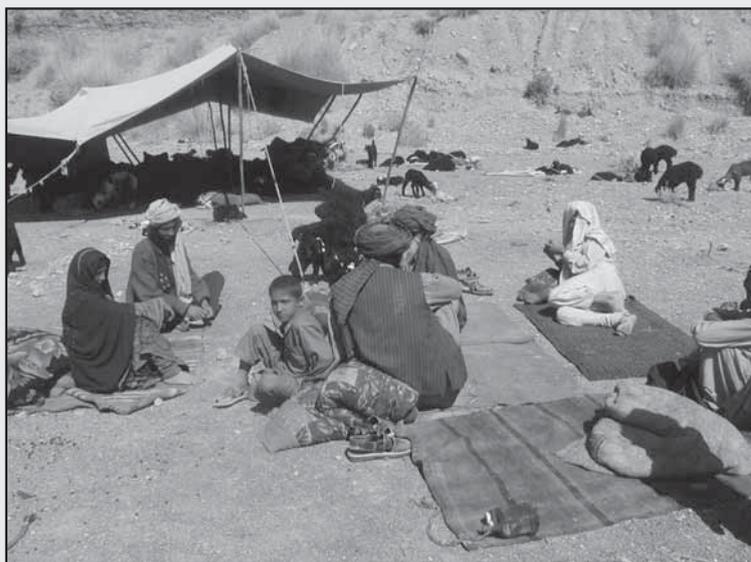


# People in Conservation

## *Biodiversity Conservation and Livelihood Security*

Volume 3 Issue 3 May 2011



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## Editorial

This issue of *People in Conservation* is dedicated to the **Pastoral Community**. These communities depend on land for maintaining and grazing their livestock (camel, sheep, cattle, etc.). Many of them are also nomadic. Pastoralist communities<sup>1</sup> are spread across the globe. In the Indian context they are not very well documented or researched (although more information is available on some of them, for e.g. the Gaddis, also known as Pahari Bahrauri, who live in northern states of India like Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Punjab; or the Changpas in the south-eastern region of Ladakh and who are involved in cross border trade with Tibet). Maintaining animals is considered to be a sacred duty prescribed for certain communities. For instance the Yadavas (Gujjar community) who tend cattle consider themselves to be the descendents of Lord Krishna. Myth apart, livestock rearing is also a low-input production system that produces organic manure, meat, milk, wool, other animal products, and of course more livestock (and thus providing a secure source for future livelihoods). The animals within such systems “have evolved in constant interaction with their environment and are the result of intensive natural and cultural selection<sup>2</sup>”. They tend to be able to survive on scarce and scattered natural vegetation, are disease and drought resistant, generate a wide variety of products and also help maintain the ecological balance (provided their breeding and grazing patterns are not disturbed by hostile influences or natural calamities). Most importantly, pastoral communities play a seminal role in facilitating breed diversity.

However, there are also many challenges that these communities face. Breed diversity is slowly decreasing. One of the main reasons for this is the exclusion of these low-input production systems from otherwise traditional grazing areas (for example from National Parks). Some of the other threats that beset these communities are competition from industrial systems of livestock breeding (which also lead to monoculture of genetically narrow breeds, thus also threatening animal genetic diversity), original pasturelands being converted for plantations (*Eucalyptus*, *Jatropha*), exclusion of pastoralists from forestry programs, and last but not the least, challenges posed by processes of market-driven globalization.

Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nation (FAO) has also expressed concerns. Much needs to be done to mitigate the negative impacts of the aforementioned challenges. The role of the government, in terms of providing an enabling environment by putting in place policies that sustain livestock keepers, protect their rights and production systems, and facilitate biodiversity

conservation, cannot be ignored. Unless this happens, there is little hope of restoring grazing land (and associated rights) to these communities. And yet, there is little or no progress on official pastoral development policies and in fact both the Ministry of Agriculture and Ministry of Environment are remarkable for their anti-pastoralist stance.

On a more positive note, it is a heartening fact that LIFE Network, a group of non-governmental organizations and individuals who support community conservation of livestock breeds have developed the concept of **Livestock Keepers’ Rights**, which seek “to strengthen and reinforce the role of communities in the conservation and sustainable use of local breeds<sup>3</sup>”. These have been arrived at as a result of extensive consultations with livestock keepers in Asia, Africa and elsewhere and are grounded in existing and emerging legal frameworks, especially the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD).

There have been other positive developments too, such as the development of the Bio-cultural Protocol of the Raika community in Rajasthan - as a means for claiming status as indigenous and local communities embodying traditional life-styles, or the global gathering of pastoralist women to assert their rights to claim resources in the face of customary mechanisms that typically recognize claims by male heads of households only, or the pastoralist exchange program in Rajasthan where discussions were held on how the Forest Rights Act, 2006, can be used to secure grazing rights in forest areas.

While this issue of *People in Conservation* is devoted to the cause of Pastoral communities, it also covers some other important developments in the country in the arena of Livelihoods and Conservation.

read on,

**Milind**

1. For a more detailed study on this issues please read: <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/r4d/PDF/outputs/ZC0181b.pdf>

2. Policy Matters, October 2010, Livestock Keepers’ Rights: A Rights-Based Approach to invoking Justice for Pastoralists and Biodiversity Conserving Livestock Keepers, Ilse Kohler-Rollefsen and Evelyn Mathia.

3. Ibid.

## 1. News and Analysis

### MoEF does a flip-flop on Critical Wildlife Habitat (CWH) guidelines

In February 2011, the MoEF issued a new set of guidelines on CWH, replacing a set issued in 2007. The earlier guidelines had specified steps to ensure due democratic and knowledge-based processes. Additional guidance was provided in 2008-09 by several conservation and social action groups as part of the Future of Conservation Network. Most recently, the Committee on the Forest Rights Act<sup>4</sup> (FRA), set up by MoEF and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA), had also recommended proper processes for CWHs. The revised February guidelines, however, ignored all this. They required local forest officials to identify and propose CWHs within six months, overlooking the fact that they lack the ecological understanding required to identify habitat that are critical for wildlife for most protected areas, and few officials have the means or the inclination to invite independent expertise.

The earlier guidelines required gram sabha consultations during the process of determination of CWH, even specifying that all relevant information must be provided to the people in local languages. This provided the possibility of local community knowledge and expertise being plugged into the determination of the extent and boundaries of the proposed CWH. The revised guidelines provided absolutely no space for community involvement in the identification or determination phase. These guidelines would in fact have led to violations of the FRA, as states would have scrambled to meet the deadline of six months. However, on March 4, 2011, members of civil society made representations to the ministry and stated that the process of identification and notification of critical wildlife habitat and the consequent processes of co-existence, modification of rights, or relocation of people from such areas required more time and had to be compliant to the provisions of the FRA.

As a result, the MoEF withdrew the February guidelines and on May 4, 2011 issued a further revised set of guidelines based on suggestions from the civil society. Section 3 of these guidelines deal with the "RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE FRA, 2006 FOR DETERMINATION OF THE CRITICAL WILDLIFE HABITAT". Sub-sections 3.1 and 3.2 make clear that issues "relating to the determination of CWH and allied issues, in National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries..." are to follow section 2(b), 4 (1) & (2) of the FRA, and also stress that, "As per section 2(b), a CWH may only be determined and notified after an open process of consultation by an Expert Committee, which includes experts from the locality appointed by the State...". Section 3.5 (e) of these guidelines also stress on the need to ensure that "free informed consent of Gram Sabha has been

obtained in writing to the proposed resettlement and the package".

The guidelines are currently being looked into by all concerned. The detailed guidelines are available at [http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/Draft\\_CWH\\_Guidelines\\_May\\_2011.pdf](http://moef.nic.in/downloads/public-information/Draft_CWH_Guidelines_May_2011.pdf)

**Contributor:** Ashish Kothari  
(email: [ashishkothari@vsnl.com](mailto:ashishkothari@vsnl.com))

**Address:** Apt. 5, Shree Dutta Krupa, 908 Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 411004, Maharashtra, India.

**Web-site:** [www.kalpavriksh.org](http://www.kalpavriksh.org)

### Second victory for Mendha-Lekha village in Gadchiroli (Maharashtra)

The Mendha-Lekha village in Gadchiroli District has gained much recognition in past years for various reasons. It became a model village for its pioneering initiatives in introducing practices like consensus-based decision-making involving all adult members of village gram sabha, transparent accounting system, liquor ban, community based protection & management of surrounding 1800 ha of forests; etc.

Mendha-Lekh has also been in news for being India's first village to have been granted recognition of its "right to protect, regenerate or conserve or manage" - the aforementioned 1800 ha forest - under section 3(1)i of the FRA on August 15, 2010. (Ref: People in Conservation, Vol 2, Issue 3, October 2009). However, despite this, the forest department (FD) denied them their right to harvest bamboo even though their rights patta (document) clearly recognizes "rights to Nistar and MFP". After much resistance from the FD when it was established that their right to harvest and sell bamboo was indeed recognized, the forest department refused to issue Transit Permit (TP) for the same (which is only meant for timber and nationalized forest resources). This despite the fact that bamboo has been defined as a Minor Forest Produce (MFP) in the FRA and hence does not require TP! Things did not improve even after a letter from the Minister of Environment and Forests (MoEF) to the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, clearly stating that bamboo has been defined as a MFP and that in forest areas where rights have been granted, TP should be given by the gram sabha and that FD should take all relevant steps to ensure this. The situation was finally resolved when the Minister MoEF and the CM of Maharashtra visited the village on the 27th of April 2011 and personally handed over the TP to the gram sabha.

**Contributor:** Neema Pathak Broome  
(email: [neema.pb@gmail.com](mailto:neema.pb@gmail.com))

**Address:** Apt. 5, Shree Dutta Krupa, 908 Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 1411004, Maharashtra, India.

**Web-site:** [www.kalpavriksh.org](http://www.kalpavriksh.org)

4. Officially known as The Scheduled Tribes and Other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights) Act, 2006.

## 2. Workshop and Dialogue

### 13th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of Commons (IASC)

The 13th Biennial Conference of the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC) was organized in Hyderabad (India) in January 2011 (10<sup>th</sup> to 14th January 2011). In order to explore the issues related to the conservation of the commons by the local and indigenous communities, and to understand recent legal developments on the same in India - two events were organized by Kalpavriksh during the IASC. A side event entitled **The Commons and Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas (ICCAs)** was jointly organized by Kalpavriksh, the ICCA Consortium, and the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), on January 12, 2011. The second event - a **Policy Forum** session on the issue of Forest Rights, Community Forest Rights & Management /Community Conserved Area was jointly organized by Kalpavriksh and FES on the January 14, 2011.

The side event - The Commons and Indigenous and Community Conserved Areas - hosted a panel of speakers, spanning the environment and Indigenous Rights world. The purpose of this event was to address current issues relating to ICCAs and their relationship to the Commons. The event saw discussions on issues related to the current frameworks for supporting ICCAs and also sought to critically examine the status, threats and needs of ICCAs. ICCA examples from across the world were presented and there was much discussion, sharing of knowledge and understanding. The event saw the participation of a culturally and politically diverse group of speakers.

Presentations were made on the issues, challenges and achievements of ICCAs from diverse cultures and geographies like Somaliland, Mexico, Nepal, Malaysia, sub-Saharan Africa, Kenya and India. Some of the issues that got discussed were relating to: problems in the limitations of existing terminology, issues relating to need for developing realistic approaches/expectations to/from ICCAs, issues relating to lack of social and legal recognition of ICCAs, threats (for e.g. those posed by governments claiming the land for development of natural resources, privatization), colonial legacies of governance, issues relating to community empowerment and dependencies, and those relating to Bio-cultural protocols (BCP) and their value.

As far as the Indian situation is concerned, some of the main things that got discussed were relating to strategies on how to develop BCPs, how existing laws like the FRA can be implemented more effectively in order to realize their full potential for bringing about a community rights based approach towards conservation & CCA management - so as to overcome existing institutional barriers created by colonial legacies of governance and

conventional state structures. Ways of encouraging governments for incentivizing conservation and documenting the process of social movements within ICCAs were also discussed.

The discussions during the Policy Forum – Forest Rights Act, Community Forest Rights & Management/Community Conserved Areas – incorporated broader issues from the afore-mentioned side event. However, it also had a particular focus upon the Indian Forest Rights Act (FRA), particularly its implications vis-à-vis ICCAs. It hosted five speakers who raised specific points and sought to explore how the Act could be used (and replicated across world) as an example of a socially rooted model for acquiring rights/tenure over **Commons** – especially those pertaining to natural resources in parts of the world where such transformations are difficult to achieve. It also explored the experiences in policy formulation relating to ICCAs that are available from other countries, which are relevant to India, while also looking at the internal and external challenges faced by ICCAs. This was followed by an interactive discussion with the audience.

**Contributor:** Milind Wani (email: kvoutreach@gmail.com))

**Address:** Apt. 5, Shree Dutta Krupa, 908 Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 1411004, Maharashtra, India.

**Web-site:** www.kalpavriksh.org

### A consultation in Nandadevi Biosphere Reserve (NDBR)

In continuation with the series of consultations initiated by Kalpavriksh and the Wildlife Institute of India (WII), aimed at working out a conservation and livelihood security strategy encompassing the Nandadevi and Askot landscape in Uttarakhand, two meetings were organized in Joshimath on 28-29th April 2011. One was organized for local communities in the Nandadevi area, in collaboration with Alliance for Development; the other was for forest staff, in collaboration with the Nandadevi Biosphere Reserve authorities. In both, there was also participation of civil society organizations, researchers of WII, Indian Institute of Forest Management, Van Panchayat representatives from Askot Sanctuary & surrounds and Binsar Sanctuary & surrounds. Representatives of WII and Kalpavriksh helped to anchor both meetings. A number of issues came up during these meetings, many concerning the impacts that 5- 6 villages located in the immediate vicinity of the national park face, particularly because of restrictions on resource collection and tourist trekking routes. An issue that became the central focus with the communities, including those of villages Lata and Reni - which were at the forefront of the Chipko movement of the 1970s, was the construction of hydroelectric projects all along the Ganga Catchment. The contradiction in government policies which restrict people from accessing resources or using

trekking routes but allow such projects despite people's opposition and ecological and geological concerns is strongly resented by the local people. Increased human-wildlife conflicts in Uttarakhand also came up as a major concern. People also questioned science and scientists, who are quick to restrict people's access, but never ready to show the actual impacts of such projects. Some of the recommendations after the two days of discussion were:

1. Prioritizing benefits for the most impacted 5-6 villages in Nandadevi Biosphere Reserve,
2. Identifying some villages as pilot for dealing with human-wildlife conflict situations,
3. Requesting regulated opening of some of the trekking routes and giving management powers for the same to the local villages,
4. Establishing regular and institutionalized dialogues between the forest department and the people,
5. Creating awareness in the villages about the Forest Rights Act and initiating appropriate processes,
6. Encouraging villagers to initiate a holistic planning process in each village rather than planning for individual schemes of the government line agencies,
7. Exploring various options for a landscape level management and decision-making body for the area.

**Contributor:** Neema Pathak Broome  
(email: neema.pb@gmail.com)

**Address:** Apt. 5, Shree Dutta Krupa, 908 Deccan Gymkhana, Pune 1411004, Maharashtra, India

**Web-site:** www.kalpavriksh.org

### **National Workshop on management of Community Forest Resources under Forest Rights Act (FRA)**

Vasundhara and Kalpavriksh together organized a national workshop on the provision for Community Forest (resource) Rights (CFRs) under Forest Rights Act in Bhubaneswar on the 26th and 27th of March 2011. The workshop was an attempt to bring together forest-dwelling communities and representatives of civil society organizations. Participants shared experiences relating to claims of CFRs under the FRA and also discussed ideas on the intricacies of CFR management including institutions required for the purpose.

#### **Emerging issues**

There is a lack of knowledge and technical support for CFR claims. There is a need for training and awareness building. In a number of states, the constitution of Forest Rights Committee (FRC) has taken place without adequate representation and participation from tribals, women and other forest dependent people. This has affected the claims process. The process of community claims, verification, mapping and provision of necessary evidence has not received the required structural support from the government.

Some of the key recommendations that came out of the workshop are as follows:

1. Recognition of claims on CFR should be made on a priority basis,
2. Necessary training and awareness support should be provided by the government with the help of civil society groups to all relevant actors involved to help the claims process,
3. Necessary changes and amendments need to be brought about in the existing government laws, policies and programs on forest management to bring them in line with the objectives of the FRA,
4. The Joint Forest Management (JFM) program has to be withdrawn to address the conflicts arising with the FRA process,
5. Necessary inputs and support needs to be provided to the gram sabhas in order to develop them as empowered authorities for management and conservation of community forest resources,
6. Guidelines on how to make development projects involving diversion of forestland compliant with the provisions of the FRA need to be issued by the MOEF,
7. Violations of the FRA in protected areas -particularly the relocation process need to be monitored and stopped,
8. Take relevant steps towards implementing the recommendations of the central Committee on FRA and the National Advisory Council (NAC).

**Contributors:** Tushar Dash  
(email: tushardash01@gmail.com),  
Vasundhara and Sreetama Guptabhaya  
(email: sreetama.gb@gmail.com), Kalpavriksh.

**Address:** Vasundhara, A-70, Saheed Nagar, Bhubaneswar, Pin 751007, Bhubaneswar, Odisha/Kalpavriksh C/O 7, Sector 15 A (second Floor), Noida 201301 (UP), Kalpavriksh, Noida, India.

**Web-site:** <http://www.vasundharaorissa.org>,  
<http://www.kalpavriksh.org>

### **Pastoralists' exchange Program in Rajasthan**

KRAPAVIS, an NGO that works with pastoralists in Rajasthan, organized a pastoralist's exchange program in Bakhtpura, Rajasthan, from 26th to 28th February 2011. The participating organizations were KRAPAVIS, Sewa Mandir, Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan (LPPS) and Anthra. Narsimlu, Yellesh, Muthyalu and Pentagoud, all of whom belong to the Shepherds Sangham (Medak district), also participated.

Speakers from among the shepherd community discussed and exchanged experiences on using the Forest Rights Act, 2006, to secure grazing rights in forest areas, applications of ethno-veterinary medicine, and other common concerns. Shepherds from Andhra Pradesh

shared how they have mapped the grazing areas involving shepherds and other livestock rearers of all the villages who graze their livestock in a particular area and are using the maps and the information to work with their gram sabhas to confirm their community rights to the forests. The shepherds who are also traditional healers shared their experiences in using herbal medicines to cure human diseases, the problems faced in collecting medicinal plants and the need to encourage young people in applying the knowledge. The entire team also visited the nearby forest area and studied the local medicinal plants and discussed their uses.

For more details please write to Aman Singh, KRPAVIS at: [krpavis\\_oran@rediffmail.com](mailto:krpavis_oran@rediffmail.com).

**Source:** <http://www.anthra.org/news.php?id=35>

### **Bio-cultural Community Protocol (BCP) for Pastoralists**

In June 2009, the Raika pastoralists of Kumbhalgarh, Rajasthan developed the Raika Bio-cultural Community Protocol<sup>5</sup> (BCP). Such protocols are a means for communities to claim status as indigenous and local communities embodying traditional life-styles relevant for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity under paragraph 8j of the CBD. This convention obliges its signatory governments to respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of such communities.

BCPs are the brainchild of the South Africa based NGO Natural Justice that came up with this idea to enable communities to claim their bio-cultural rights. Community protocols are also referred to under the Nagoya Protocol on Access and benefit-Sharing that was agreed upon in October 2010 at the 10th meeting of the parties to the CBD, and that is set to become binding international law.

The Raika pastoralists who are amongst the first to compile a BCP, reside in a string of villages at the edge of the Aravali Hills in Pali District of Rajasthan. They practice a mobile lifestyle. Traditionally herding sheep and goats, but also camels and the local Nari cattle breed, the Raika have extensive traditional knowledge in managing the eco-system and in retaining a long-term balance between their herds and the vegetation (for instance the browsing of camels on the trees actually stimulates their growth). The Raika's have also taken the responsibility of preventing forest fires by keeping the grass short, and helping to extinguish fires if they do occur. The BCP lists other environmental services as well.

But although the Raika view themselves as custodians of the forest, this perspective is not shared by the Forest Department. The latter has stopped issuing grazing

5. [http://www.pastoralpeoples.org/docs/Raika\\_Biocultural\\_Protocol.pdf](http://www.pastoralpeoples.org/docs/Raika_Biocultural_Protocol.pdf)



Camel herding by Bhanwartal (Raika)

Photograph by Ilse Köhler-Rollefson

permits since 2003, under an order of the Centrally Empowered Committee of the Supreme Court of India. A lengthy legal battle for grazing rights is being fought at both the Rajasthan High Court and the Supreme Court. For a while, the Raika staked their hopes on the Forest Rights Act, but implementation of this law has also proven problematic. Kumbhalgarh Sanctuary is to be soon converted into a National Park. It will be interesting to see what value the Raika Bio-cultural protocol will be accorded in the emerging scenario and whether there is the will to utilize their unique traditional knowledge into the management plans for the park to be.

**Contributors:** Hanwant Singh Rathore, Director, Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan, Sadri) and Ilse Köhler-Rollefson (email: [ilse@pastoralpeoples.org](mailto:ilse@pastoralpeoples.org)), Projects Coordinator, League for Pastoral Peoples and Endogenous Livestock Development.

**Address:** Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan, P.O. Box 1, Sadri 306702, District Pali, Raj/Butibagh, Sadri 306702, District Pali, Rajasthan, India.

**Web-site:** <http://www.pastoralpeoples.org>; [http://www.pastoralpeoples.org/docs/Raika\\_Biocultural\\_Protocol.pdf](http://www.pastoralpeoples.org/docs/Raika_Biocultural_Protocol.pdf)

## **3. Case Studies**

### **Shepherding communities of the Deccan Plateau**

The Deccan plateau of south central India is one of the driest parts of the country. Crop rearing is precarious and rural livelihoods are heavily dependent on livestock. For hundreds of years, shepherding groups like the Kurumas, Kurubas, Gollas and Dhangars have traditionally reared sheep and goats. Some of them practice agriculture during the four monsoon months from June to September. As the rains recede these groups migrate with their animals to where fodder is available. Over time, these groups have developed strong relations with settled farming communities who trade agricultural produce in return

for dung, milk, meat and wool from the shepherds. Allied livelihoods have also developed around these communities such as the spinning of wool and weaving. Today many more communities besides the traditional shepherding groups such as the Marathas, Ramoshis and Matangs also rear sheep. These different castes, groups and sub-groups, and their specialised livelihoods woven together, form the fabric of society which sustains thousands of households in the otherwise harsh terrain of the Deccan.

### The Black Sheep of the Deccan

The breeds of this region have evolved over the years to suit the ecological and social landscape of the region. The black Deccani sheep is the most popular sheep breed of this region. The Deccani is a medium sized, short tailed coarse wool sheep breed and black is the predominant color though shades of tan, brown and even white are observed in some flocks. This hardy breed is ideally suited to the extreme temperatures of the Deccan plateau and is capable of long-distance migration, a necessary coping strategy during years of drought. The breed is mainly reared for meat, manure and wool. Ewes of this breed lamb thrice in two years and the sale of young lambs also provides a good source of income. Sheep's milk is used in tea, or made into yoghurt and butter milk. The coarse wool protects the animal from extreme temperatures and weather patterns which are typical of the semi-arid Deccan plateau. The spinning and weaving of wool into coarse blankets and rugs is an allied activity practiced sometimes by shepherd groups themselves and sometimes by other communities. The blankets are called Gongali/Ghonghadi/ Kambali (a local blanket) and felted floor throws called jenn. These blankets have multiple uses and used to be very popular with shepherds and farmers in the region and the general population too. Shepherds have their own unique way of describing the breed and identifying their animals based on sex, ear size, body markings, wool color, horn type and age.

### Why is the Deccani threatened?

The Deccani geographical spread is quite large and the breed has a definite ecological, sociological and economic niche. Several factors have resulted in the rapid decrease of the breed in its traditional breeding tract. It began in the 1990s with the dumping of merino wool from Australia and South America in the Indian market. People could now get apparel of finer wool at lower prices. Further, as synthetic alternatives - which were finer and more durable - became available in the Indian market, farmers who used to buy these coarse wool blankets every year shifted to more colorful and longer lasting synthetic blankets. The Indian army was once a large buyer of these coarse wool blankets. However, now cheaper synthetic blankets have replaced the coarse Deccani blankets. With no market for the wool, even shearing of the wool became unprofitable for the shepherds. At the same time there was an enormous

increase in the demand for meat in the country as well as for export to other countries. The government, through the state animal husbandry departments, encouraged shepherds to replace their Deccani sheep with heavier non-wool sheep breeds. Shepherds were given loans to shift to the Red Nellore (Andhra Pradesh), Madgyal breed (Maharashtra) and Yelugu breed (Karnataka). Unfortunately, the mutton breeds promoted by the state have been found to be more susceptible to disease and less capable of coping with the stresses of migration. Being heavier, they require greater quantities of feed and fodder. The Madgyal has also been found to be more prone to diseases like orchitis in breeding rams.

The Deccani has survived all these years because the pastoral communities who rear the breeds have managed to change, adapt and evolve to meet new challenges. But there is a limit to their resilience and adaptation skills

As landscapes rapidly change and more young members of these groups step out of shepherding, a situation may soon emerge where there will be very few people surviving who can safeguard this breed .

**Contributor:** Nitya Ghotge  
(email: anthra.pune@gmail.com)

**Address:** F, Lantana Gardens, NDA Road, Bavdhan,  
Pune 411021, Maharashtra, India.

**Website:** <http://www.anthra.org/>

### Conservation and Pastoralists' Livelihoods: A Case Study from Rajasthan

"If our Oran is intact we have everything; if not, we suffer from lack of fodder, water and wood", said Bodan Gujjar, a 50 year old pastoralist, from Bera village, located within core 3 of Sariska Tiger Reserve. In rural Rajasthan, poverty and vulnerability to climatic changes (drought, famine) are common. Villagers, particularly the pastoralist communities, depend on their sacred forests (Orans) for wood, for fuel and timber, for fodder for their animals, for water and for medicinal plants. The *Orans* of Rajasthan are forests and pasturelands preserved in the name of local gods, goddesses or saints. Known locally as *Devbani*<sup>6</sup> (literally, 'god's forest'), they constitute an ancient form of adaptive resource management.

The well-known Sariska Tiger Reserve is in fact one such composite of Devbanies. To this day it is possible to identify the various Devbanies that comprise this Reserve. In all, there are about 300 identified Devbanis/Orans in the Alwar District. Most Devbanies have sources of water, either small springs or rivulets running through them or a variety of ponds and rivers in their midst. In a nutshell, they are a living and active part of the socio-ecological landscape

6. The terms 'Devbani' and 'Dev Vans' both are correct. Whereas the former is normally used by the local people, the latter term is used in official discourse.

of pastoralist communities, which were managed and supported by the local institutional and social fabric.

In Sariska, there are as many as 140,000 heads of livestock and 85% of this population depends on Oran/ forest resources. Most pastoralist households produce milk and milk products (ghee, yoghurt, buttermilk and *mava* (milk-cake). If we look at the location wise pattern of livelihood, we can see that 95.7% households in core area, 68.5% in the buffer area and 30% on the periphery receive income from animal husbandry practices. It means that animal husbandry occupies a major component of their economy. The area has a rich pastoralist heritage and its contribution to society is immense. They not only rear but maintain excellent indigenous animal genetic resources that adapt very well to drought conditions. These include different breeds of buffaloes, sheep, cows, camels and goats. The Orans serve as pasturage for these livestock. The species composition of these Orans has consequently evolved in response to the grazing influence. In the larger context of Rajasthan, there are 7.5 million pastoralists. As per the government census of 1997, the livestock population in Rajasthan was 54.4 million, out of which 14.3 million are sheep. About 1.5 to 2.0 million sheep are on migration every year in Rajasthan. The livestock sector, in Rajasthan, contributes 19% to the State's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

### State Government Policy initiatives to support Orans

Rajasthan State Forest Policy 2010, the first ever forest policy for Rajasthan, acknowledges the ground realities of the management of forest cover in the State. More specifically, the policy also acknowledges the importance of Orans/ Devbani/ Dev Vans and grasslands, for which the NGO KRAPAVIS has been advocating for so long. One of the objectives in the policy document reads: "Conservation of rare and endangered species of flora and fauna of the state by undertaking in-situ and ex-situ conservation measures, apart from conserving and managing biodiversity-rich ecosystems such as grasslands, Orans, wetlands etc.". An entire section – section 5.10 – in the policy discusses Orans (Dev Van). Sub-section 5.10.1 discusses their importance and the efforts to be made to support them. It reads: "Orans / Dev vans are islands of good forests and repositories of rich biodiversity. These Orans / dev van are excellent examples of people's religious faith linked with conservation. Efforts will be made to provide necessary financial and legal support in consonance with religious ethos of the local community."

However, increasingly local communities are being excluded from the management of their resources. The Forest Department can enclose Devbanies for plantation purpose without the consent or knowledge of the local people and declare it a reserve or a protected area. There are two consequences of this: one, the alienation of local peoples and two, the deterioration of natural resources.

The village Bakhtpura on the periphery of Sariska National Park illustrates the difference a community's involvement in an Oran can make. The Oran of this village has been cut into two parts, one that is community controlled and the other, which has been enclosed as a forest reserve. The result of this has been that the reserved forest has been stripped bare – presumably by the local community – whereas the community controlled forest retains fairly thick stands of trees. Such experiences and understanding need to be fed back into the formal management of Sariska Tiger Reserve in order to evolve it towards benefiting both - conservation and local people.

**Contributor:** Aman Singh  
(email: [krapavis\\_oran@rediffmail.com](mailto:krapavis_oran@rediffmail.com))

**Address:** Krishi Avam Paristhiti Vikas Sansthan (KRAPAVIS), 5/218, Kala Kua Alwar 301001, Rajasthan, India.

**Web-site:** <http://www.krapavis.netne.net>

### Migratory routes of Pashtun Tribe in Baluchistan

Baluchistan is the cradle of many precious livestock breeds. The breeds have been nurtured by the pastoral people of the region. The pastoralists usually walk behind their livestock in search of feed and water. They have flocks and herds of a wide diversity of animal species. The flock migration is a very important activity of the flock owners. Nomads have well-defined migratory routes. The Pashtun nomads usually follow the north-south migratory routes.

#### North-South migratory routes of Pashtun nomads

No.	Winter Route	Summer Route
1.	Sibi Lowland	Chamman, Western Toba Kakri range and several areas in Afghanistan
2.	Sulaiman range	Central Toba Kakri Range, Loralai, Killa Saifullah
3.	Harnai, Sibi District	Central Toba Kakri Range, Ziarat and Loralai
4.	Zhob District	Killa Saifullah, Pishin

Source: <http://www.saves.org.pk/pub/8.pdf>

Pashtun pastoral people practice livestock production in a very eco-friendly way. They conserve and maintain precious animal genetic resources for food and agriculture. In doing so, their conservation and livelihood practices draw upon indigenous knowledge. The Pashtun livestock products for food are many, for e.g. Kurth (dried shlombey (whey), Landi (dried sheep meat), Shlombey, butter, yoghurt, sausage, ghurri (ghee) etc. There is a very high consumer demand for these products at the local levels.

Pashtun livestock breeds are well adapted to climatic stresses and need very low inputs for feeding and management. Local people do not use pesticides and other insecticides to kill insects and pests at mass level, unlike the practices in industrial livestock production systems. Only natural means to control pests and insect are used. They use wood oils, leaf extract of some plants, raise chickens to eat insects and use other means to keep insects and pests at harmless levels. Their control system thus relies on biological resources that are eco-friendly.

Pashtuns migrate with their livestock from one place to another. Animals are used for transportation and Pashtuns do not depend on fossil fuel. Their migratory path is based on the growth, flowering and seeding of the natural vegetation of a region. They do not disturb the local flora and allow it to germinate and make seed for next generation.

Pashtuns know the geography and resources of their region and use it judiciously without over-exploiting it. They practice humane ways to use these resources for family. Pashtuns use water from natural resources, like spring, streams and small man-made ponds and they do not use machinery to draw out ground water.

In short the Pashtun shepherds are very wise in using their local resources to guard health and produce eco-friendly products.

**Contributor:** Dr. Abdul Raziq (email: [saves@saves.org.pk](mailto:saves@saves.org.pk)), President, Society of Animal, Veterinary and Environmental Scientists (SAVES). He is also Organizer, Camel Association of Pakistan (CAP) and Coordinator, LIFE Network Pakistan.

**Address:** Kakar house, street 7, Faisal town, Brewery Road, Quetta, Pakistan.

**Web-site:** <http://www.saves.org.pk/>

## 4. International News

### Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists

Pastoralists' livelihood is based on intricate and seasonal relationships between pastures and livestock. Pastoral management of land and other natural resources is based on a set of claims to use such resources flexibly. Since claims overlap with those of other resource users, pastoralists' need to negotiate access through customary mechanisms that typically recognize claims for male heads of household only, resulting in a lack of basic resource control for women. Women pastoralists' rights are traditionally limited to usufruct rights, leaving women in a position of having to negotiate their rights through male relatives. This is at odds with the important role women pastoralists play in pastoralist communities, for instance in managing animals' health. Women pastoralists are marginalized even further due



Photograph by Sabine Pallas

The opening of the Global Gathering with representatives from Slow Food, WAMIP and IFAD

## Can Women's empowerment threaten traditional social systems?

Some researchers argue that the pre-colonial traditional communities were actually more egalitarian – and that it was the outside influences of the male-dominated and monetised colonial powers that changed pastoral societies to a point where women were limited to certain roles and excluded from decision-making. The targeting of men in development programmes over the last 4-5 decades has further reinforced this!

Thus, the empowerment of women pastoralists is partly aimed at making pastoral societies more egalitarian again and returning women their role in decision-making. However, along with socio-political empowerment, there is also a need for economic empowerment as the latter is closely linked to the former; economically empowered women are usually more likely to be respected within a community and included in decision-making.

One argument often raised "against" women's empowerment is that these are ideas based on Western feminism and thus not applicable to changing traditional systems – but this is shown to be untrue by the fact of women pastoralists themselves demanding equality!

Women pastoralists becoming empowered does imply a change in power relations, of course, and men can be threatened by this and react negatively at the family level and the community level. It is very important that empowerment processes are driven by what women themselves want to achieve, as they are likely to be more aware of the hurdles they may face and how to overcome them.

A pastoral system is not a group of isolated individuals but that of interlinked individuals where each plays a role within a system. Empowered pastoral women contribute to such systems, to the decision-making, to the economic viability, etc. through valuable inputs and knowledge. Their inclusion and empowerment will bring benefits to everyone. On the other hand, if pastoral systems are increasingly under stress and women continue to be excluded from decision-making, then the likelihood of such systems (which require both men and women to be strong) continuing, is reduced. Thus empowerment of women pastoralists will only strengthen pastoral systems!

to limited opportunities to make decisions within their own societies, and till now their participation in global pastoralist initiatives has been minimal.

The Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists, held from 21-26 November 2010 in Mera (Gujarat), India, attempted to change this. During that one week, over 100 women from herding communities scattered across 32 different countries came together to discuss the myriad problems faced by nomadic and semi-nomadic women pastoralists worldwide, and how they can together strive to solve them.

## MERA Declaration<sup>7</sup> of the Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists

We call on governments, governing agencies of the United Nations, other relevant international and regional organizations, research institutes and our own customary leaders to support us and to:

- RECOGNISE the essential role of pastoralists in global environmental sustainability, including the conservation of biodiversity, mitigation of climate change and combating desertification.
- ENSURE the equal rights of pastoralist women and recognize their key role in society. This includes the recognition of the work of women pastoralists as a valid profession and as a fundamental component of pastoralism.
- RECOGNISE pastoralist mobility as a fundamental right.
- ENSURE and defend pastoral access to resources, including our traditional grazing lands.
- PROTECT the rights of pastoralists and provide security in nomadic areas including the enforcement of laws that guarantee the safety of women.
- RECOGNISE pastoralists who identify as indigenous and respect the UN Declaration on Indigenous Rights.
- MONITOR the development and implementation of policies affecting and protecting pastoralists.
- SUPPORT the development of an international organization in charge of considering complaints about violations of pastoralist rights. This organization needs the ability to hold countries accountable and must include pastoralist women as members.
- ADAPT existing legislation to take into account the specificities of pastoralist ways of life and differentiate nomadic and trans-humant pastoralism from intensive livestock production.

**Contributor:** Mona Patel  
(email: maragindia@rediffmail.com)

**Address:** MARAG, 2/B, Milind Park, Opposite ST. Xavier's Loyola School, Memnagar Road, Ahmedabad 380 052, Gujarat, India.

**Web-site:** www.marag.org

Participants at the Gathering identified key issues, including markets, rules and rights, environment; social movement, education, and, health; as well as a number of priorities for action, such as representation, communication & networking, education & capacity building, and advocacy. They also selected

7. This is an excerpted version of the MERA declaration.

representatives to draft the **Mera Declaration** – not only to inform and support the development of pastoralist policies, but also to demonstrate commitment to environmental sustainability and protection of biodiversity and common resources for future generations. The Declaration calls on governments, international and regional organizations, research institutes and customary leaders to support pastoralist women through specific actions. They also elected Ms. Safouratou Moussa Kané (Niger) and Mr. Lalji Desai (India) as Pastoralist Focal Points in the Coordination Committee of the Civil Society Mechanism to the Committee on World Food Security (FAO), where they will be representing pastoralists for one year.

The idea for the gathering was developed by MARAG<sup>8</sup>, a voluntary organization established in 1994 which works to educate, organize and empower the Maldharis – a marginalized pastoral community from Gujarat in India.

**Contributor:** Sabine Pallas

(email: [s.pallas@landcoalition.org](mailto:s.pallas@landcoalition.org)).

Programme Officer for Women's Land Rights at the Secretariat of the International Land Coalition (ILC). ILC aims at promoting women's access to land by identifying and supporting practical solutions, particularly at the grassroots level, and advocate with policy-makers for their replication and up-scaling.

**Address:** International Land Coalition, Secretariat at IFAD, Via Paolo di Dono 44, 00142 Rome, Italy.

**Web-site:** <http://www.landcoalition.org/docs/t12wal.htm>:  
<http://cso4cfs.org>

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### Note to the reader

In case you want to receive People In Conservation at a different address, please send us your new address at [kvoutreach@gmail.com](mailto:kvoutreach@gmail.com), else send it by post at the following address:

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Documentation and Outreach Centre  
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908, Deccan Gymkhana,  
Pune, Maharashtra, India.

**Web-site:** [www.kalpavriksh.org](http://www.kalpavriksh.org)

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8. MARAG is supported by: International Union for Conservation of Nature – World Initiative for sustainable Pastoralism (IUCN-WISP), International Land Coalition (ILC), The World Alliance for Mobile Pastoralists (WAMIP) and the League for Pastoral Peoples (LPP). For more information visit <http://www.womenpastoralists.com/> or read the report here: <http://www.landcoalition.org/global-initiatives/womens-land-rights/global-gathering-women-pastoralists>

### Letters to Editor<sup>9</sup>:

*...I have been receiving your Newsletter and associated material regularly...As soon as I read through, I pass it on to anyone who may chance to meet me. I am most impressed by your honesty-of-purpose and I am sure that in the long run, your efforts will impact on the exposed readership even though there can be no true measure of the benefits accruing...*

Lt. General Baljit Singh  
(Chandigarh)

*A great work is being done. Congratulations to Kalpavriksh team ...Information provided are useful for lectures on conservation, which I have been using... Design is excellent, content is super. Please keep it up.*

Dr. S.K. Barik,  
Professor  
Centre for Advanced Studies in Botany  
(North-Eastern Hill University),  
Shillong (Meghalaya)

*...definitely helps get update and enables digging into specific issues we are involved in. Insights have also been useful in forming opinions. ...at the cost (i.e. free), it is among the best. Perhaps some in vernacular will be more useful at local levels...*

R. Sreedhar  
Environics Trust (New Delhi)

*...these are useful..Please cover more issues from NE India (North East), and especially issues related (with) Conflict and Conservation..The articles are good...*

Mr. Dhritiman Das  
(Assam)

*...We have recd. Samuday va Samrakshan ... It laid emphasis on Law and Policy... (Forest Rights Recognition) .... There is news from Orissa, Rajasthan, etc. but the emphasis is on Forest Rights Act and this coverage and discussion on Forest Rights Act is very important...*

Mr. Khobragade  
Saygata (Maharashtra)

*...We regularly receive all material sent by you, and we find it very useful in our work. If anyone is wronged in this neighborhood/area, we quote the advocacy material sent by you, before the authorities...*

Mr. Bhupal Singh  
Vividhara, Nahikala, (Dehradun)

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9. We have uploaded all the letter that we received in response to our appeal for a feedback (see <http://www.kalpavriksh.org/feedback>). What you see here are excerpts from few of them.

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Advisor and Editorial help: Neema Pathak

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Photograph 1. Pashtun tribe in Baluchistan, by Dr. Abdul Raziq.

Photograph 2. Maldhari women listening to the closing statement of Global pastoralist women gathering,  
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Phone: 91-20-25675450, Tel/Fax: 91-20-25654239

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Website: www.kalpavriksh.org

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