

SOUTH ASIA PASTORALIST ALLIANCE (SAPA)

PARTNERSHIPS

since 2015

40+
Member organisations
plus 9 individual members



Inputs

SOUTH ASIA PASTORALIST ALLIANCE (SAPA)

since 2015

CHANGES IN
POLICIES and PRACTICES

Inputs to Legislative and Policy

India - The Draft National
Commons Policy

LAND RIGHTS ACROSS SOUTH ASIA'S RANGELANDS

EXPERIENCES FROM THE SOUTH ASIAN
PASTORALIST ALLIANCE (SAPA) 2021-2026

INTERNATIONAL
LAND
COALITION

UNITED
FOR LAND
RIGHTS

combining policy advocacy with
community-based practices

Pastoralist Women's Alliance
restoration of commons (96%
of degraded land)

Asia Pastoralist Women's Gathering
revisited the MERA Declaration

CONTEXTUAL PROBLEMS



GAP IN
FRAMEWORKS
IMPLEMENTATION



DEEPENING
INEQUALITY AND
LAND
DISPOSSESSION



ESCALATING CLIMATE
AND ECOLOGICAL
PRESSURES



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Established in 2015 through the South Asia regional process of the **World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples**, the **South Asia Pastoralist Alliance (SAPA)** is a member-led regional platform supported by the **International Land Coalition (ILC)** that works to strengthen people-centred land governance across South Asia's rangelands and commons.

Hosted by ILC member **Maldhari Rural Action Group (MARAG)**, SAPA convenes pastoralist organisations, civil society groups, government agencies, research institutions, and individual practitioners in a collaborative network spanning seven countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. The platform currently engages 10 ILC members within a wider community of more than 40 organisations and nine individual members committed to advancing pastoralist rights and sustainable land governance in the region.

The platform's strategy rests on three framing pillars:

- » **forging partnerships;**
- » empowering pastoralist communities through **knowledge**, capacity-building and advocacy; and
- » **influencing policy and practice** for the recognition of pastoralist tenure, mobility and stewardship.

Across these pillars, SAPA works as a convening, coordination and advocacy space through which national member organisations lead work in their own country contexts.

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 South 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:

- » legislative and policy **engagement;**
- » fostering **knowledge**, documentation and grassroots leadership; and
- » global **advocacy** and pastoralist representation in the lead-up to the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) 2026, before closing with a section on key partnerships and platform membership.

7

Countries engaged across South Asia

40+

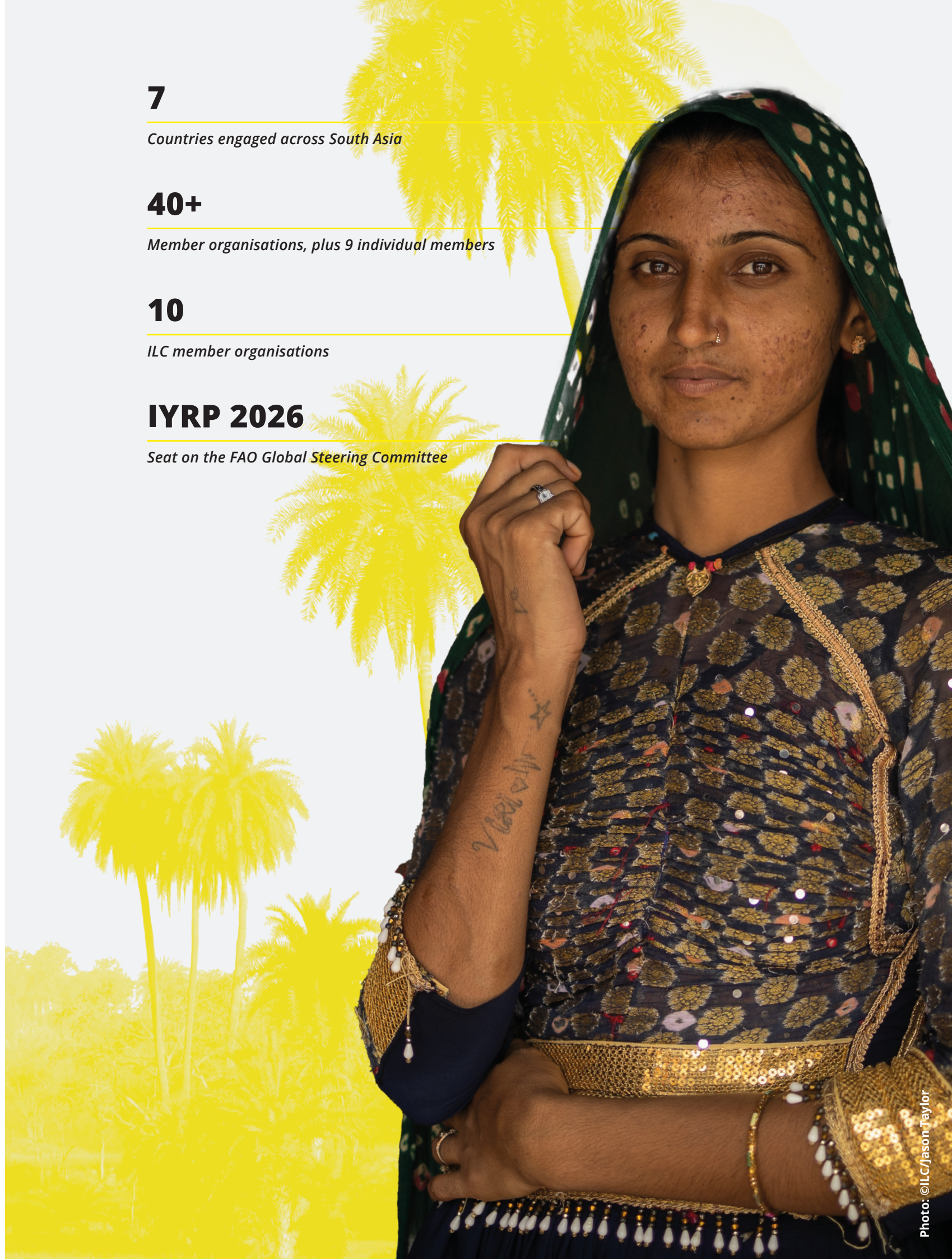
Member organisations, plus 9 individual members

10

ILC member organisations

IYRP 2026

Seat on the FAO Global Steering Committee



KEY CONTRIBUTIONS AT A GLANCE

Between 2021 and early 2026, SAPA and its members have broadened the reach of pastoralist voices in the South Asian land and policy landscape. The platform's contributions are visible at three scales, national, regional and global, and across two dimensions: the growing legal recognition and reclaiming of commons and customary tenure through early policy formulation and on-the-ground demarcation, and a wider agenda shift in which pastoralism is increasingly treated as a climate solution, a food system and a rights-bearing form of land use rather than a marginal rural livelihood.

At the national level, members have contributed to policy formulation and to the reclaiming of common land, particularly in India, where national platform members helped develop the country's first Draft National Commons Policy (under review) and supported the demarcation and release of commons land across 15 villages.

At the regional level, SAPA has fostered a vibrant network for learning and knowledge exchange, documenting and disseminating good practices that contribute to a shared advocacy framework and a stronger, collective pastoralist voice. The platform has also convened pastoralist youth from across the region, strengthening leadership and ensuring that youth perspectives are meaningfully represented in IYRP processes.

At the global level, the platform has elevated the voice and representation of Asian pastoralists in key international policy and advocacy spaces. A representative of its Pastoralist Women's Alliance secured a seat on the FAO Global Steering Committee for IYRP 2026, ensuring direct pastoralist engagement in global coordination efforts. The platform also co-led the pastoralist constituency at the Nyéléni Global Forum 2025 in Sri Lanka, and amplified member perspectives at major global forums, including UNCCD COP16, the UNFSS+4 Roundtable on Pastoralism, and the Global Rangelands Congress. In addition, it helped convene the 2025 Asia Pastoralist Women's Gathering, which renewed the 2010 MERA Declaration and defined shared regional priorities for women pastoralists and the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists.

The chapters that follow explore these contributions in more depth, with regards to legislative and policy reform (Chapter 1), the knowledge, documentation and grassroots leadership processes that underpin advocacy (Chapter 2), and the platform's role in positioning South Asian pastoralists within global frameworks shaping their future (Chapter 3).



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THE RANGELANDS AND PASTORALIST CONTEXT IN SOUTH ASIA

Pastoralism is a central way of life across South Asia. From the nomads of Afghanistan and the yak-herders of the Nepali Himalaya, to the camel, sheep and cattle keepers of western and southern India- millions of people depend on the commons: the forests, water sources and pastures managed through long-standing customary arrangements. India alone has some 13 million pastoralists across 46 communities, and around 77 per cent of its livestock, the largest national herd in the world, is raised in pastoral systems. In total, over 100 million hectares of land in Asia fall under the commons, supporting between 48 and 75 per cent of the rural population. Yet despite this scale, pastoralists remain increasingly vulnerable as the commons are encroached upon, acquired or converted, and as their mobility and customary tenure remain largely unrecognised in law.

LEGAL FRAMEWORKS ON TENURE

Recognition of rangelands, commons and pastoralists' rights varies widely across South Asia, and a persistent gap remains between legal frameworks and lived realities on the ground. Across the region, where frameworks do exist, they are typically designed around settled land users and individual title, leaving collective, mobile and customary tenure arrangements structurally unprotected. India, for example, has no national rangeland policy or dedicated commons legislation, though a Supreme Court 2011 ruling requires states to restore encroached commons to community use, and some states have adopted supporting provincial frameworks. In Afghanistan, a rangeland policy and legislation exist, but the legal status of rural and pastoral groups remains poorly defined, and the governance gains made before 2021 have been disrupted by the political transition. In Nepal, where approximately 23 per cent of land is classified as rangeland, the 2010 Rangeland Policy provides a framework, but pastoralists still lack formal legal recognition. Bangladesh, a predominantly sedentary agrarian legal system, offers very limited statutory protection for nomadic and agro-pastoral communities.

INEQUALITY AND DISPOSSESSION

Pastoralists are predominantly landless or hold insecure communal rights, and land distribution across South Asia is consistently and highly unequal. Land Gini coefficients are estimated at around 0.76 to 0.80 in India and Bangladesh, 0.59 to 0.84 in Pakistan, 0.65 in Nepal, and 0.57 in Afghanistan. These figures, based on individually held agricultural land, systematically exclude commons users and landless households, which constitute a substantial share of pastoral populations. As a result, the true extent of inequality is likely far higher than standard land distribution data indicate. This structural insecurity is further compounded by encroachment from commercial agriculture, infrastructure development, conservation programmes, and extractive industries, as well as the conversion of common grazing lands to alternative uses without free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC).

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL PRESSURES

South Asia's rangelands are under intensifying ecological pressures. Recurrent droughts and erratic monsoons, accelerating land degradation and the spread of invasive species are reducing native grasses and fodder availability, while also severely restricting traditional grazing routes. Where land restoration programmes are developed and implemented, they are typically framed through forestry, agriculture, or biodiversity conservation agendas, with pastoral systems largely absent from their design. As a result, pastoralists are not only excluded from the planning processes, but also from the climate finance and disaster-risk mechanisms established in response to these challenges.

WOMEN AND PASTORAL SYSTEMS

Pastoralist women play essential roles across South Asian rangeland systems- from livestock care, dairy processing, and biodiversity stewardship- yet their contributions remain consistently undervalued in formal governance structures. In western India, women historically held shared authority over livestock and grazing decisions, but declining access to commons has eroded this autonomy. In Nepal, women in high-altitude systems contribute extensively to livestock and rangeland management but face constrained mobility and insecure or unclear tenure rights. In Afghanistan, women remain central to herd management yet hold highly insecure land rights, while in Bangladesh there are no legal provisions for women's ownership of communal pastoral resources and no quotas for their participation in land-management institutions (LANDex, 2026). Across the region, women pastoralists remain among the groups with the weakest formal tenure security and the least representation in governance bodies determining access to the lands they manage, underscoring the urgent need for sustained advocacy for their fundamental rights.

TIMELINE AND THEORY OF CHANGE



2026

- » The **IYRP 2026** is inaugurated with **SAPA's seat on the FAO Global Steering Committee** coming into effect (April), which focuses on mainstreaming rangelands and pastoralism in national and global agendas. Platform members work to influence relevant declarations with regional priorities emerging from the global gatherings of pastoralist youth and women.

2025

- » Bhavna Desai (Pastoralist Women's Alliance) is endorsed to the **FAO IYRP GLOBAL STEERING COMMITTEE**.
- » Members play an active role in **UNCCD COP16**, the Global Rangelands Congress and the UNFSS+4 Roundtable on Pastoralism.
- » SAPA joins **SLOW FOOD** and formalises its partnership with WAMIP.
- » **Sri Lanka:** SAPA and WAMIP co-lead the pastoralist constituency at the Nyéléni Global Forum in Sri Lanka (September).
- » The **ASIA PASTORALIST WOMEN'S GATHERING** (December) convenes pastoralist women from across Asia to update the 2010 MERA Declaration as MERA+15 and officially launches the IYRP at regional level.

2022

- » The UN General Assembly adopts Resolution A/RES/76/208 (March), designating 2026 as the **International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists**, is backed by 102 countries and 303 organisations.
- » SAPA begins efforts to expand membership.

2023-24

- » **THE PLATFORM EXPANDS** to **Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bhutan**; membership grows from 32 to 40 organisations.
- » **India:** The **Pastoralist Youth Fair** (Mera, Gujarat, June 2024) gathers over 100 young pastoralists and adopts the Youth Charter of Demands on commons, climate and culture.
- » **India, BANGLADESH:** Around 5,000 hectares of village commons are demarcated and/or released across 15 villages in India; 20 hectares are released for 553 families in Bangladesh with support from platform members.

2021

- » **India:** The **National Pastoralist Alliance** (Rashtriya Pashupalan Sangathan) is consolidated as a pan-Indian federation and the Pastoralist Women's Alliance (Maldhari Mahila Ayog) is launched.
- » **India:** 126 individual and 14 community Forest Rights Act claims are accepted at sub-divisional level in India with support from national platform members.

2016-20

- » **ALLIANCE-BUILDING** across **India, Afghanistan and Nepal**; national pastoralist alliances formed in India and Afghanistan.
- » **Afghanistan:** Afghan members, with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, draft four rangeland and commons instruments and establish 39 pastoralist associations and 19 Pastoralist Boards.
- » **India:** India members begin the Draft National Commons Policy with ActionAid and start Forest Rights Act work for non-tribal pastoralists.
- » ILC initiates support to SAPA as a regional thematic platform.
- » **JOINT CIVIL SOCIETY ADVOCACY**, alongside CAPA, FAO and Mongolia, supports a proposed UN year for rangelands, endorsed by the FAO Committee on Agriculture (2020).

2015

- » **SAPA ESTABLISHED** as the South Asia process of WAMIP, with technical backing from the FAO Pastoralist Knowledge Hub. MARAG (India) takes the host role.

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ESCALATING CLIMATE
AND ECOLOGICAL
PRESSURES



SYSTEMIC
MARGINALISATION
OF WOMEN

FORGING PARTNERSHIPS



40+
Member organisations
plus 9 individual members

EMPOWERING PASTORALIST COMMUNITIES THROUGH KNOWLEDGE, CAPACITY- BUILDING



documenting and disseminating good
practices

regular webinars, peer-learning
exchanges, newsletter

network for learning and knowledge
exchange

ADVOCACY



Building youth leadership:
the Charter of Demands

combining policy advocacy with
community-based practices

SOUTH ASIA PASTORALIST ALLIANCE (SAPA)

since 2015

CHANGES IN POLICIES and PRACTICES



Inputs to Legislative and Policy Reform

India - The Draft National
Commons Policy in India

India - 126 individual and 14 community claims
accepted at sub-divisional level



In India, contributed to securing the inclusion of
a dedicated enumeration of pastoralist
communities in the national Livestock Census



Pastoralist Women's Alliance led the
restoration of commons (961 hectares
of degraded land)



Asia Pastoralist Women's Gathering
revisited the MERA Declaration



CONTRIBUTIONS

TO ADVANCING PEOPLE-CENTRED LAND GOVERNANCE

The platform's key contributions are organised into three interlinked areas: (i) ensuring pastoralist inputs to legislative and policy reform; (ii) fostering the knowledge, documentation and grassroots leadership that underpin pastoralist advocacy; and (iii) representing South Asian pastoralists in regional and global advocacy spaces, including in the lead-up to the IYRP 2026.

1

ENSURING PASTORALIST INPUTS TO LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY REFORM

The platform's contribution to national policy has taken three key forms. First, **direct participation in drafting and consultation**, as with India's Draft National Commons Policy and the pre-2021 Afghan rangelands framework. Second, **convening and coordination**, where the platform organises pastoralist and civil society inputs and routes them through credible national bodies supported by the platform, such as the National Pastoralist Alliance in India. Third, **applying existing law**, such as the Forest Rights Act in India, to secure recognition on the ground in a region where pastoralism is rarely recognised in national law.

THE DRAFT NATIONAL COMMONS POLICY IN INDIA

As of 2026, India has no national law dedicated to the commons, the pastures, wetlands, water bodies and shared grazing lands on which pastoralist livelihoods depend. That absence is most consequential for pastoralists, whose mobility and collective tenure fall outside the individual-title model that governs most Indian land law. The legal foundations exist only in fragments, principally a Supreme Court's 2011 ruling¹ which requires states to restore commons to community use, and a 1988 resolution providing 40 acres of pasture per 100 livestock. While some states have introduced provincial frameworks, no national instrument effectively consolidates or systematises these provisions.

The platform began work on a national policy in 2020, with ILC member and platform host MARAG leading the drafting process with support from ActionAid as a resource partner.



1 Jagpal Singh and Others v. State of Punjab

This process was grounded in several years of consultation with pastoralist communities, women's organisations, civil society and legal experts, and channelled through the **National Pastoralist Alliance** (Rashtriya Pashupalan Sangathan) - a pan-Indian federation established with the platform's support to advance national-level pastoralist policy engagement and solidarity.

The resulting draft policy proposes a coherent framework for the demarcation, registration, and protection of village commons; the recognition of pastoralist user rights over rangelands; and the inclusion of pastoralist representation within local governance institutions. It also incorporates a deliberate gender lens, including provisions to register livestock-enclosure (Vada) land titles in women's names, drawing on women-led commons restoration efforts documented by platform members in Gujarat. This coordinated input ensured that commons and pastoralist concerns, often marginalised in mainstream policy processes, were incorporated into the draft as formal civil society proposals. As of 2026, the draft is under final review by legal experts.

FOREST RIGHTS FOR OTHER TRADITIONAL FOREST DWELLERS IN INDIA

The Forest Rights Act (2006) recognises the rights of people who live in and depend on forests in India, including both Scheduled Tribes and "Other Traditional Forest Dwellers" (OTFDs). The latter category is intended to include non-tribal communities with long-standing dependence on forests, including pastoralists who rely on forest landscapes for seasonal grazing and mobility.

In practice, implementation has largely favoured Scheduled Tribes, while the OTFD category has been used far less frequently. As a result, many pastoralist communities outside the ST classification remain under-recognised, and their seasonal grazing in forest areas is often treated as informal access rather than a legal right. Administrative systems have also struggled to assess claims from mobile communities whose land use is cyclical rather than settled.

In light of these challenges, pastoralist organisations and partners have worked to operationalise the Act for mobile livelihoods. In collaboration with the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES), an ILC member, SAPA developed approaches to document seasonal use and grazing patterns and engaged with authorities to support claim submission and review. By 2021, 126 individual and 14 community claims had been accepted at sub-divisional level, with additional claims in progress across several states, thanks in part to the efforts of national platform members in India.

These efforts are helping to progressively strengthen recognition of pastoralist rights under the Forest Rights Act, creating important precedents for more inclusive interpretations of forest governance that better reflect mobile and seasonal livelihoods.



Photo: © ILC/Michael Benahav

POLICY ENGAGEMENT BEYOND INDIA

Policy engagement outside India remains at a formative stage and varies significantly across countries, reflecting differing political contexts and institutional entry points. Across the region, work ranges from direct policy engagement to early-stage analysis, coalition-building, and rights-based advocacy.

In Afghanistan, the platform previously had its strongest policy footprint. Prior to August 2021, members working with the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock contributed to four rangeland and commons policy instruments and supported the establishment of 39 pastoralist associations and 19 Pastoralist Boards. Following the political transition, this progress was disrupted, and current engagement focuses on solidarity, maintaining visibility of pastoralist constituencies, and preserving institutional memory. In Nepal, members working through ILC member COLARP and the Dolpo Indigenous Peoples Development Centre are reviewing land and rangeland governance frameworks, including the Land Reform Act (1964), the Pasture Land Nationalisation Act (1974), and the Rangeland Policy (2010), with emphasis on policy analysis and engagement with pasture user committees. In Bangladesh, ILC member Community Development Association (CDA) engages in livestock policy processes affecting agro-pastoral communities, while in Sri Lanka², Bhutan, and Pakistan, members are increasingly integrating issues of grazing rights, customary tenure, and pastoral mobility into national policy discussions.

2 In Sri Lanka, platform member NAFSO has supported Tamil pastoralist communities in advocating for the protection of traditional grazing lands in the Madhavanai and Mayilathamadu grasslands. Through research, legal advocacy, and engagement with authorities, they have drawn attention to land encroachment, declining pasture access, and the need for formal recognition of pastoral land rights.

GOOD PRACTICE

From Invisible Labour to Land Rights: The Pastoralist Women's Alliance in India

Pastoralist women underpin the productivity and resilience of South Asia's rangelands. They play central roles in livestock care, dairy production, breed selection, and the day-to-day management of grazing resources, yet their contributions are rarely recognised in the records and registers that determine rights to land and natural resources. This invisibility is not accidental; it is a key mechanism through which women remain excluded from tenure security, decision-making, and the governance of the commons.

In India, women are legally entitled to inherit land under the Hindu Succession Act and can claim community forest rights under the Forest Rights Act. In several states, government resolutions also provide avenues for women to access and manage village commons. However, limited awareness of these provisions, weak implementation, and persistent social norms continue to constrain women's ability to exercise these rights in practice.

The **Pastoralist Women's Alliance** (Maldhari Mahila Sangathan), established in Gujarat with the support of the South Asia Pastoralist Alliance, was founded on a clear premise: that systematically documenting women's roles in pastoral systems can generate the evidentiary basis required to advance claims over rights and recognition. Its work therefore combines three interconnected strands. First, it undertakes the mapping of Maldhari women's contributions to pastoral livelihoods and commons-based resource management. Second, it sustains legal literacy efforts on the frameworks governing commons governance and inheritance rights, strengthening women's capacity to engage with existing legal provisions. Third, it translates this evidence into formal policy proposals, most notably through *gender-responsive provisions developed for India's Draft National Commons Policy*.

The Alliance's flagship initiative is the *restoration of commons* in Rapar block, Kutch. By 2022, Maldhari Rural Action Group, the SAPA host organisation, had identified 10 villages in which 961 hectares of common grazing land had been degraded due to encroachment, recurrent drought, and long-term neglect.

Recognising that ecological restoration required parallel reforms in governance, *women across the 10 villages organised themselves into Women Pasture Land Management Committees*—one in each village—and took the lead in implementing restoration activities. These included the removal of invasive species, soil testing and land levelling, the sowing of native grasses, GPS-based boundary demarcation, and water-recharge interventions.

The initiative was financed through convergence of two public schemes: the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, which supports rural employment-based public works, and Gujarat's Gauchar Vikas Yojana, which funds the regeneration of village grazing lands. *Following restoration, the rehabilitated Vada plots were formally registered in women's names*, marking a significant shift in both tenure recognition and governance authority.

This evidence, demonstrating that communities most dependent on the commons are also capable of governing them effectively, has informed the policy proposals referenced above and has subsequently been shared through platform-facilitated exchanges with platform members and partners in Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

The experience and lessons emerging from this initiative are explored in greater depth in the full case study, found [here](#).

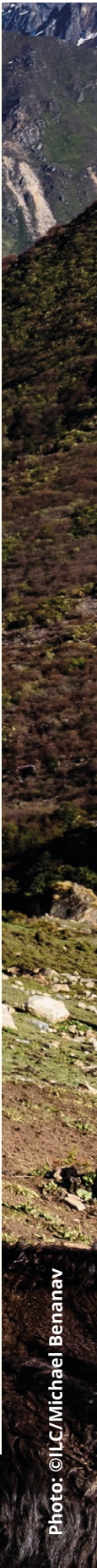
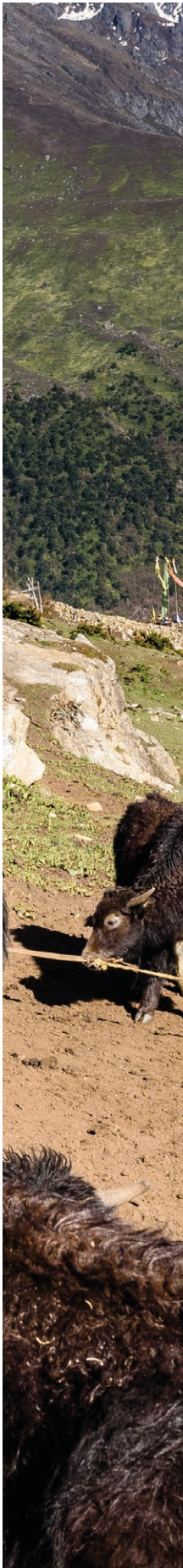


Photo: ©ILC/Michael Benahav

2

FOSTERING KNOWLEDGE, DOCUMENTATION AND GRASSROOTS LEADERSHIP

The platform's second key area of focus is the generation and mobilisation of knowledge, alongside the strengthening of grassroots leadership, including youth leadership. These efforts are implemented through regular webinars, peer-learning exchanges, a newsletter, and the compilation of best practices, enabling approaches developed in one context to be adapted and applied across diverse local settings.

BUILDING YOUTH LEADERSHIP: THE CHARTER OF DEMANDS

The **Pastoralist Youth Fair** in Mera, Gujarat (June 2024) was convened by the platform as a regional space for youth engagement and political articulation. Bringing together over 100 young pastoralists from six countries, the Fair enabled the collective drafting of the **Charter of Demands of Young Pastoralists in South Asia**, a first regional statement of its kind produced by pastoralist youth. The Charter is structured around three priority domains identified by participants as decisive for their future: the commons, climate and culture.

On the **commons**, the Charter calls for a national commons policy developed in consultation with pastoralist communities, a prohibition on industrial and extractive development on commons land, and the formal inclusion of pastoralist organisations in livestock census processes. On **climate**, it demands recognition and remuneration for pastoralists' role in environmental stewardship, alongside requirements for the free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) of communities- particularly women- before commons are allocated to renewable energy projects. On **culture**, it calls for the documentation of traditional knowledge systems and the formal recognition of pastoralist skills, practices, and languages within national education and policy frameworks.

The significance of the Charter lies not only in the substance of its demands, but in its role as a collective political instrument. It provides young pastoralists across the region with a shared framework for engagement, as well as a transferable advocacy tool that can be deployed across diverse governance and policy arenas. In doing so, it also signals a shift from viewing youth as participants in consultation processes towards recognising youth as agenda-setters and leaders in their own right.

Since its adoption, **youth representatives have carried the Charter into several major policy and advocacy spaces and platforms**, including the IYRP Youth Working Group, the International Land Coalition (ILC) youth constituency, the Global Landscapes Forum Youth Programme, and the Nyéléni Global Youth Assembly. Regional demands are also being consolidated for presentation in policy dialogues at UNCCD COP17 in Mongolia, further extending its influence into global environmental governance arenas.

CONTRIBUTING TO NATIONAL AND GLOBAL EVIDENCE SYSTEMS

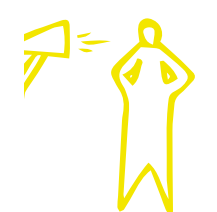
The platform has strengthened the integration of pastoralist perspectives into the evidence systems that inform policy, planning, and advocacy at national, regional, and global levels. This has involved both direct contributions to official data systems and active engagement in the development of new indicators designed to better capture pastoralist realities.

In India, the National Pastoralist Alliance played a leading role in engaging with the Government to secure the inclusion of a dedicated enumeration of pastoralist communities in the national Livestock Census. Through a series of dialogues and consultations with government agencies, the Alliance underscored the importance of generating reliable data on both migratory and non-migratory pastoralist populations in order to inform more effective and targeted policy and programme responses.

As a result of this sustained engagement, the Livestock Census has, for the first time since India's independence, incorporated the enumeration of pastoralist communities. Members of the platform actively supported the process by ensuring that pastoralist groups were identified and counted across diverse contexts, as well as by implementing a nationwide awareness campaign to encourage participation and improve coverage. While this represents a significant milestone in terms of visibility, the resulting census data has not yet been made publicly available.

At the global level, ILC, in collaboration with ODI/PRINDEX, developed a set of indicators to assess land tenure security for pastoralists through LANDex. These indicators were designed through extensive consultation, feedback, and validation with ILC's pastoralist membership, ensuring that they reflect the realities of collective, overlapping, and seasonal land use systems that are often absent from conventional tenure frameworks. The resulting indicators offer 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.

SAPA members actively contributed to these consultation processes and are now using the resulting **policy brief** and **technical report** as advocacy tools at regional and national levels. Together, these efforts contribute to expanding the body of people-generated evidence on pastoral land use, tenure, and governance, reinforcing the empirical foundations for more inclusive policy and advocacy processes across multiple scales.





3

GLOBAL ADVOCACY AND PASTORALIST REPRESENTATION

Alongside national and community-level efforts, the platform has worked to position South Asian pastoralists within the global frameworks and institutional agendas that progressively define pastoralism as a legitimate, rights-bearing and climate-relevant land use system. To date, the platform's most concentrated period of global engagement has coincided with the regional mobilisation for the **International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) 2026** and with the 2024–25 cluster of UN conferences.

THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF RANGELANDS AND PASTORALISTS 2026

The International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) 2026 is the first United Nations–designated international year dedicated to rangelands and the communities that depend on them.

Its establishment was shaped by a sustained global civil society campaign in which ILC members and regional pastoralist platforms, including SAPA and its Central Asian counterpart CAPA, played a central role. Together, they supported the proposal submitted by Mongolia to FAO, which was endorsed by the FAO Committee on Agriculture in 2020 and subsequently adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in March 2022, with the backing of 102 countries and 303 organisations.

The IYRP Global Alliance, though not a formal institution, operates through solidarity, collaboration, and voluntary contributions from a broad coalition of civil society organisations, NGOs, pastoralist networks, and development partners. SAPA co-chairs the Alliance's South Asia regional group, where it contributes to coordination, advocacy, knowledge sharing, and the promotion of pastoralist priorities within the wider IYRP agenda. Select member representatives sit on global thematic working groups covering land, water, women, youth, and biodiversity- helping embed pastoralist perspectives across the IYRP architecture. In a significant milestone, Bhavna Desai of the Pastoralist Women's Alliance was endorsed to the FAO Global Steering Committee for the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, with her mandate beginning in April 2026. This appointment makes her the first South Asian pastoralist woman to hold the seat.

For pastoralist communities in South Asia, which have historically been marginalised within national policy frameworks, International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists represents an important political opening to reposition pastoralism as a climate solution, a resilient food system, and a rights-based approach to land use and stewardship.

SOUTH ASIAN PASTORALIST ENGAGEMENT ACROSS THE UN PROCESSES

Since its establishment in 2015, the platform has worked consistently to strengthen and expand pastoralist representation within the intergovernmental processes that most directly shape the future of South Asia's rangelands. In recent years, this advocacy has translated into sustained engagement across multiple global policy arenas.

Key interventions include participation in the **UNFSS+4 Roundtable on Pastoralism**, where members elevated the perspectives and priorities of pastoralist women; and engagement at **UNCCD COP16**, where South Asia Pastoralist Alliance, in collaboration with the ILC, presented member-led good practices on rangeland governance and women-led landscape restoration. Members have also contributed to the Convention on Biological Diversity COP16 and UNFCCC COP29 through the promotion of the **Pastoralist Youth Charter** and engagement with allied initiatives, including **Women4Biodiversity** and the **International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development**.

In parallel, SAPA's co-coordination of the **Nyéléni Global Forum** in collaboration with the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples, alongside engagement with the **Slow Food** in 2025, has further consolidated its presence within global food sovereignty, climate, and biodiversity governance spaces. Collectively, these engagements have strengthened SAPA's recognition as a legitimate and representative regional pastoralist constituency within key international policy arenas.

FROM MERA TO MERA+15: WOMEN PASTORALISTS ON THE GLOBAL STAGE

In December 2025, SAPA members co-convened the Asia Pastoralist Women's Gathering in Gujarat, India, bringing together more than 100 pastoralist women from eight Asian countries. The gathering revisited the MERA Declaration (first articulated by pastoralist women in 2010), situating its core principles within the contemporary context of accelerating climate change, the contraction and fragmentation of grazing corridors, and intensifying contestations over land and resource rights.

The resulting **NERA+15 Declaration** sets out a collective agenda articulated by pastoralist women across the region. It calls for the recognition and enforcement of permanent collective rights to grazing lands, water sources, and commons, including the restitution of lands lost to enclosure, conservation interventions, or renewable energy developments implemented without free, prior and informed consent. It further demands the legal protection of seasonal and transboundary migration routes, ensuring continuity of mobility within and across national borders; equitable access to services, markets, and fair pricing systems that support mobile pastoral livelihoods rather than incentivising sedentarisation; formal recognition of women's traditional knowledge and leadership in governance, policy, and research processes; and strengthened legal safeguards against violence, dispossession, and criminalisation, alongside effective access to justice and redress mechanisms in cases of rights violations.

Framed within both the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists and the parallel International Year of Women Farmers, MERA+15 provides women pastoralists in Asia with a coherent, collectively endorsed framework of demands, while also reinforcing a strengthened regional platform through which these priorities can be advanced in national, regional, and global policy arenas.

WE COULD NOT DO IT ALONE

PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPACT

SAPA's effectiveness is grounded in the breadth of the network it convenes, encompassing pastoralist People's Organisations, civil society networks, research institutes, government bodies and international pastoralist movements across seven countries.

The platform's membership comprises 10 ILC member organisations, within a wider community of over 40 member organisations and 9 individual members. In collaboration with partners in government, research and intergovernmental agencies, these stakeholders integrate advocacy, knowledge generation, legal expertise and grassroots practice into a coherent regional strategy for people-centred land governance.

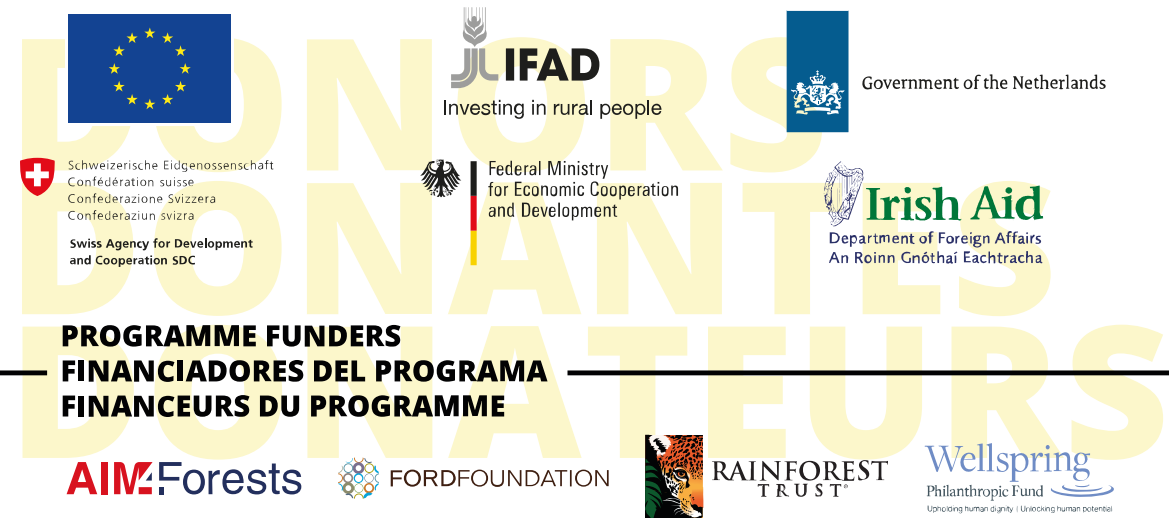
In addition to its core membership, SAPA maintains strategic partnerships with intergovernmental and movement-based actors, including the FAO Pastoralist Knowledge Hub, the World Alliance of Mobile Indigenous Peoples (WAMIP), the Slow Food movement, and the wider ILC network.

COUNTRY	ILC MEMBERS	KEY PARTNERS	GOVERNMENT BODIES
AFGHANISTAN	—	Individual members	» Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (Steering Group)
BANGLADESH	» Community Development Association (Steering Group)	—	—
BHUTAN	—	» College of Natural Resources, Lobesa,	» Agriculture, Animal Husbandry and Forest Department
INDIA	» Ekta Parishad » FES » KRAPAVIS » MARAG (host) » Prayatna Samiti » Social Justice » SPWD	» ActionAid India » Anthra » Azad Vikas Sangathan » Dhangar Vikas Sangthan » Himachal Pashupalak Sangathan » J&K Chopan Association » Kachchh Unt Ucherak Maldhari Sangthan » Karnataka Pastoralist Alliance » Ladakh Pastoralist Youth » Maldhari Mahila Sangathan » Maldhari Vikas Sangathan » Maldhari Yuva Sangathan » Rayka Vikas Sangathan » TFPPS » Van Gujjar Tribal Yuva Sangthan	» Ministry of Agriculture » Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change » Ministry of Rural Development » National Green Tribunal » NITI Aayog



COUNTRY	ILC MEMBERS	KEY PARTNERS	GOVERNMENT BODIES
NEPAL	COLARP (Steering Group)	» Dolpo Indigenous Peoples Development Centre	—
PAKISTAN	—	» Individual members (Steering Group)	—
SRI LANKA	—	» NAFSO (Steering Group) » Praja Abilasha Land Rights Network	—

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