

CENTRAL ASIA PASTORALIST ALLIANCE CAPA

Since 2015

14 orgs. (10 ILC members),
6 govt bodies and 19
partner organisations



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LAND RIGHTS ACROSS CENTRAL ASIA'S RANGELANDS

EXPERIENCES FROM THE CENTRAL ASIAN
PASTORALIST ALLIANCE (CAPA) 2021-2026

INTERNATIONAL
LAND
COALITION

UNITED
FOR LAND
RIGHTS

CONTEXTUAL PROBLEMS



GAP IN
FRAMEWORKS
IMPLEMENTATION



INEQUALITY



ESCALATING CLIMATE
AND ECOLOGICAL
PRESSURES



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Established in 2015, the **Central Asia Pastoralist Alliance (CAPA)** is a member-led regional thematic platform of the **International Land Coalition (ILC)** working to advance tenure security and sustainable governance of rangelands across **five countries: Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.**

The platform brings together pastoralist organisations, civil society networks, government bodies, and research institutions in a shared commitment to advance people-centred land governance across the region's rangeland landscapes.

The platform currently engages **14 ORGANISATIONS**, of which **10 ARE ILC MEMBERS**, alongside six government bodies and a network of **19 NON-MEMBER PARTNER ORGANISATIONS** spanning civil society, research, and development institutions. The platform is hosted by ILC member Kyrgyz Jayity (the National Pasture Users' Association of Kyrgyzstan), which provides secretariat functions and coordinates activities.

CAPA's work is structured around **THREE STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES** guiding its activities:

- » strengthening the regional network of members and partners;
- » building member capacity to engage with decision-makers on sustainable pasture management;
- » influencing policy and legislation to recognise and protect pastoralists' tenure rights, including by advancing preparations for the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP 2026), a UN-designated year-long international focus that CAPA helped to advance.

Building on the cross-regional analysis **Uniting for Land Rights: Rangelands in Central and South Asia (2021)**, this report traces the platform's role in shaping land and rangelands-related policies, practices and agendas across Central Asia between 2021 and early 2026. It opens with a summary of key contributions and a contextual overview, followed by a timeline of milestones and **THREE THEMATIC CHAPTERS:**

- » championing pastoralist rights in national legislation;
- » scaling community-based governance and environmental stewardship; and
- » building the global case for rangelands and pastoralism: advocacy and evidence generation.

The report closes with a section on key partnerships and platform membership.

260M+ ha

Rangelands in the platform's coverage area

80,000+

Herder households in CAPA-supported pasture user groups

5

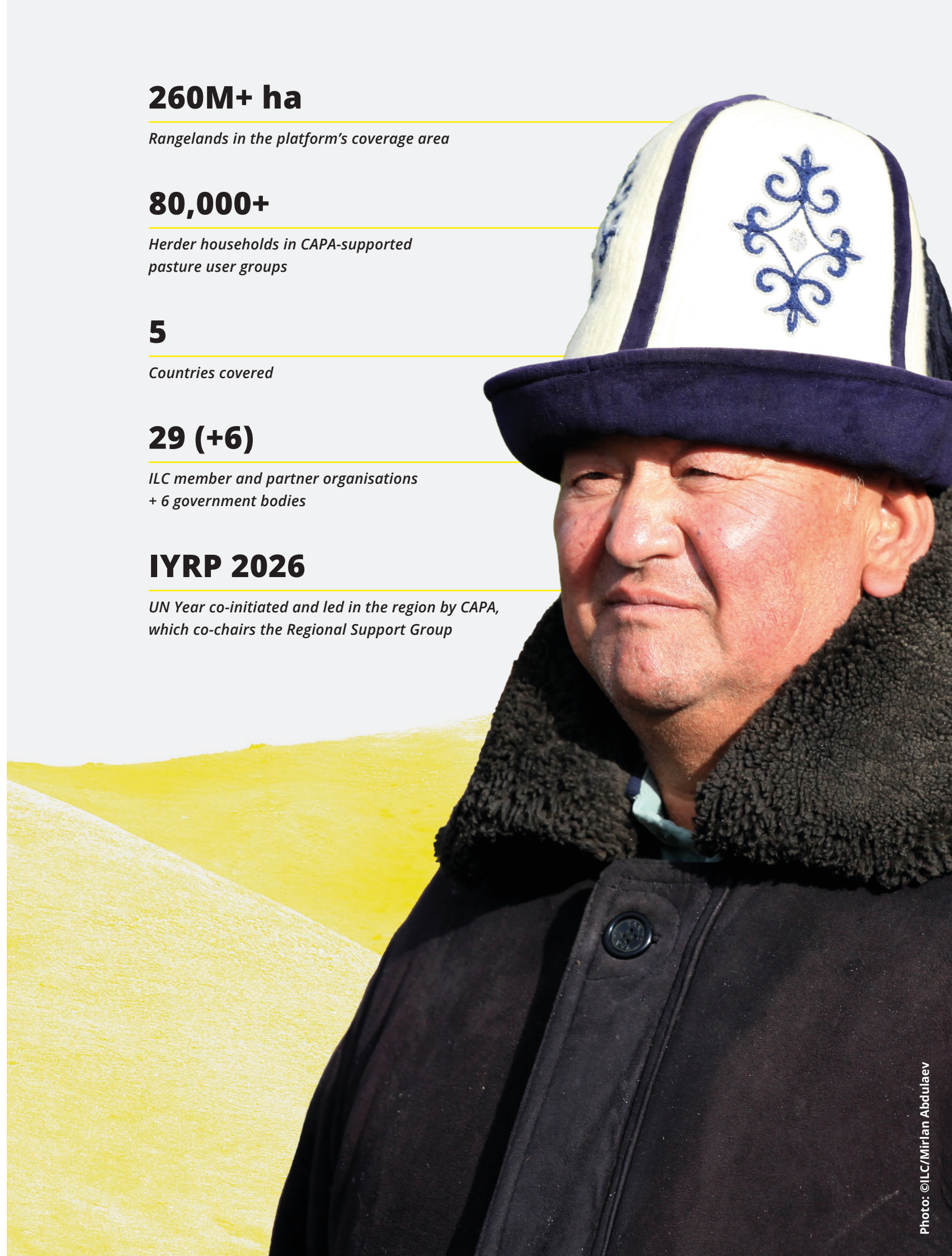
Countries covered

29 (+6)

*ILC member and partner organisations
+ 6 government bodies*

IYRP 2026

*UN Year co-initiated and led in the region by CAPA,
which co-chairs the Regional Support Group*





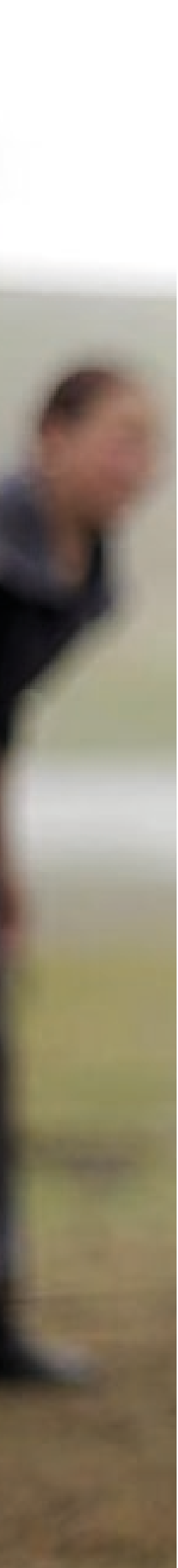
KEY CONTRIBUTIONS AT A GLANCE

PILLAR I

CHAMPIONING PASTORALIST RIGHTS IN NATIONAL LEGISLATION

*Between 2021 and early 2026, CAPA members have actively contributed to the adoption, revision, and strengthening of pasture-related legislation across **FIVE COUNTRIES**. These developments were influenced through a range of sustained policy engagements, including in parliamentary hearings on **KYRGYZSTAN'S NEW LAND CODE**; representation on **MONGOLIA'S PARLIAMENTARY TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP** responsible for drafting pasture legislation; sustained technical input to the Kazakh Ministry of Agriculture during the **2024 LAND CODE AMENDMENT** process; as well as participation in public consultations on **UZBEKISTAN'S CABINET DECREE** on pasture protection(No. 126).*

Collectively, these engagements have strengthened the visibility of pastoralist perspectives within legislative processes and created important opportunities to advance the recognition and protection of pasture users' rights across Central Asia.



	CHANGE	CAPA ENGAGEMENT
MONGOLIA 2024	» Law on Herders (2024) » Law on the Legal Status of the Association of Herder Households (2024) Together, the laws provide the first statutory recognition of herders' pasture use rights and formal legal standing for herder cooperatives.	CAPA members JASIL, NFPUG, MLMA, NAMAC and CPR participated in the Parliament's Technical Working Group during drafting and amendment.
KYRGYZSTAN 2025, ongoing	» Amendment to the Land Code » Draft Law on Environmental Fees for Pasture Use The Land Code revised the pasture management system and formally recognised agroforestry as a land-use category. The proposed Law on Environmental Fees aims to link herders to local pasture funds.	ILC member Kyrgyz Jayity leads the legislative response and engages directly with the Ministry of Agriculture alongside other national ILC members and partners.
KAZAKHSTAN 2024	» Amendments to the Land Code (2024) Prohibited the conversion of grazing lands, mandated Pasture Management and Utilisation Plans, and guaranteed free access to water infrastructure.	CAPA member IESD provided technical analysis and informational support to government counterparts.
UZBEKISTAN 2024 to 2025	» Cabinet Decree No. 126 (2024) » Presidential Decree on Modern Mechanisms for Pasture Protection (2025) Established a national pasture commission, auction-based lease agreements, as well as a National Pasture Restoration Programme.	CAPA partner Agroinnovation participated in the public consultations preceding Decree No. 126 on the prevention of overgrazing.
TAJIKISTAN 2019	» Amendment to the Law on Pastures (2019) Increased the roles and responsibilities of Pasture User Groups, with pasture use plans subsequently developed for all 284 Pasture User Unions across the country.	CAPA partner NADF led the legislative engagement and the national pasture-planning rollout.

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PILLAR II

SCALING COMMUNITY-BASED RANGELAND GOVERNANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Across the region, Central Asia Pastoralist Alliance members have supported the **ESTABLISHMENT, STRENGTHENING, and SCALING OF THE COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS** through which herders collectively manage rangelands, including Pasture User Groups (PUGs), Pasture Users’ Unions (PUUs), and herder cooperatives. These institutions constitute the local foundations of pastoralist land governance, providing the mechanisms through which pasture users exercise collective rights, regulate grazing practices, manage shared resources, and translate national legislation into everyday governance on the ground.

COUNTRY	INSTITUTION	SCALE	CAPA ENGAGEMENT
KYRGYZSTAN	Pasture Committees (Jayit Committees)	454 COMMITTEES (modified to 227 pasture municipalities with the New Land Code in 2025) 9 million hectares of rangelands managed under Community-Based Natural Resource Management. Established under the 2009 Law on Pastures, co-authored by Kyrgyz Jayity.	CAPA member Kyrgyz Jayity supported the establishment of community Pasture Committees since 2009, providing formalisation support and ongoing capacity development to committees across the country.
MONGOLIA	Pasture User Groups and Pasture Use Agreements	1,600+ PUGS 81,600 herder households across 157 districts; 62.5 million hectares; 1,065+ Pasture Use Agreements.	CAPA member NFPUG was instrumental in the formation of the PUG network from the 2000s onwards, providing organisational support and capacity-building. NFPUG and JASIL have since provided technical support and led peer-learning networks for PUGs across the country.
MONGOLIA	‘New Cooperative, Wealthy Herder’ cooperative program	9,689 COOPERATIVES 95,118 members; loans up to USD 14,500 at 6% interest, with 80 to 100% state-backed guarantees.	NAMAC contributed cooperative development expertise; the 2024 Law on Herder Associations (with CAPA member input) gave cooperatives their legal standing.
KYRGYZSTAN	Artificial glacier programme	1,092 HA Pastures with secured drought season water access.	Implemented by Kyrgyz partners; informed broader regional climate adaptation planning.

PILLAR III

BUILDING THE GLOBAL CASE FOR RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISM

At the global level, CAPA has played a sustained role in advancing the international frameworks, knowledge systems, and policy agendas that position pastoralism as a viable, productive, and legitimate approach to land stewardship.

INITIATIVE	CHANGE / OUTCOME	CAPA ROLE
INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISTS (IYRP 2026)	UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/76/208, adopted in March 2022 with backing from 102 countries and 303 organisations, designates 2026 as the first UN International Year focused on rangelands.	CO-INITIATOR From 2016, CAPA members were among the leading advocates for a UN-designated year on rangelands. In 2018, CAPA accompanied the Mongolian Government in submitting the formal proposal to FAO; FAO endorsed it in 2020 and the UN General Assembly adopted it in 2022. CAPA chairs the Central Asia and Mongolia IYRP Regional Support Group, with ILC member JASIL as its co-chair.
REGIONAL POLICY BRIEF ON RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISM (2026)	10 policy recommendations directed at national governments, UNCCD COP17, and development partners. Aligned with UNGA Resolution A/RES/76/208 and UNCCD COP-16 Riyadh Commitments.	LEAD AUTHOR Synthesised community consultations, member surveys, and official data.
GLOBAL PASTURE TENURE INDICATORS	First indicators designed specifically for pastoral land tenure security, capturing shared, mobile, and communal rights that conventional land tenure data structurally cannot.	CO-DEVELOPER With ILC, Prindex, and ODI. NFPUG co-led LANDex (the ILC global land governance monitoring index) implementation in Mongolia.
YOUTH ENGAGEMENT	Youth representation at COP28, COP29, and COP16 (2024); ILC Interregional School for Young Pastoralists co-organised in 2026; database of young pastoralists established.	Young pastoralists database established; interregional youth school launched; CAPA youth representatives participating in UNFCCC, UNCCD and ILC global processes.

THE RANGELANDS AND PASTORALIST CONTEXT IN CENTRAL ASIA

Stretching across approximately 260 million hectares, the rangelands of Central Asia form the largest contiguous expanse of grazed land on Earth, providing a critical foundation for pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods as well as distinctive steppe ecosystems. Today, the region's pastoralists navigate a complex set of overlapping pressures, including insecure land tenure, fragmented migration routes, and the expansion of mining operations and large-scale infrastructure projects into traditional grazing areas, among others.

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS ON PASTORALIST TENURE

Across Central Asia, a range of legal frameworks governing pastureland and defining pastoralist rights have been introduced, with varying degrees of implementation and institutional consolidation. In Mongolia, the Land Law, the Environment Protection Law, and successive draft pasture legislation (2003, 2008, 2019) establish the legal status and secondary rights of pastoralists. In Kyrgyzstan, legislation similarly defines the legal status and secondary rights of pasture users, with the new Land Code incorporating the 2009 Law on Pasture Land and formally recognising local pasture communities. In Kazakhstan, the Law on Pastures (2017) places emphasis on institutional arrangements, formalising the roles of local pasture management organisations and herders' associations. In Uzbekistan, the legal framework for pasture management is established by the Law *"On Pastures"* (2019), which introduced measures for restoring degraded lands and responsibilities for their conservation. Despite important legislative progress, gaps between legal recognition and implementation remain a persistent challenge across the region. Across the region, pastoralists continue to face constraints related to weak enforcement, competing claims over land and natural resources, fragmentation of grazing territories and migration routes, and unequal access to pastureland. In some countries, the continued concentration of land in the hands of large landholders who illegally sublet pastureland further exacerbates these insecurities.

INEQUALITY

Measuring land inequality across Central Asia remains constrained by persistent gaps in the availability, quality, and transparency of land tenure data. Reliable land Gini estimates are largely unavailable, and standard ownership-based indicators provide only a partial picture of distribution and concentration. More broadly, inequality is expressed not only through land allocation but also through unequal access to pastureland, water resources, markets, infrastructure, and public services essential for pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods, as

well as differences in tenure security and mobility rights. Conventional measures of inequality are further limited in pastoral contexts, where land is primarily accessed through collective tenure systems, seasonal mobility, and negotiated use rights rather than individual ownership. As a result, key dimensions of inequality related to access, control, and governance of rangelands remain under-measured in existing national and international datasets.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES

Central Asia is characterised by high climatic variability and recurrent extreme weather events, particularly the severe winter storms known as dzuds, which can lead to large-scale livestock mortality and heightened livelihood vulnerability among pastoral households. These shocks interact with longer-term environmental pressures, including rangeland degradation and changing precipitation patterns, placing additional strain on already fragile pastoral production systems.

In response, several countries have developed policy frameworks to address climate and environmental risks. In Mongolia, for example, these include the Action Plan for the National Program on Climate Change and the National Adaptation Plan (2025), both of which identify pastoralists as a priority group for vulnerability reduction and the development of green livelihoods. The National Program on Biological Diversity (2015) further provides a legal basis for community-based associations involved in pasture and natural resource management. Similar policy attention is emerging in Kyrgyzstan, where commitments to Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) are advancing the recognition of pastoralists among groups vulnerable to environmental change. However, despite the growing policy architecture, implementation remains uneven, and meaningful pastoralist participation in planning and land management decisions continues to be limited across the region.

WOMEN AND PASTORAL SYSTEMS

Across Central Asia, pastoralist women play essential roles in livestock care, dairy processing, biodiversity stewardship, and household economies, yet their contributions remain consistently undervalued and underrepresented in formal governance structures and land tenure systems. In Mongolia and Uzbekistan, despite the centrality of women to pastoral production systems, legal and policy frameworks provide limited targeted measures to strengthen women's land ownership or control, and mechanisms for ensuring their meaningful participation in land and pasture governance remain weak. In Mongolia, this includes the absence of quotas or dedicated safeguards within land-related legislation, while in Uzbekistan institutional channels for women's representation and access to resources remain limited, particularly for younger women. Kyrgyzstan presents a partial exception, where recent gender-quota measures in public administration, although not directly linked to land governance, indicate emerging efforts to institutionalise women's participation in decision-making structures.

TIMELINE AND THEORY OF CHANGE



2026

- » Preparation of **Regional Policy Brief on Rangelands and Pastoralism** with recommendations for UNCCD COP17 and national governments.
- » Finalisation of **Global pasture tenure indicators** with ILC, Prindex, and ODI.
- » Organisation of the **Global Pastoralist Gathering in Mongolia** and the launch of the **ILC Interregional School for Young Pastoralists**.

- » **Uzbekistan**: **Presidential Resolution No. 179** on livestock and pasture sectors in development with members, focusing on strengthened sustainable natural resource management. The **Agency for Livestock and Pasture Development** is established in its support.

2024

- » **Mongolia**: Adoption of the **Law on Herders** and Law on the Legal Status of Herder Associations. Five CAPA members participate in the Parliament's Technical Working Group.
- » **Kazakhstan**: **Amendments to the Land Code** enter force. CAPA member IESD provides technical input to the Ministry of Agriculture during the amendment process.
- » **Uzbekistan**: Adoption of **Cabinet Decree No. 126** on pasture protection. CAPA partner AgriInnovation participates in the public consultation process.

2025

- » **Kyrgyzstan**: Enactment of the **new Land Code**, replacing Law on Pastures (2009). CAPA members Kyrgyz Jayity, RDF and KAFLU participate in parliamentary hearings, and KAFLU contributes to the formal inclusion of agroforestry as a recognised land use category within the law.
- » **Uzbekistan**: Signing of **Presidential Decree on Modern Mechanisms for Pasture Protection**, as well as the launch of the National Pasture Restoration Programme 2025-27.
- » **Mongolia**: cooperative movement reaches 9,689 cooperatives with 95,118 members. NDC 3.0 commits to restoring 10% of degraded rangelands by 2035.
- » Launch of the **FAO GEF Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)** Project in Kyrgyzstan with CAPA members as lead actors.

2023

- » **Kyrgyzstan**: Platform member Kyrgyz Jayity submits **Draft Law on Environmental Fees for Pasture Use**.
- » **Kyrgyzstan**: **Forecast-based livestock insurance**: a financial mechanism that allows pre-emptive action before livestock losses occur.

2022

- » UN General Assembly approves **IYRP 2026** (Resolution A/RES/76/208), backed by 102 countries and 303 organisations.
- » **CAPA assumes the chair of the IYRP Central Asia** and Mongolia Regional Implementation Support Group.

2020

- » FAO's Committee on Agriculture (COAG) endorses the IYRP proposal in October, backed by 15 governments and 165 organisations.

2021

- » **Mongolia**: Adoption of the **Law on Grazing Fees**, with member contributions.
- » **Mongolia**: 1,605 Pasture User Groups operational across 157 districts (81,600 herder households, 62.5 million hectares).

2019

- » **Kyrgyzstan**: **amendments to the Law on Pastures** increase the responsibilities and funding of Pasture User Associations. CAPA member Kyrgyz Jayity contributes evidence on community-based pasture funding.
- » **Mongolia**: formulation of **draft Law on Pasture Protection** with CAPA input.

2017

- » **Kazakhstan**: Adoption of the **Law on Pastures**, the first national legal framework supporting pastoralists' tenure rights. CAPA member IESD contributes to its drafting.

2015

- » **Establishment of the Central Asia Pastoralist Alliance** as an ILC regional thematic platform.
- » Founding of the four thematic clusters, with Kyrgyz Jayity assuming the hosting role.

2016-18

- » CAPA members begin **advocacy for a UN International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists**.
- » **Mongolia**: The Mongolian Government submits a **formal IYRP proposal** to FAO in 2018.
- » Platform expands to over 35 organisations.

CONTEXTUAL PROBLEMS



GAP IN
FRAMEWORKS
IMPLEMENTATION



INEQUALITY



ESCALATING CLIMATE
AND ECOLOGICAL
PRESSURES



SYSTEMIC
MARGINALISATION
OF WOMEN

FORGING PARTNERSHIPS



convening and coordination

14 orgs. (10 ILC members),
6 govt bodies and 19
partner organisations

PEER LEARNING, KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE, TECHNICAL ADVISE AND MONITORING



institutional strengthening

monitoring

technical analysis and advisory
support

consultations

ADVOCACY



ADVOCACY AGENDAS

PARTICIPATION IN PARLIAMENT'S
TECHNICAL WORKING GROUP

DIRECT LEGISLATIVE
ENGAGEMENT
direct input on legal
text and amendments

CENTRAL ASIA PASTORALIST ALLIANCE CAPA

Since 2015

CHANGES IN POLICIES and PRACTICES

MONGOLIA

Law on Herders (2024)
Law on the Legal Status of the Association of
Herder Households (2024)

KYRGYZSTAN

Land Code Amendments
Draft Law on Environmental Fees for Pasture Use

KAZAKHSTAN

Amendments to the Land Code (2024)

UZBEKISTAN

Cabinet Decree No. 126 (2024)
Presidential Decree on Modern Mechanisms for Pasture
Protection (2025)

CHAMPIONING PASTORALIST RIGHTS IN NATIONAL LEGISLATION

SCALING COMMUNITY- BASED RANGELAND GOVERNANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

ESTABLISHMENT, STRENGTHENING, AND SCALING OF THE COMMUNITY INSTITUTIONS

MONGOLIA

1,600+ PUGs - covering approximately 81,600
herder households and 62.5 million hectares of
rangeland
9,689 cooperatives

KYRGYZSTAN

454 pasture user committees (modified to 227
pasture municipalities with the New Land Code in 2025)
Artificial glaciers programme 1,092 ha

BUILDING THE GLOBAL CASE FOR RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISM

INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISTS (IYRP 2026)

REGIONAL POLICY BRIEF ON
RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISM (2026)

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

GLOBAL PASTURE
TENURE INDICATORS

CONTRIBUTIONS

TO ADVANCING PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

1

CHAMPIONING PASTORALIST RIGHTS IN NATIONAL LEGISLATION

Central Asia Pastoralist Alliance engages in national legislative reform processes through three complementary modalities that reflect differing levels of institutional access and influence. First, direct legislative engagement, where CAPA members hold formal seats in parliamentary working groups or serve as key technical interlocutors for relevant ministries, as seen in Mongolia and Tajikistan. Second, convening and coordination, where CAPA members facilitate dialogue, share evidence, and connect national reform processes to broader pastoralist constituencies, as seen in Kazakhstan and, in an emerging form, in Uzbekistan. Third, peer learning and knowledge exchange, where CAPA brings members together across countries to share comparative experience on legislative engagement, document good practices, and support the adaptation of effective approaches across contexts. The five country cases below illustrate these three modalities of engagement.

THE LAW ON HERDERS AND THE LAW ON HERDER ASSOCIATIONS (MONGOLIA, 2024)

In July 2024, the Mongolian Parliament adopted two landmark pieces of legislation that significantly redefined the legal basis of pastoral land use and collective organisation.

The Law on Herders established, for the first time, the formal right of herders to use pastures and introduced responsible pasture use as a legal obligation. It requires adherence to carrying capacity and is operationalised through Pasture Use Agreements (PUAs), which are contractual arrangements between herder households and local governments defining how specific pasture areas are managed, grazed, and restored.

Adopted in the same parliamentary session, the Law on the Legal Status of the Association of Herder Households established a formal institutional framework for herder cooperatives by defining their role across pasture management, animal health, breeding, environmental protection, disaster risk reduction, and the collective marketing of livestock products.

Five Mongolian member organisations, JASIL, NFPUG (National Federation of Pasture User Groups of Herders), MLMA (Mongolian Land Management Association), NAMAC (National Association of Mongolian Agricultural Cooperatives), and CPR (Centre for Policy Research), held seats on the Parliament's Technical Working Group responsible for drafting the laws

and associated amendments. Through this role, members provided direct input on legal text and amendments, ensuring that pastoralist perspectives on community governance, pasture carrying capacity, cooperative financing, and climate adaptation were incorporated through to final adoption.

The 2024 laws build on more than a decade of sustained engagement, including CAPA member contributions to the Draft Law on Pasture Protection (2019) and the Law on Grazing Fees (2021). Together, these legal instruments form part of the foundation for Mongolia's preparations for International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists and its commitments under its third Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC 3.0) under the Paris Agreement, which includes a target to restore 10% of heavily degraded rangelands by 2035.

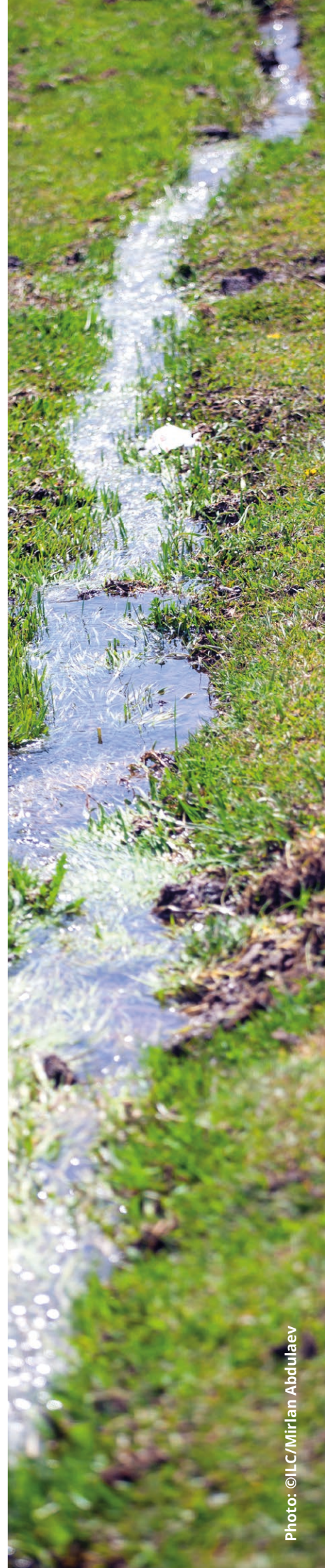
THE LAND CODE AMENDMENTS (KYRGYZSTAN, 2025)

In July 2025, Kyrgyzstan enacted a new Land Code (Law No. 149), incorporating the 2009 Law on Pastures that had been developed with the direct involvement of CAPA member Kyrgyz Jayity, and which was among Central Asia's earliest legal frameworks for decentralised, community-based rangeland governance. It had served as the legal foundation for the 454 Pasture Committees managing 9 million hectares.

The new Land Code consolidates pasture governance within a broader legislative framework. While proponents argue that it streamlines and modernises land management, CAPA members have raised concerns that the reform could weaken community-based governance by reducing the legal autonomy of Pasture Committees, undermining local dispute-resolution mechanisms, and centralising decision-making and financial resources. Particular concern has focused on the potential loss of dedicated funding streams and the risk that revenues generated from pasture use are channelled away from local management institutions.

In response, Kyrgyz Jayity has advanced a three-part advocacy agenda aimed at safeguarding community-based pasture governance within the new legislative architecture. This includes the establishment of a dedicated pasture management fund, the development of a Draft Law on Environmental Fees for Pasture Use to generate sustainable financing for rangeland stewardship, and the introduction of minimum standards for pasture management.

The reform process also produced a notable achievement: through advocacy led by KAFLU, agroforestry was formally recognised within the new Land Code as a legitimate land-use category, creating new opportunities to integrate sustainable rangeland and forest management approaches. Kyrgyz Jayity continues to engage closely with the Ministry of Water Resources, Agriculture and Processing Industry to support the implementation of the new framework and ensure that community-based governance principles are retained in practice.



AMENDMENTS TO THE LAND CODE (KAZAKHSTAN, 2024)

In 2024, Kazakhstan adopted a series of amendments to its Land Code aimed at strengthening the protection and management of grazing lands. Notably, the amendments introduced stronger safeguards against the conversion of grazing land, required local authorities to reserve pasture areas through Pasture Management and Utilisation Plans, and guaranteed free access to water facilities for livestock.

The reforms were developed through sustained engagement between the Government of Kazakhstan, particularly the Ministry of Agriculture, and a range of technical and civil society actors. CAPA member IESD (Institute of Ecology and Sustainable Development) provided technical analysis and advisory support throughout the process and worked alongside CAREC (Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia) to promote and monitor implementation of the amendments. The reforms build on the earlier Law on Pastures (2017), which CAPA members also helped shape through engagement with government counterparts.

The amendments represent meaningful progress, but also carry risks. One provision stipulates that pasturelands used below 50 per cent of their allowable grazing capacity for a period of one year may be subject to compulsory expropriation. While intended to discourage land hoarding and improve the allocation of pasture resources, the measure could have unintended consequences for small-scale herders whose livestock numbers temporarily fall below the legal threshold. By contrast, the prohibition on converting grazing land to other uses addresses a longstanding vulnerability in Kazakhstan's pastoral sector: the loss of pastureland to commercial agriculture, extractive industries, and large landholders who have consolidated control over grazing resources. As implementation begins, CAPA members are monitoring how the amendments are applied in practice, with the aim of ensuring that the protective provisions are effectively enforced while preventing the expropriation mechanism from disproportionately affecting vulnerable pastoralist households.

**DECREE NO. 126 ON PASTURE PROTECTION (2024)
AND PRESIDENTIAL DECREE ON PASTURE PROTECTION
(2025, UZBEKISTAN)**

Two consecutive reforms in 2024 and 2025 introduced Uzbekistan's first comprehensive national frameworks for pasture protection. Although Uzbekistan has no active ILC member organisations, the platform's engagement in the country has been facilitated through partner organisations and its broader convening role, illustrating how pastoralist advocacy can extend beyond formal membership structures.

In March 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers adopted Decree No. 126 on Measures to Protect Pastures, Combat Degradation, and Safeguard Groundwater. The decree prioritised reducing overgrazing through rotational pasture use, restoring degraded land, and strengthening sustainable water management systems. CAPA member Agroinnovation Fund Public Union participated in the public consultations preceding the decree, contributing pastoralist perspectives informed by CAPA's regional experience with community-based rangelands governance.

This was followed in January 2025 by a Presidential Decree on Modern Mechanisms for Pasture Protection, which established a national commission on pasture regulation, introduced competitive auction-based lease allocation for long-term pasture rights, and launched the National Pasture Restoration Programme (2027). The decree also created regional pasture management authorities and introduced investments in geobotanical assessment and digital mapping systems. As part of this ongoing process, 15.8 million hectares of pastureland are being inventoried, with allocation underway for 8.18 million hectares, boundary demarcation in progress for 6.58 million hectares, and digital mapping being developed for 5.57 million hectares. For pastoralist households, this represents the first systematic state-led effort to document long-used grazing areas, forming an important foundation for future tenure recognition and protection as implementation continues.

AMENDMENT TO THE LAW ON PASTURES (TAJIKISTAN, 2019)

In 2019, NADF (National Association of Dekhan Farmers), CAPA's primary national partner in Tajikistan, worked with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development on an amendment to the Law on Pastures that strengthened the roles and responsibilities of Pasture User Groups. Following the amendment, pasture use plans were developed across all 284 Pasture User Unions nationwide. These unions now constitute the principal community-level governance mechanism for pasture management in the country.



2

SCALING COMMUNITY-BASED GOVERNANCE AND ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Legislative reform translates into meaningful change only where robust community-level institutions exist to implement, adapt, and benefit from it in practice. Members of the Central Asia Pastoralist Alliance have supported the establishment and scaling of the institutional structures through which herders collectively manage rangelands, including Pasture User Groups, Pasture Users' Unions, and herder cooperatives. These bodies operationalise national legislation at local level by shaping day-to-day decisions on grazing, seasonal rotation, and dispute resolution, and they remain the most durable channel for pastoralist participation in rangeland governance across the region.

Alongside institutional strengthening, members have also advanced climate adaptation approaches designed to reinforce the resilience of these governance systems in the context of increasing environmental variability affecting pastoral landscapes.

GOVERNING THE COMMONS: COMMUNITY-BASED PASTURE MANAGEMENT AT SCALE

Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM) refers to a set of practices through which herder communities, in collaboration with local governments and supporting organisations, manage rangelands in a sustainable and collectively governed manner. Its governance architecture centres on Pasture User Groups (PUGs), elected by herder households, which negotiate Pasture Use Agreements (PUAs) with local administrations. These agreements define how pasture areas are used, rested, and restored, establishing a formal accountability framework between herders and the state. Operationally, CBNRM encompasses rotational grazing systems and seasonal pasture resting, water-point management, fodder reserves, winter preparedness, herd composition adjustment, soil and vegetation restoration, and ongoing monitoring of rangeland conditions — all organised and enforced through these community institutions.

In Mongolia, platform members have supported more than 1,600 PUGs across 157 districts, covering approximately 81,600 herder households and 62.5 million hectares of rangeland- with over 1,065 Pasture Use Agreements being developed through these processes. In particular, ILC and CAPA members JASIL and the National Federation of Pasture User Groups of Herders (NFPUG) have provided sustained technical support through the SDC-supported Green Gold programme, which established over 2,000 community-based rangeland management organisations. As a result, around five million hectares of degraded rangelands have been placed under two- to five-year resting agreements, while the proportion of heavily degraded rangeland declined from 10.2 per cent in 2015 to 6.6 per cent in 2022. These gains also carry broader climate significance, given that Mongolia's rangelands function as a major carbon sink,

with the Global Climate Fund estimating a potential CO₂ avoidance of 440 million tonnes over 20 years through improved soil carbon management. In parallel, Pasture User Groups in Mongolia have evolved beyond their original mandate. Supported through NFPUG's national federation model, many now provide agricultural extension services and facilitate collective marketing, demonstrating that formalising customary institutions can produce more durable governance outcomes than creating parallel administrative structures.

In Kyrgyzstan, ILC and CAPA member Kyrgyz Jayity has supported the establishment and continued operation of 454 Pasture Committees (Jayit Committees) managing 9 million hectares of rangeland. This has been achieved through sustained capacity building, peer-learning networks, and technical support for rangeland use planning. Members have also advanced climate adaptation measures in pastoral landscapes. The platform, together with ILC support, developed a regional project proposal building on Kyrgyzstan's artificial glacier pilot programme, which has improved dry-season water access across 1,092 hectares of pasture.

Several of these pastoral communities have also been included in the ICCA Global Registry, an international platform documenting and recognising Indigenous and community-conserved territories- strengthening the formal, international recognition of customary governance systems and their standing within global conservation and land governance frameworks.

ECONOMIC RESILIENCE: FROM THE COOPERATIVE MOVEMENT IN MONGOLIA TO CLIMATE-RISK INSTRUMENTS

The Government of Mongolia introduced the "New Cooperative, Wealthy Herder" programme in 2024 as a national strategy to strengthen the economic resilience of herder households by formalising collective organisation and improving access to finance and services. The programme is specifically designed to transition herders into legally registered cooperatives with access to subsidised credit, shared infrastructure, and coordinated production systems.

Since its launch, 9,689 cooperatives with 95,118 members have been established nationwide. The programme is supported by a state-backed financing mechanism in which commercial banks provide investment loans with interest-rate incentives and collateral guarantees of 80 to 100 per cent through the Credit Guarantee Fund of Mongolia. This enables herders to access loans of up to 50 million MNT (approximately USD 14,500) over 60 months at an interest rate of 6 per cent, replacing earlier reliance on informal and high-cost credit arrangements.

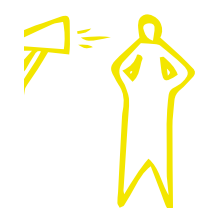
CAPA members contributed to the institutional environment that made this programme viable. ILC member NAMAC provided cooperative development expertise, and the Law on the Legal Status of Herder Associations (2024), to whose drafting NAMAC contributed, gave cooperatives their formal legal standing. The model promotes a structural shift from subsistence herding toward organised collective production, with implications for both economic resilience and political voice. Together with the Kyrgyzstan forecast-based insurance pilot, the cooperative reforms form part of an emerging portfolio of climate-risk and economic-resilience instruments that the platform is actively documenting and seeking to replicate across the region.



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BUILDING THE GLOBAL CASE FOR RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISM: ADVOCACY AND EVIDENCE GENERATION

Alongside national and community-level initiatives, CAPA has engaged in global policy processes and knowledge systems that are progressively strengthening the recognition of pastoralism as a legitimate, rights-based, and climate-relevant land use grounded in mobility and collective stewardship.

THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISTS 2026

The International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) is the first UN-designated international year focused on rangelands and the communities that depend on them. For Central Asian pastoralists, who have historically been treated as a marginal rural constituency in international policy, the year represents a sustained political opening to reframe pastoralism as a climate solution, a food system, and a rights-based form of land use. Mongolia's role as the proposing government, supported by Kyrgyzstan and with continued leadership from Central Asia Pastoralist Alliance members, has positioned the region as a contributor to shaping the global pastoralism agenda rather than only responding to it.

The platform's advocacy for the initiative began in 2016, when platform members started building the case for a UN-designated year. In 2018, this preparatory work contributed to the Mongolian Government's decision to submit a formal proposal to the Food and Agriculture Organization, which was subsequently endorsed by the Committee on Agriculture in October 2020. In March 2022, the UN General Assembly adopted the resolution with support from 102 countries and 303 organisations.

Since 2022, CAPA has co-chaired the Central Asia and Mongolia IYRP Regional Implementation Support Group, alongside ILC/platform member JASIL as its chair. In 2025, the platform shifted from advocacy to operational implementation by developing an annual IYRP work plan with member organisations, launching a dedicated regional communications platform, hosting the 7th National Rangeland Forum in Mongolia with a focus on IYRP, convening webinars on legislative developments across member countries, and co-organising regional policy dialogues.

CAPA also coordinates engagement with the FAO Pastoralist Knowledge Hub, while the participation of platform members in UNCCD COP16 and UNFCCC COP29, supported by ILC, has further strengthened the visibility of Central Asian pastoralist voices within the climate and biodiversity processes.

A REGIONAL POLICY BRIEF ON RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISM (2026)

In 2026, CAPA formulated a Regional Policy Brief on Rangelands and Pastoralism in Central Asia, a capstone advocacy document aligned with UNGA Resolution A/RES/76/208, as well as the UNCCD COP-16 Riyadh Commitments. The brief synthesises community consultations, structured surveys among member organisations, desk research, and official data into 10 policy recommendations spanning community-based rangeland management, pastoral mobility corridor protection, tenure security, climate resilience, gender equity, youth engagement, data systems, multi-stakeholder platforms, and investment in pastoral economies. The brief is targeted at three audiences: national governments, UNCCD COP17, and international development partners.

FILLING DATA GAPS WITH INDICATORS ON PASTURE TENURE SECURITY

A persistent limitation in pastoral land governance is the invisibility of collective, mobile, and seasonal tenure arrangements within conventional monitoring systems. Standard indicators are designed around individual, fixed ownership — leaving shared grazing rights, negotiated use arrangements, and seasonal mobility largely unmeasured and, as a result, unrecognised in policy.

To address this, the ILC, in collaboration with the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and PRINDEX, developed a set of indicators specifically designed to assess pastoral land tenure security through LANDex, ILC's global land governance monitoring index. These indicators were developed through extensive consultation, feedback, and validation with ILC's pastoralist membership, ensuring they capture the realities of collective, overlapping, and seasonal land use that are structurally absent from conventional tenure frameworks. The resulting indicators provide a critical tool for measuring tenure security in ways that recognise mobility and shared resource governance, and are intended to inform both advocacy and policy design for governments and communities.

In December 2025, this work reached an institutional milestone when ILC signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Mongolia and the National Land Coalition of Mongolia (NLC)— an ILC member-led national platform whose membership overlaps with CAPA, with several organisations active in both platforms — to jointly develop and integrate pastoralist-specific indicators into national land monitoring and governance systems. The agreement formally recognises pastoralists as active contributors to land data, policy, and decision-making, and commits all parties to aligning LANDex implementation with Land Degradation Neutrality objectives and the Rio Conventions. As Mongolia prepares to host UNCCD COP-17 and leads the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, the partnership positions pastoralist land data as a direct contribution to the global agenda on land degradation and climate resilience.

3.4 YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Youth succession in pastoralism represents a structural challenge, as increasing livelihood precarity drives many younger pastoralists to shift away from herding towards urban employment and non-pastoral economies. In response, the platform has invested in strengthening youth engagement by positioning young pastoralists as active participants in advocacy and policy processes. Youth members have taken part in major international forums, including UNFCCC COP28 and COP29, as well as UNCCD COP16, through engagement with ILC and IYRP networks. At the regional level, CAPA has established a database of young pastoralists, and served as a co-organiser of ILC's Interregional School for Young Pastoralists launched in 2026. The platform is also supporting intergenerational dialogue processes within the ILC's Mobility Matters Campaign and the UNCCD Silk Way Caravan initiative. Across the region, these initiatives are contributing to a more structured pathway for youth leadership in pastoral governance, combining data systems, training programmes, and sustained participation in global policy processes to deepen engagement through 2026 and beyond.



Photo: ©ILC/Jason Taylor

WE COULD NOT DO IT ALONE

PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPACT

The platform's effectiveness is rooted in its collaborative approach to coalition-building, convening a diverse range of actors, from government officials and international organisations to pastoralist associations and local women's groups, and integrating advocacy, knowledge generation, legal expertise, and practice-based demonstration into a coherent strategy for change. By linking community-level practice with national-level policy processes, the platform creates pathways of influence that connect local realities with institutional decision-making.

The platform's core membership includes 10 ILC members, complemented by a broader network of over 19 platform member organisations and 6 government agencies across 5 countries. At the regional and international level, CAPA maintains strategic partnerships with organisations and platforms including the Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Livestock Research Institute, the Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities Consortium, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation, the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples, and the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists Regional Implementation Support Group for Central Asia and Mongolia, which CAPA co-chairs.

COUNTRY	ILC MEMBERS	KEY PARTNERS	GOVERNMENT BODIES
KYRGYZSTAN	Kyrgyz Jayty (National Pasture Users' Association) KAFLU (Kyrgyz Association of Forest and Land Users) RDF (Rural Development Fund)	—	Ministry of Water Resources, Agriculture and Processing Industry
KAZAKHSTAN	IESD (Institute of Ecology and Sustainable Development)	Farmers' Organisation of Kazakhstan (FOK) Otandastar Khory Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia (CAREC) State Agriculture University of Kazakhstan	Ministry of Agriculture
MONGOLIA	CPR (Centre for Policy Research) JASIL (Environment and Development Association) NFPUG (National Federation of Pasture User Groups of Herders) NAMAC (National Association of Mongolian Agricultural Cooperatives) MLMA (Mongolian Land Management Association)	Centre for Desertification Studies Free Land Association Pasture and Water Union Mongolian Academy of Sciences Erdem University Agriculture Training Centre	Ministry of Food and Agriculture Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism



FORGING PARTNERSHIPS



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COUNTRY	ILC MEMBERS	KEY PARTNERS	GOVERNMENT BODIES
TAJIKISTAN	—	National Association of Dekhan Farmers (NADF)	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
UZBEKISTAN	—	Agricultural Innovation and Information Centre (AIIC) Agroinnovation Fund Public Union Karakul Sheep Research Institute and Desert Ecology	Inter-Ministerial Programme on Pastures of Uzbekistan (IMPPUz)
INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS	FAO IFAD ILRI ICCA Consortium	UNCCD SDC (Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation) WAMIP (World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples) IYRP RISG – Central Asia and Mongolia (co-chaired by CAPA)	—

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