



Global Gathering of Pastoralist Women

26-29 May 2026
Kathmandu, Nepal

Concept Note developed by the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP) Working Group on Pastoralism and Gender

Hosted by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) and jointly organized by the IYRP Working Group on Pastoralism & Gender and ICIMOD in partnership with RECONCILE, Women in Ranching, Anthra, Mujeres Ganaderas de Mexico (MUGAM) and others.

Pastoralist women play vital roles in sustaining resilient rangelands and thriving pastoralist communities. The Global Gathering of Pastoralist Women will recognise and support pastoralist women and their initiatives, strengthen their solidarity and amplify their voices in international discussions about rangelands and pastoralists. The Global Gathering of Pastoralist Women aims to ensure pastoralist women's voices and perspectives are included in all decisions that affect them, from local to global.



Background and rationale

Rangelands cover half of Earth's land surface and pastoralism is the world's most widespread land-use. In recognition of the importance of rangelands and pastoralists to humanity and the planet, the UN has declared 2026 the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP). The IYRP aims to raise awareness of the values that rangeland ecosystems and pastoral peoples provide the world and to catalyze action to protect rangelands and the livelihoods and communities they support. 2026 is also the UN International Year of the Woman Farmer. Women and girls who make up half of the world's pastoralist population make critical contributions to livestock care, land stewardship, food security, community resilience, innovation and entrepreneurship, while also passing on pastoralist traditional knowledge and culture. Yet to date they have little voice and power in many decisions that affect their families, communities and lands. The IYRP Working Group on Pastoralism and Gender (WGPG) includes 70 volunteer members from pastoralist and rangeland communities, governments, research institutions, civil society, the private sector, funding bodies and United Nations (UN) agencies, spanning 11 regions across the globe. The IYRP WGPG seeks to increase recognition of the essential roles women pastoralists play in maintaining vibrant and healthy rangelands and pastoralist communities, and to ensure that their voices and perspectives are included in all decisions that affect them from the local to global.

We propose a Global Gathering of Pastoralist Women (GGPW), hosted by the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD) in Kathmandu, Nepal in May 2026. The Global Gathering will bring together women from diverse pastoralist communities around the world to share their knowledge and experiences, collaboratively develop a global action plan for sustainable pastoralism that addresses women pastoralists' concerns, and launch a global network of pastoralist women. Representatives from this global gathering will carry their messages forward to various global fora during the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists 2026 (IYRP 2026), including the UNCCD COP17 in Mongolia, UNFCCC COP31 in 2026, and the UNCBD COP17. All participants will also take their learning back to their home communities, catalyzing the formation of a global network of networks of women pastoralists. Such a network can help ensure that women pastoralists' voices are always present and included in decision-making across multiple scales, from local to global.

The 1st [Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists](#) took place in November 2010 in the state of Gujarat, India. For the first time, pastoralist women from around the world united, shared experiences and developed a [Global Action Plan, known as the MERA Declaration](#). The proposed 2nd Global Gathering (Mera+16) will mobilize pastoralist women to take stock of progress in delivering the Mera 2010 action plan and increase recognition of pastoralist women around the world and their representation in decision-making at all levels.

Goal and objectives

The overall goal is to convene a global gathering of pastoralist women to facilitate knowledge sharing and learning, mutual support, network-building, and advocacy. The Global Gathering will celebrate pastoralist women, their contributions to pastoralism, and their knowledge, skills and cultures. Pastoralist women will have an opportunity to share their challenges, innovations, successes and solutions, and to make global connections that endure beyond the event, increasing global solidarity, mutual support, and sense of worth. Participants will collaborate in revising/developing a shared policy agenda and prepare to carry forward their messages to various global decision fora.

Specifically, the gathering will:

1. Facilitate knowledge exchange and sharing of experiences and cultures to build solidarity, a sense of worth, and an understanding that pastoralism is practised worldwide and that pastoralist women and communities in different parts of the world face similar challenges and opportunities
2. Facilitate the sharing of skills, good practices and successes for addressing the common problems that pastoralist women face globally
3. Identify priorities for gender-responsive and transformative pastoralist interventions from pastoralist women and their networks around the world
4. Strengthen networking and solidarity among pastoralist women's organisations and, if appropriate, create a global pastoralist women's network and platform for advocacy
5. Develop a roadmap for strengthening global capacity in gender-responsive pastoralist interventions
6. Revisit, reflect on and potentially revise or update the MERA Declaration created at the first global gathering of pastoralist women in 2010. This MERA +16 document would reflect the collective vision of the pastoralist women present and the networks they represent
7. Prepare women pastoralist representatives to convey key messages from the Mera+16 gathering to policymakers worldwide during 2026 and beyond.



Expected outcomes

Outcomes will depend upon the interests and priorities of the pastoralist women who participate in the global gathering. However, we expect they may include the following:

1. A global network of pastoralist women and their organizations/networks to support ongoing knowledge sharing, mutual support, and advocacy and to ensure women pastoralists' voices and perspectives are always included in decisions that affect them at the local, regional and global scales.
2. A revised and updated MERA Declaration (Mera +16) or call for action reflecting women pastoralists' priorities for policy, practice and research around the world.
3. A strategy to deliver the declaration/call for action at key global venues during 2026 and onwards, including the UNCCD COP17 in Mongolia (August 2026), UNFCCC COP 31 (November 2026), and UNCBD COP 17.
4. ~90 women pastoralists from every inhabited continent inspired and empowered with new knowledge, learning and networks that will directly benefit them, their communities and families.

Organizers, Participants and Organizational Arrangements

The Global Gathering is co-organized by the IYRP Working Group on Pastoralism and Gender (WGPG) and the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Research and Development (ICIMOD), with additional support from partner organizations. The WGPG, made up of 70 members from around the world, is part of the IYRP Global Alliance, a volunteer, grassroots, global network of pastoralists, practitioners, scholars and advocates, organized into thematic working groups. Established in 1983, ICIMOD is a multilateral organization serving the countries and peoples of the Hindu Kush with the mission to build and share knowledge that drives regional policy and action to transition to greener, more inclusive and climate resilient development.



ICIMOD has extensive experience in and capacity to organize and host international gatherings and the proposed Global Gathering of Pastoralist Women aligns closely with their mission and existing program areas. Other partner organizations include RECONCILE, Women in Ranching, Anthra, Women Pastoral Alliance, MARAG, and MUGAM. An initial organizing committee has been formed with representatives from the IYRP WGPG, ICIMOD and the Nepal Yak and Chauri Farmers Federation. A program committee led by pastoralist women with support from other WGPG members will develop the agenda for the gathering.

The main participants in the Global Gathering will be women from pastoralist women's organisations and networks around the world. Other participants may come from government institutions, research organisations or civil society organisations that support pastoralist women (i.e. "pastoralist support organisations"). The gathering prioritizes participation of pastoralist women, but recognizes that participants may need support navigating international travel and/or with language interpretation. Therefore, we encourage women pastoralists, if needed, to attend together with a support person who can provide language and travel support. We anticipate ~90 pastoralist women and local support people, and ~10 organizers, facilitators, and researchers will attend, for a total of 100 people.



The IYRP WGPG has carefully developed criteria for nominating participants to the Global Gathering to ensure that all participants are able to benefit fully from and contribute to the gathering, and are committed to communicating their learning with their communities when they return home. In addition, IYRP WGPG members are organizing regional gatherings of pastoralist women in 2025 and early 2026, prior to the global gathering. These regional gatherings will enable more grassroots participation of women pastoralists within each region. We encourage participants at each regional gathering to nominate participants to the Global Gathering, taking into account the recommended criteria. The IYRP WGPG is working to ensure alignment in the goals and agendas of the regional and global gatherings, while encouraging regional gatherings to include regional priorities and processes. Organization of regional gatherings of women pastoralists in Africa, South and Central Asia and North America is underway.

The specific agenda for the 4-day global gathering will be developed by the Program Committee, which includes pastoralist women from all IYRP regions. The committee will seek additional input from women pastoralists across all 11 IYRP regions to ensure the gathering is by and for pastoralist women. We expect the gathering may include activities such as talks by pastoralist women champions, small and large group discussions,

informal “campfire” chats, exhibitions of women’s arts and crafts, film screenings, and workshops tailored to pastoralist women’s interests (e.g. value-added livestock processing and marketing, forming a women’s network, emerging or persistent animal and human health issues, and advocacy skills). We expect some of the discussions will focus specifically on women’s priorities for pastoral development and policy, and knowledge needs. The event will be conducted primarily in English with support from simultaneous and sequential translators. Some small group discussions can be held in language groups where appropriate.

Budget and funding needs

The estimated total cost of holding the Global Gathering of Pastoralist Women in Nepal is ~US\$327,800. Thus, the average total cost per participant is US\$3,278. However, the actual costs for participants from some regions (e.g. South America) are much higher, and from other regions (e.g. South Asia) are lower. A detailed estimated budget is available upon request. Broken down, the cost per participant is US\$1400 plus international travel (airfare, ground transport, travel insurance and visa fee). Travel costs will vary greatly depending on the location of origin. A detailed estimated budget is available upon request. As host, ICIMOD will provide fully-equipped meeting facilities; planning, logistical and technical support for the meeting; and will organize all local logistics for participants and international travel (if assistance is needed).

Budget Item	Estimated Cost (USD)
International travel for 100 participants (average airfare \$1400, plus ground transport, visa fees, insurance)	\$187,000
Kathmandu lodging and meals for 100 x 5 days for 100 people; field trip	\$42,000
Simultaneous translation & written material translation	\$44,000
Materials, supplies, printing & communications	\$5,000
Facilitation, documentation, evaluation & reporting	\$20,000
ICIMOD administrative costs (10% of direct costs)	\$29,800
TOTAL	\$327,800

Partners are sought to cover the international travel (variable) and in-country gathering costs (US\$1400 per person) of 100 participants coming from all continents except Antarctica. Priority will be given to funding the travel of pastoralist women and their local support people.

Partners may want to:

- Provide core sponsorship for the Global Gathering of Pastoralist Women
- Sponsor a delegation of pastoralist women from a specific country or region
- Sponsor specific activities
- Provide in-kind logistical support to pastoralist women in obtaining travel documents, etc.

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