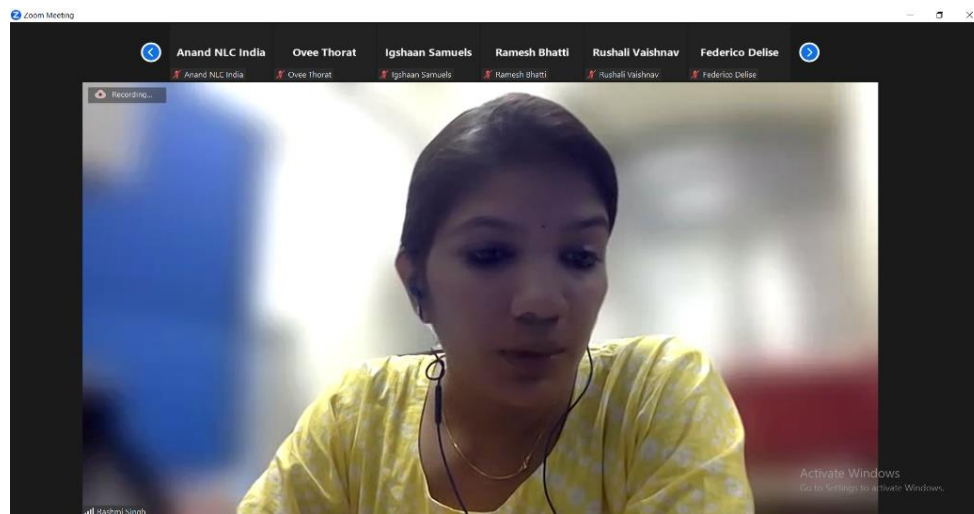
Objective:

- Enhanced understanding of pastoralist agendas and mobility, in line with the twelve thematic priorities of the IYRP 2026.
- Strengthened regional networking and improved collaboration among stakeholders to promote the recognition of pastoralists and their mobility.

Participants:

SAPA, acknowledging the declaration of IYRP 2026, collaborated with its host organization MRAG, along with a team comprising Dinesh Desai, Megha Seth and Advaita Dave to organize a worldwide webinar. Rashmi Singh moderated a session attended by approximately 65 individuals, who were participants representing India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Kyrgyzstan, Africa, Latin America, EMEA countries and other countries from the global. The

speakers for this event came from diverse nations such as Morocco, Ethiopia and Afghanistan.



Introduction:

SAPA is a vital platform in South Asia including India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Afghanistan that uplifts pastoralist voices and protects their rights. It emphasizes alliances, networking, knowledge sharing, governance and policy influence. With notable successes, SAPA strives to sustain pastoralism and pastoralists' rights in the region. In March 2022, the United Nations General Assembly declared 2026 as the International Year for Rangelands and Pastoralists, recognizing its significance in the context of food system transitions, nature conservation, climate adaptation and mitigation. IYRP serves as both a celebration and a communication and advocacy campaign aimed at raising global awareness about the crucial role of rangelands and pastoralists in ensuring global food security and climate mitigation. The visions of both SAPA and IYRP are interconnected, as they both aim to uphold pastoralism and protect the rights of pastoralists in the South Asia region.

Central to the livelihood of pastoralists is their mobility, enabling them to harness the benefits of seasonal variations and resources. They possess adeptness in managing uncertainty and have mastered the skill of adaptation, thriving in the face of diverse social, ecological and political unpredictabilities. Whether enduring the harsh weather of the cold deserts in South and Central Asia or the arid landscapes of Africa, pastoralists continue to oversee substantial livestock populations. The mobility of pastoralists is deeply ingrained in the generational wisdom of these communities, encompassing their local ecosystems, water availability, species preferences, and the intricate relationships between food and fodder for their animals. These patterns of mobility are interwoven with the social and cultural fabric of pastoral societies.

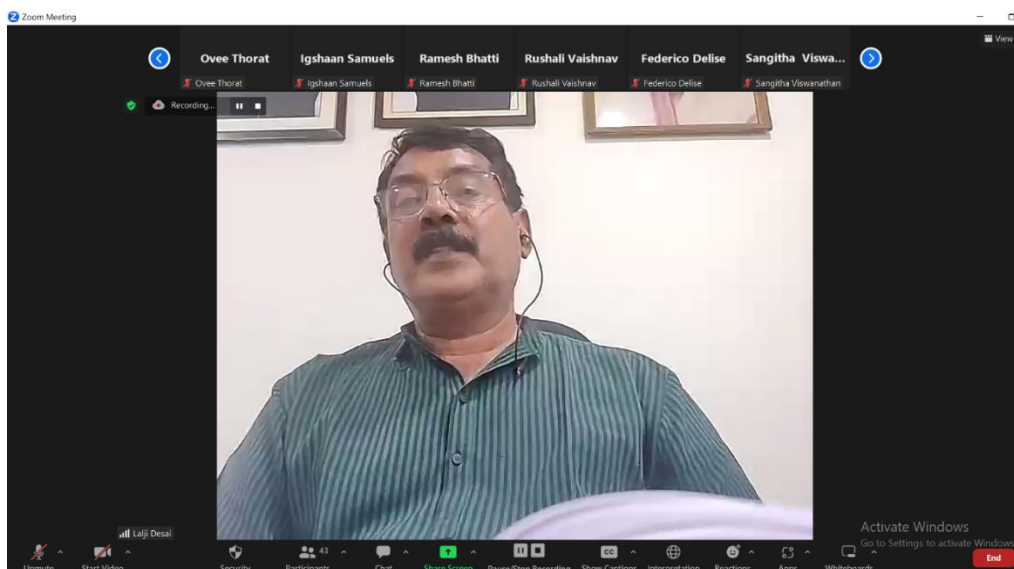
However, pastoral communities worldwide encounter constraints and limitations due to various factors. These include attempts to enhance control over pastoralist communities,

development projects and the emerging challenges posed by the transition to green energy, particularly across the vast expanses of Asia and Africa. Ensuring sustainable mobility for pastoralist communities is, indeed, a pressing concern that requires attention and action.

Traditional Mobility Practices and Pastoralist Knowledge:

Lalji Desai, an ardent social activist deeply rooted in Gandhian values and raised within the maldhari tradition, envisions a convergence of local community empowerment and global advocacy has come a long to speak up for pastoralists by his ingrained maldharin experiences. Having previously served as a Co-founder and Director of MARAG, he currently holds the position of General Secretary at WAMIP. He has been involved with notable organizations including FAO, ILC, VGGT. Furthermore, he actively advocates for land rights in the state of Gujarat.

Between 2007 and 2023, the predicament of pastoralists underwent significant phases marked by declarations such as the Sagovian and Mera declarations. Presentations made for esteemed bodies like FAO, ILC, and CSM (Civil Society Mechanism) underscored the alarming deterioration of their circumstances. Further he added, “This underlines the urgency for governments to acknowledge pastoralism as not only a way of life but also the world's second oldest occupation and culture. Policymakers must meticulously assess the impact of policies on pastoralism and pastoralists, considering their reliance on natural resources. Remedying these policies is crucial.”



The solutions to the plethora of issues faced by pastoralists are inherently tied to their distinctive way of life. Employment, climate, food, and energy crises culminate in a peace crisis catalyzed by the current development paradigm.

While the predicaments are widely debated, the remedies, embedded in pastoral practices, are often overlooked. Their interdependent way of life fosters harmony among all, yet modern technologies, machinery, and tools have marginalized traditional practices, eroding this harmony and interdependence. Factors such as restricted access to farmland, disrupted migratory routes, and the sale of common property resources by governments, coupled with dwindling access to forest lands, are detrimental to pastoralism.

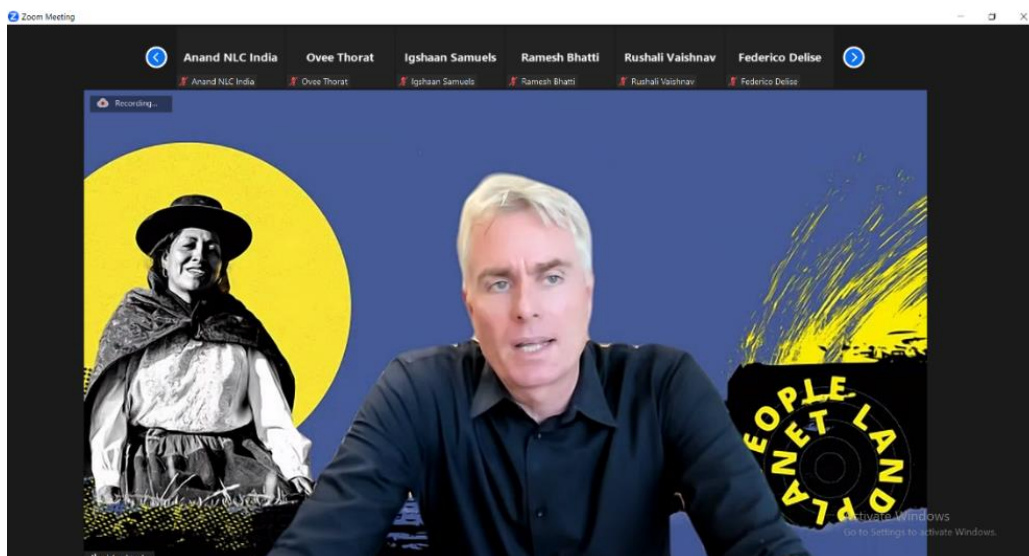
A cohesive pastoralist community is pivotal, but internal conflicts persist, such as those along the Kenyan-Tanzanian border and within India, where resource disputes hamper livelihoods.

The shift from decentralized to centralized systems has disrupted natural processes including feeding, breeding, and management, necessitating a reevaluation. It's imperative for authorities to elevate pastoralism from a local to a global perspective, ensuring the dissemination of information both locally and globally. By championing the struggles of activists, avenues can be discovered to navigate these challenges.

Policy and Advocacy for Sustainable Mobility:

Michael Taylor, situated in Botswana, holds the esteemed position of Global Secretary of the International Land Coalition. His professional background encompasses expertise in mobility and rangeland issues. With a remarkable background spanning 15 years of global engagement in human rights and environmental matters.

Drawing from his extensive experience, he astutely observes, "Most governments from all over the globe have mistaken the idea that mobility is damaging to dry lands and the best way to protect them is by fencing. This misconception, encapsulated in a detrimental approach, has regrettably hindered progress rather than advancing it, shaping policy decisions as well."



Fortunately, a pivotal opportunity has arisen in the form of the designation of 2026 as the International Year for Rangelands and Pastoralists. This global recognition provides a platform to transition from local efforts to a worldwide scale. Taylor highlights a framework for collective action that addresses the long-discussed changes. He substantiates this framework with three illustrative facets of the International Land Coalition's (ILC) work.

The initial facet entails showcasing tangible on-ground transformations that underscore the superiority of mobility for people, rangelands, livestock, and economies. Taylor cites the Tanzanian government as a beacon of progress, where collaborative efforts among local authorities, research institutions, and villages have resulted in the formulation of pastoralist rangeland management plans. The government's endorsement of these plans has yielded a noteworthy 50% reduction in internal conflicts.

The second facet revolves around leveraging data as a catalyst for change. Taylor acknowledges that flawed data can lead to misguided decisions and posits that while ample research supports the benefits of mobile pastoralism, practical support is lacking. He advocates empowering pastoralist organizations to independently gather, manage, and utilize data pertinent to their regions. This data-driven approach can persuade policymakers that pastoralists are integral to the solution, not the problem.

The third facet emphasizes the paramount significance of global advocacy. Taylor underscores the growing recognition of the roles played by indigenous people and pastoralists in international policy processes, benchmarks, events, and agreements. Despite this recognition, funding predominantly flows towards forests and indigenous communities rather than rangelands. Taylor contends that the window of opportunity demands ILC's unwavering commitment to elevate pastoralist voices in crucial dialogues at the global level.

Further elaborating, he concluded, "That's how to be working locally on data, globally with opportunities that we see. To promote visibility of the incredible role of pastoralism, particularly mobile pastoralism." He accentuated that the scope of change extends beyond mere global recognition, necessitating the allocation of the requisite funding and support. These measures, however, must transcend the realm of theory and manifest tangibly on the ground. He reiterated that effective collaboration remains the sole strategy to surmount the challenges at hand.

Fiona, a senior scientist expert in natural resource management and land governance, specializes in areas such as participatory land use planning, pastoralism, rangeland management, gender dynamics, and conflict resolution. Her current location is Rome, where she collaborates with IFDA under a partnership agreement. Fiona has dedicated considerable time to projects in East Africa, primarily in Ethiopia, and has also undertaken brief research assignments across various regions in Africa and Asia.

Quoting her words, she motivated the participants to consider "the role of advocacy and lobbying at different levels, from local to national to global. The International Year for

Rangelands and Pastoralists holds the potential for collective action. We are presented with an excellent opportunity to advance in this direction.”



Community Engagement and Empowerment under Pastoralist Mobility:

Amina stands as a staunch advocate for the rights of North African rangeland communities. She holds the esteemed position of Senior Fellow within the OH CHR Indigenous Representative program, having previously served as a member of the ILC Council from 2018 to 2021. Notably, she is also a founding member of the Feminist Land Platform. 9Current working organization)

Amina's discourse revolves around the critical engagement of pastoral communities. She underscores the pivotal role these communities play in safeguarding ecosystems and biodiversity. This engagement, she emphasizes, extends beyond their own ranks to encompass interaction with broader society. Recognizing the intricate web of livelihoods, resources, and purposes that unite us all, Amina accentuates the pastoral community's profound knowledge of territory and natural resources.

The concept of autonomy is intricate for pastoralists. Their way of life is defined by mobility, rendering them unable to establish static roots. Viewing this dynamic through the lens of pastoral perspectives is crucial. Amina contends that economic empowerment is also attainable for pastoralists and the communities they encounter during their journeys.

Expanding on this notion, Amina emphasized, "Land is linked with the land territories and natural resources. Pastoral people don't just have a particular territory or land to stay but they have their territory across multiple states or countries. This presents a contemporary challenge for pastoral communities."

She emphasizes that mobility acts as a gateway to diversity, complementarity, and prosperity for these communities. Amina calls for a paradigm shift in how governments perceive

pastoralists and their relationship with nature and climate. She underscores that nurturing our planet requires profound respect for the pastoralist way of life, acknowledging their indispensable role as "Guardians of the Planet."

In conclusion, Amina's discourse illuminates the urgency of granting pastoralists a genuine place and role within global frameworks. Her words resound with the call to preserve our planet by honoring the stewardship of pastoralist communities, recognizing them as indispensable custodians of the Earth.

Challenges and Opportunities for Mobility in Pastoralist Communities:

Dr. Ludin is an integral member of Afghanistan's National Pastoral Community, actively contributing to the food and nutrition agenda. His extensive efforts have focused on amplifying the voices of Afghanistan's pastoralists on the global stage. With a background of engaging with entities like the UN and various governmental agencies, he brings a wealth of experience to his advocacy work.

Dr. Ludin's insights into the challenges and prospects surrounding mobility within Afghanistan's pastoralist community were delivered via a comprehensive PowerPoint presentation. In Afghanistan, the migratory populace, commonly referred to as 'Kuchi,' constitutes the pastoralists. Notably, approximately 1.5 million pastoralists inhabit Afghanistan, each delineating distinct summer and winter areas for habitation. Some pastoralists' movements remain confined within a single province, with designated rangelands catering to each community. However, forest regions present restrictions to pastoralists accompanied by camels and goats due to potential harm to the forests.

Prominently, the summer rangelands predominantly lie in the northern regions, encompassing Badakhshan, while central regions like Ghazni also play host. Meanwhile, the western terrain of Badghis and the eastern territories of Kunar, Nangarhar, Kandahar, and Helmand become their winter havens.



Delving into the challenges faced by Afghanistan's pastoralist community, Dr. Ludin highlighted key areas that could see improvement and transformation through adept government policies. Addressing conflicts arising from territorial disputes between tribes, he acknowledged recent progress in conflict resolution. He highlighted issues such as the encroachment of fertile grazing lands by settled farming, limited access to water sources for herds, and the absence of recognition for traditional territories and communal land holdings. Furthermore, he stressed the lack of attention to improving living conditions, insufficient health and education provisions, shifting economic dynamics, and budget constraints due to international sanctions on Afghanistan.

Drought and climate change emerged as formidable challenges, exacerbated by the dearth of NGO cooperation. Communicable disease outbreaks like lumpy skin virus posed additional threats. Limited financial support from NGOs, especially in comparison to other sectors, hindered pastoralist development. Insufficient assistance in processing and marketing animal products, inadequate shelter, and water access further compounded their struggles. Dr. Ludin noted the need for fortified coordination among pastoral committees and networks.

Highlighting avenues for potential support, Dr. Ludin pointed to SAPA's role. This encompassed establishing a robust regional network for consistent advocacy events, disseminating pertinent informational resources to pastoralists, and creating a pastoralist knowledge hub to bridge knowledge gaps. He emphasized the paramount importance of evidence-based, targeted policies tailored to the pastoralist system's unique needs.

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) and its Relevance to Pastoralist Mobility:

Dr. Igshaan Samuels serves as a specialist researcher within the Rangeland Forage Science Unit of the Agricultural Research Council, focusing on rangeland ecology and management. With a rich two-decade history in the realm of drylands pastoralist systems, he's garnered expertise in this field. Notably, Dr. Samuels holds the co-chair position for the International Support Group, a vital entity facilitating the United Nations-declared International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists in 2026.

Highlighting the strategic timeframe, he articulated, "From now to the year 2026 is the best opportunity to advocate for the rights of pastoralists. Advocating for healthy arrangements sustains resilience in life at large. It is also true that this endeavour caters to 2 to 300 million pastoralists and supports the livelihoods of around 2 billion people reliant on pastoral products. Hence, this opportunity is significant. Our aim is not solely to commemorate the international year of rangelands and pastoralists, but to also contribute meaningfully to amplify the voices, address the calls, and tackle the issues and challenges faced by pastoralists on a global scale."

Dr. Samuels provides a rationale for the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) celebration and its global necessity. These reasons encompass fostering a broader

comprehension of rangelands and pastoralists' role in food security, economics, the environment, and cultural heritage. Additionally, dispelling myths and misunderstandings, bridging knowledge gaps through participatory research and communication, promoting science-backed policies, and encouraging ethical investments are key objectives.

Offering insights into the diversity of world regions and their respective species, Dr. Samuels introduces the IYRP's structure. This encompasses the General IYRP e-list, serving as a communication channel, followed by the International Support Group comprising 415 active partners. A crucial decision-making body, the Global Coordinating Group, includes representatives from FAO, Government of Mongolia, ILRI, IUCN, UNEO, and WAMIP.

The IYRP 2026 agenda outlines eight priority actions, calling upon the UNCCD Conference of the Parties for their adoption.

1. Stop indiscriminate conversion of rangelands
2. Recognize the importance of pastoral mobility
3. Innovate and implement beneficial economic policies and technologies
4. Promote integrated, multifunctional land use
5. Strengthen participatory land governance and equity.
6. Increase rangeland and pastoral projects under the LDN funds by 30%.
7. Commit LDN targets to rangelands and pastoralism
8. Earmark 25% of the LDN fund for knowledge and capacity building.

Dr. Samuels further details the thematic themes for IYRP 2026, outlining a diverse and comprehensive celebration that encompasses various aspects of rangelands and pastoralists on a monthly basis.

The image is a screenshot of a Zoom meeting interface. The main content is a slide titled "Thematic themes" for the "INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISTS 2026". The slide features a circular diagram with 12 months, each with a specific theme:

- JANUARY: Who are pastoralists?
- FEBRUARY: Securing mobility and access
- MARCH: Social and economic services
- APRIL: Climate change and resilience
- MAY: Biodiversity and ecosystem services
- JUNE: Soils, water and land use
- JULY: Sustainable livestock consumption
- AUGUST: Indigenous knowledge and culture
- SEPTEMBER: Sustainable livestock production
- OCTOBER: Pastoralist women
- NOVEMBER: Pastoralist youth
- DECEMBER: Sustainable technologies and innovation

 The slide also includes an illustration of a herd of animals grazing. To the right of the slide, there is a list of participants: Lajji Desai, Rashmi Singh, sumant Vyas, and Amrina AMHARECH. At the bottom right, there is a chat window with messages from Rashid Mohamed, Micheal Taylor, and Mariana Quiroga Mendiola. The chat messages include: "if possible, kindly Micheal Taylor contact!", "I must go to another meeting. I'm very grateful to hear you all, thank you very much!", and "Who can see your messages? Recording On".

Concluding his discourse, Dr. Samuels highlights IYRP's contributions at the UNCCD, particularly in advocating for legal recognition and enforcement of pastoral mobility across national boundaries. He underscores the necessity of legal status for land users and communities managing common property tenure, as well as investments in mobile-friendly pastoral infrastructure, such as water and electricity supply corridors. Dr. Samuels advocates for the provision of mobile-friendly livestock infrastructure through mobile phones and internet coverage, catering to pastoralists' needs for communication, forecasts, and services like health and social welfare.

Question & Answer Session:

The webinar concluded with a productive question-and-answer session, fostering an exchange of ideas and further enriching the knowledge shared during the event.

Question 1:

Ovee Thorat raised the query of effectively addressing the fixation of government research bodies in India on measurable carrying capacity and conventional practices. How can practical advocacy for more realistic alternatives be achieved, fostering collaboration among state and non-state entities?

Igshaan's Perspective:

Igshaan highlighted that similar challenges are encountered by the IYRP. He emphasized the importance of translating scientific evidence that showcases the value of mobile pastoralists into a language understood by policymakers and decision-makers. This step is crucial as not everyone possesses the same scientific background. He further stressed the significance of collaborative efforts, demonstrating superior rangeland management options instead of engaging in direct confrontation. Igshaan provided the example of IYRP's collaboration with forest working groups, even when opposing rangeland-to-forest conversion. The aim is to showcase a diverse range of benefits for rangelands, including benefits for agro-pastoralists.

Fiona's Perspective:

Fiona underscored the value of collaboration in solving challenges. She advised against mere criticism without a willingness to work jointly on solutions. She suggested leveraging entry points that provide technical support and facilitate overcoming existing challenges. Fiona acknowledged that building lasting relationships is essential, although hurdles such as changes in government staff might arise. She encouraged establishing connections with allies within governmental and non-governmental bodies, using these partnerships as a starting point for shifting perspectives and jointly finding solutions.

Outcome:

The Q&A session sheds light on how to tackle rigid government approaches. Igshaan emphasizes translating scientific evidence for policymakers and promoting alternative strategies. Fiona adds that collaboration, not criticism, is key, advocating for lasting

partnerships to drive change and collaborative solutions. The session highlights the importance of joint efforts in addressing challenges.

Question 2:

Dr. Rajeev inquired about the available solutions to address the challenge of inadequate education among mobile pastoralist children due to their migratory lifestyle. Furthermore, how can we counter the lack of awareness about their rights and the potential issues they confront, including exploitation?

Igshaan's Perspective:

Igshaan emphasized the significance of addressing the broader social service needs of mobile pastoralist communities. For children's education, he suggested the concept of mobile schools in specific locations where the herds temporarily settle seasonally. Although implementing such solutions is challenging due to logistical reasons, it could be an effective approach. He also mentioned the potential of remote learning and online education through broadband coverage in pastoral areas. Igshaan acknowledged the complexity of the issue but stressed the need for sustained efforts to find solutions, pointing out mobile clinics and remote learning as impactful possibilities.

Amina's Perspective:

Amina added to the conversation by highlighting the advocacy challenges associated with pastoralist rights. She noted that while efforts are made to raise awareness about these issues, a communication gap often leads to governments misinterpreting these efforts as rebellious claims. Amina provided the example of Morocco, where policies like regionalization have restricted pastoralists' ability to migrate across borders. Although some relaxation has been granted, this has led to a shift towards industrial pastoralism that disregards environmental conservation. Amina underlined how governments might use highlighted issues against pastoralist communities, further complicating the situation.

Outcome:

The webinar shed light on the complex challenges faced by mobile pastoralist communities, particularly in the domains of education and rights. Igshaan's insights demonstrated that solutions like mobile schools and remote learning hold potential for addressing the education gap. Amina's contribution underscored the delicate balance between advocacy and potential misinterpretation by governments, highlighting the need for strategic communication.

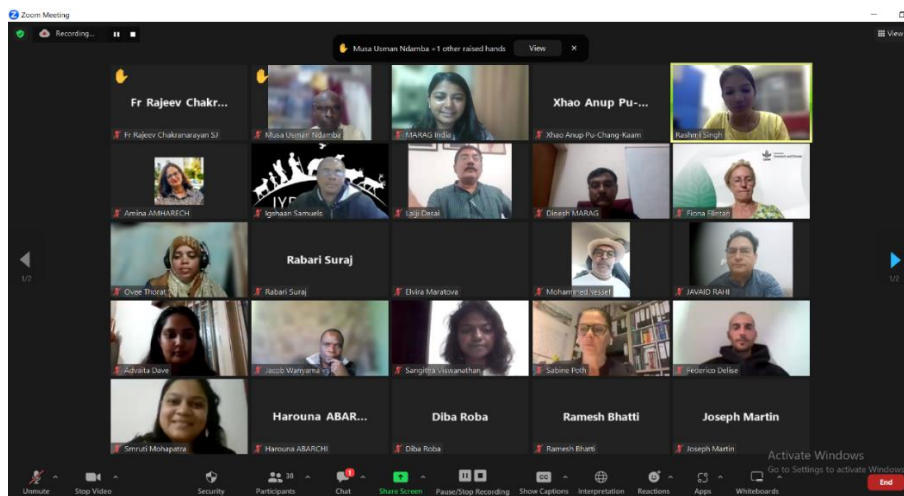
Participant Comment:

Elvira, a participant from Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia, shared her insights on addressing children's education among remote pastoral communities. In her country, they have established pastoral kindergartens to cater to children during the summer months when families move to remote mountain areas. This initiative addresses the education needs of these children while also addressing the lack of employment for village workers during this

time. Teachers from local schools rotate to these kindergartens, staying for a few weeks at a time and then alternating for pastoral communities. The pastoral people contribute to the teachers' salaries from their earnings, creating a mutually beneficial cooperation.

Conclusion:

Rashmi Singh brought the webinar to a close by sharing an impactful anecdote from Jammu & Kashmir. She highlighted the Ministry of Tribal Affairs' initiation of over 31 schools for tribal communities, underscoring her recent visit to the region. She also mentioned the collaborative efforts of IYRPR, South Asia, in partnership with the Ministry, wherein a two-day workshop was organized.



Moreover, she underscored the significance of shared learning and experiences, envisioning an ongoing partnership across diverse platforms and organizations. The goal is to collectively advocate for pastoralists and their pivotal role in shaping policy decisions. With enthusiasm for the upcoming year 2026, She conveyed sincere appreciation to all participants for their active involvement in the webinar, extending gratitude not only from herself but also from the organizing entity, MARAG, for orchestrating this valuable and productive session.

