

Shared Grounds, Moving Futures

Annual Report
2024-2025





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Caption yet to be given

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Restoring Balance Between People and the Land

*Sandeep Virmani,
President, Sahjeevan*

Our forest communities, including pastoralists, have long possessed a deep and intimate understanding of the ecosystems they inhabit. Their traditional knowledge and cultural practices evolved to conserve these landscapes, not only because their livelihoods depended on them, but because they respected the delicate balance of nature. For centuries, this relationship thrived, sustaining both the people and the ecosystems. While occasional conflict with carnivores was inevitable—particularly those that preyed on livestock—most communities learned to coexist peacefully with the wild.

Sadly, this harmony was disrupted. First by colonial powers, and later by independent India’s own elite, who failed to comprehend this model of coexistence. Driven by a misplaced vision of ‘development’, they displaced these communities from their ancestral landscapes. Even many environmentalists echoed this thinking, ignoring the vital role that pastoralists and forest dwellers played as guardians of nature. The colonial view that saw grasslands as ‘wastelands’ persisted into independent India, resulting in policies that disregarded our indigenous ecological knowledge and cultural heritage.

Today, as commons shrink and traditional cultures are eroded, our forests are suffering. Invasive species such as Lantana and Prosopis juliflora, introduced first by the British and later promoted by Indian policies, are choking native biodiversity and degrading landscapes.

In response, the early 2000s saw a progressive shift with the passage of the Forest Rights Act—recognizing the rights of forest communities to access and manage their commons. Organizations like Sahjeevan and the Centre for Pastoralism (CfP) have worked tirelessly to help pastoralist communities secure these rights through Gram Sabha resolutions. Beyond advocacy, Sahjeevan has launched an accredited university-level course for young pastoralists, aimed at reconnecting them with the rich heritage of their grasslands—flora, fauna, and cultural practices. The program also trains them to develop Management Plans to restore their ecosystems and reintroduce species—including carnivores—that once lived alongside their ancestors.

This is a long-term mission that Sahjeevan and CfP are committed to expanding, to ensure that our forests and grasslands can flourish once again. A second pressing concern is India’s growing dependence on imported

wool. Despite being home to 44 indigenous sheep breeds, we have seen a sharp decline in local wool procurement—leading not only to a loss of genetic diversity but also to foreign exchange outflows. Sahjeevan and CfP are working to rebuild the wool value chain in India, promoting the use of Indian wool in insulation, packaging, and apparel as sustainable alternatives to polymer-based products. Encouragingly, several state governments and industry partners have expressed interest, and this area will remain a key focus in the years ahead.

Pastoralism, despite its immense cultural and economic contribution, remains poorly understood in India. CfP has made significant progress in documenting the diverse lifestyles, migratory patterns, and ecological knowledge of pastoral communities. Our advocacy has led the Ministry of Animal Husbandry and Fisheries to initiate the country’s first census of pastoral animals—an important step in policy recognition. Generating and disseminating scientific research on pastoralism will continue to be a priority.

In the face of climate change, hybrid and genetically modified livestock are increasingly underperforming worldwide. In contrast, indigenous

breeds developed by pastoralists have shown remarkable resilience. At our request, the National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources (NBAGR) has begun documenting and recognising these breeds. Over the past three years, more than 75 animals have been removed from the ‘non-descript’ category, with research now underway on their unique genetic strengths. The government is beginning to allocate resources toward conserving these vital breeds—an effort Sahjeevan is deeply invested in.

We are also undertaking cultural and scientific studies on pastoralism in the arid west and the Deccan regions. These insights are being showcased through our multimedia exhibition, *Living Lightly: Journeys with Pastoralists*, which is accompanied by stakeholder consultations. This initiative will soon expand to explore pastoralism in the Himalayas, continuing to highlight the sustainable lifeways of these remarkable communities.

With the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralism, as declared by the United Nations, approaching next year, we hope the world will pause to reflect on the destructive path driven by industry and markets. There is much to learn from pastoral communities—if only we are willing to listen.



Scaling Conservation, Strengthening Pastoralism

*Kavita Mehta,
Executive Director,
Sahjeevan*

As we continue building an enabling environment for pastoralism through the Centre for Pastoralism (CfP), this year was also a moment of reflection—allowing us to strengthen our conservation focus and recalibrate organisational strategies. As we look ahead, we are placing greater emphasis on community-led conservation as a cornerstone of our future direction.

Two key developments stood out this year. First, the sixth edition of the Living Lightly exhibition in Bengaluru (February 2025) revitalised conversations around pastoralist lifeways. Consultations during the event prompted the Karnataka State Government to commit to safeguarding pastoralist access to forage, protecting grasslands from industrial conversion, supporting para-veterinary training for youth, and reviving rural economies linked to wool and leather. These commitments have opened new avenues for policy engagement with civil society, with growing expectations from CfP and Sahjeevan.

The Grasslands Conference, co-hosted with the National Centre for Biological Sciences, brought together 80 young researchers. Selected papers will be published in Nomadic Peoples. Alongside the exhibition, the Wool Pavilion attracted designers, industry leaders, and policymakers, renewing interest in India’s wool economy. Following this, the Central Wool Development Board pledged support for shifting away from polymers towards Indian wool in textiles and insulation. We, in collaboration with FES and WASSAN, is also engaging with the Ministry of Environment and Forests to highlight India’s pastoral systems during the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralism (2026).

Another milestone milestone was the Government of India’s decision to include pastoralists and their livestock in the 21st Livestock Census—a historic first. A support cell comprising Sahjeevan–CfP, WASSAN, and the RRA Network assisted the Ministry in defining pastoral systems, developing enumeration frameworks, training enumerators, and building

community awareness. The census is expected to identify over 70 pastoralist communities across 22 states.

At the field level, momentum continues. In Gujarat, shepherd communities advanced efforts to revive the indigenous wool supply chain. In Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh, partnerships with Future Greens and Bajinath Pragatishil Kisan Utpadak Producer Company moved towards establishing local wool processing units. With GUSHEEL and CSWRI, a Detailed Project Report was developed for a Common Facility Centre for wool. A collaboration with Kamdhenu University is also building para-veterinary capacity among youth.

However, challenges remain. The Halari donkey is critically endangered. With technical support from Sahjeevan, the breeders’ association is working with the National Bureau of Animal Genetic Resources to conserve this unique germ plasm.

On the conservation front, eight Community Forest Resource Management Committees and six Biodiversity Management Committees were formed across

thorn forest and mangrove ecosystems. These bodies developed management plans, documented biodiversity, and identified entry-point activities. In Sangnara village, the local BMC cleared *Prosopis juliflora* from 30 hectares, converted it into 100 tonnes of biochar, and generated 220 carbon credits. In Surendranagar, our camera-trap research on small canids and hyenas has opened pathways to bring privately held vidis into the community conservation fold.

Through CfP and over 50 partner organisations, our work now spans eight states—strengthening rights over grazing resources, building sustainable livelihoods, and advancing conservation through local leadership. This has been possible only with the continued support of our philanthropic partners. With their backing, we achieved a turnover of ₹12 crores this year, enabling us to deepen and broaden our work.



Director's Note

*Vasant Saberwal,
Director, Centre for Pastoralism*

This has been an exciting year for the Centre for Pastoralism! On several fronts, efforts initiated over the past few years have begun to yield tangible results. A selection of these developments is highlighted below, with a more fuller account presented in the report that follows.

A key demand of civil society for many years has been that pastoralist livestock be enumerated separately during the 5 yearly livestock census. This demand has been based on the fact that we have no accurate data on animals managed by pastoralists, and, correspondingly, no database to quantify their contributions to the economy or to enable targeted service delivery in support of pastoralism. In a historic first, the government decided to separately count pastoralist livestock during the 21st livestock census. CfP hosted a process that resulted in civil society inputs in the design of this aspect of the census, and, along with WASSAN, supported the government in identifying and locating pastoralist communities for government enumerators.

With enormous satisfaction, CfP saw the Deccan edition of Living Lightly come to life in Bangalore, in February 2025. This has been

many years in the making, involving documentation of pastoralist stories in the region, including those of their lives and livelihoods, their music and crafts, their ecologies, their institutions and their emerging struggles. All of this came together in Bangalore, with inputs by over 160 designers, artistes, pastoralists and others. It was the 6th edition of Living Lightly, by far the biggest so far, and, given substantial government involvement, one that signals a significant impact on policy.

Equally momentous has been the completion of the first output from our project to map pastoralist communities across the country. We began with the assumption that such a mapping would allow for a cartographic representation of the scale and spread of pastoralism—an essential step that would challenge the mainstream narrative that pastoralism only exists on the margins. Initiated three years ago, the project has taken us time to work out a reliable methodology. At the Conference on Grasslands and Pastoralism, we showcased our draft atlas of Himachal Pradesh, the first output of this ambitious effort. The governments of Himachal Pradesh and Karnataka have expressed

interest in this exercise, and we have high hopes of releasing atlases for our first five states by the end of 2026.

Our work on wool continues apace, with the fifth edition of the Desi Oon Exhibition held at the Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi, in December. Nearly 5,000 people attended over three days, and sales by Desi Oon Hub partners reached close to ₹40 lakh. Both figures reflect an upward trend, and signal that the event has become a fixture on Delhi's cultural calendar!

Finally, our work on improving herder access to forage has led to the submission of over 200 Community Forest Rights claims under the Forest Rights Act—among the first such claims in the country. Titles against these claims have been issued in both Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, with many others at the final stages of approval. We are in the process of deepening this work, recognizing that, ultimately, assured access to forage remains the cornerstone for the survival of pastoralism in India.

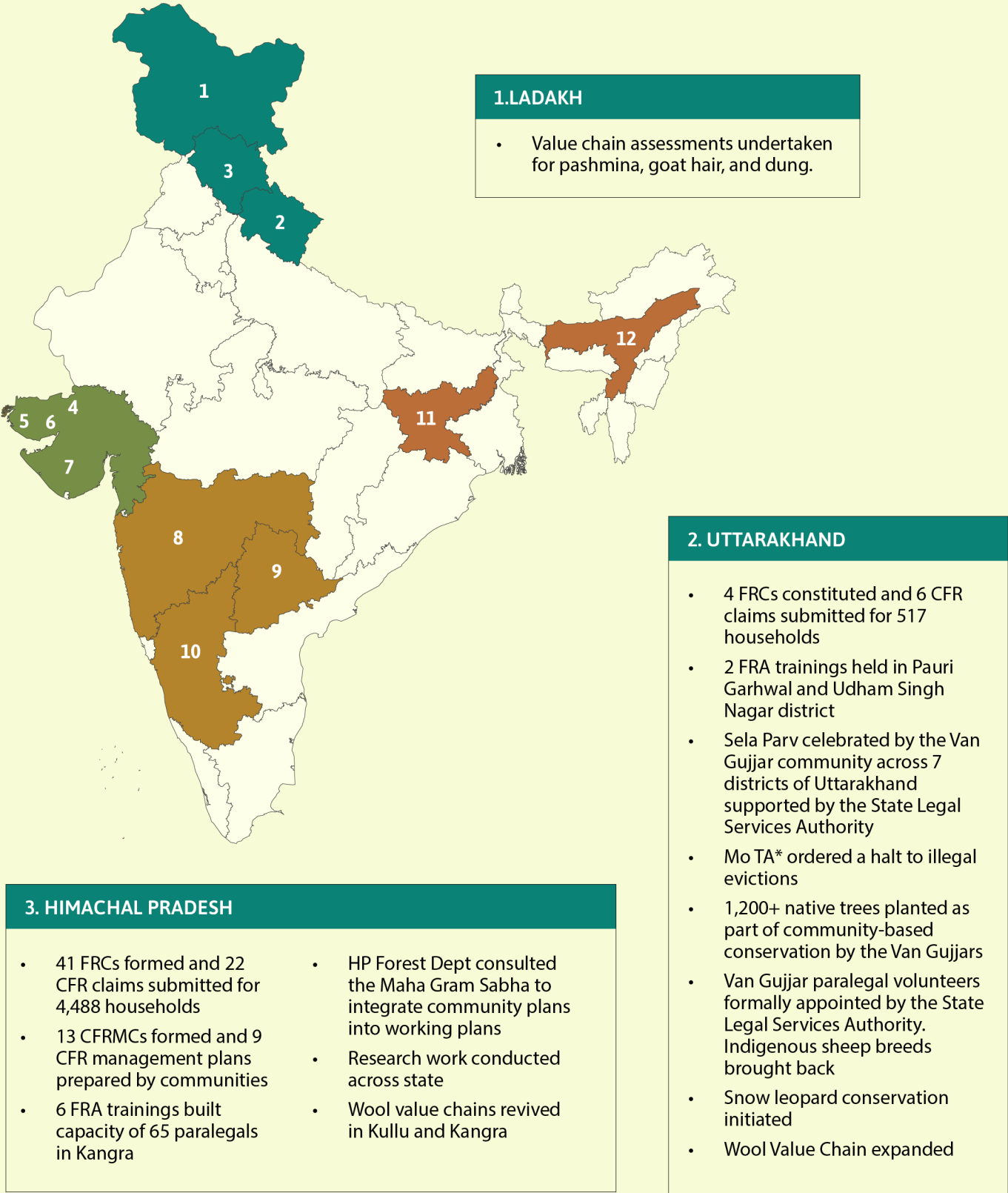
As always, much of our work at CfP depends on the efforts of our partners. While some activities are

hosted internally, large parts of the wool and FRA work rest entirely on the imagination, commitment, and understanding of those we collaborate with. We often play a facilitative role, but it is our partners—those who live and breathe pastoralism—who do the hard yards, engaging tirelessly with government, industry, and civil society.

Our thanks to all those we have had the great pleasure of engaging with over this past year. We anticipate a continuation of such collaboration will underpin our work going forward and we welcome ideas for how we might collectively push the needle on pastoralism!

Geographies of Work

From the Himalaya to Kachchh, different geographies required distinct responses. By staying rooted in each, we built pathways through mapping, restoration and value chain revival. Together, these efforts are expanding into a collective agenda to secure pastoralist futures. Our work spans across the 4 regions: **Himalaya, West, Deccan** and **East**



4. BANNI GRASSLANDS <ul style="list-style-type: none">Gram Sabhas renewed CFRMCs*, deepening community stewardshipYouth trained in the Pastoral Ecology course led village meetings	5. WESTERN KACHCHH <ul style="list-style-type: none">30 ha cleared of invasive Prosopis juliflora, producing 60 tonnes of biochar2 BMCs* formed, 2 PBRs* documented with local knowledge3 community forest management plans drafted with CFRMCs2 FRA trainings built a capacity of 17 paralegals in Western KachchhTraining on FRA built capacity of 20 CFRMC membersRevival of the Wool value chain underway.	6. EASTERN KACHCHH <ul style="list-style-type: none">Survey at Hadakiya Creek recorded 34 threatened species3 BMCs constituted; 3 PBRs developed with local communitiesCFMRCs prepared 5 CFR management plans2 FRA trainings built capacity of 31 paralegals in Eastern KachchhTraining on FRA built capacity of 26 CFRMC membersKUUMS set a vision to protect Kharai camels and habitatsVillages took leadership in sustaining mangrove protection
7. SAURASHTRA <ul style="list-style-type: none">Camera trapping conducted across multiple sitesHuman-wildlife interactions documented through herder interviewsNature education campaigns run with schools and sangathans	8. MAHARASHTRA <ul style="list-style-type: none">Over 1,800 pastoralist routes mapped and 1,500 households surveyedFRA training conducted for district-level officials in Chandrapur	9. TELANGANA <ul style="list-style-type: none">5 CFRMCs and 6 FRCs formed; 8 CFR claims submitted120 petitions filed demanding grazing rights in AmrabadRotational grazing practices of Lambada and Golla herders officially recognised by Forest officialsFRA advocacy strengthened by sangathans and paralegals
10. KARNATAKA <ul style="list-style-type: none">Bengaluru exhibit co-curated with Deccani pastoralists and artisansStories and materials drawn from long-term field collaborationOutreach and state dialogue on livelihoods and integration	11. JHARKHAND <ul style="list-style-type: none">11 FRCs formed and 5 CFR claims submitted for 300 households.FRA trainings held in Palamu built pastoralist legal literacy.Dialogue with State FRA Cell resulted in a framework for recording seasonal mobility.District officials in Palamu and Garhwa trained on pastoral FRA.Advocacy with Jharkhand Government led to provision of production unit for value-addition to animal based products of pastoralistsSheep included for the first time in a state pro-poverty livestock scheme.	12. ARUNACHAL PRADESH <ul style="list-style-type: none">Baseline studies for pastoralist household incomes initiated in West Kameng andTawangMapping pastoralist routes across both districts

• See Appendix on page 92 for details of acronyms.

• Our work in Himachal Pradesh was carried out in partnership with HPGM and Kulvi Whims

• Our work in Uttarakhand was done in partnership with VGYS

• Our work in Telangana was done in partnership with CONARE

• Our work in Jharkhand was done in partnership with Manthan Yuva Sansthan, Pal Yuva Sangh Live Foundation, and Gaderia Mahasabha



Changthangi sheep herder, Ladakh. PC - Ritayan Mukherjee

Our Interventions

In 2025, working with pastoralists is not just relevant — it's urgent.

Traditional herding landscapes and communities carry extensive histories of shared land, mobile life, and ecological knowledge. However, they are under pressure — not just from development, but from the growing inability of systems to recognise and sustain them. Our work this year stayed close to these tensions. Some efforts held ground we've long been a part of. Others opened new questions through research, outreach, and institutional dialogue.

The undertakings ahead reflect this range — governance of commons, herd health and breed work, biodiversity restoration and conservation, livelihoods, and knowledge-building. These are not isolated efforts, but interconnected responses to the shifting realities of pastoralist landscapes and communities.

Through this report, we reflect on what it takes to stay with these changes and work alongside the communities who continue to live, adapt, and lead within them.


Access to Forage

Securing the right to graze where the tide meets the land

During Ramzan, forty Fakirani Jat women in Mori gathered not just for Iftari but to speak of blocked access to mangroves, long used for grazing. Border fences, checkpoints, and lack of IDs made entry near impossible. At the gathering, Kalashma, 25, stood up and said:

"Baiyu dhare t aj chandhra te veni achetiyu pa paja jungle n bachai sako koro. Halo baiyu cher me!"
("If women can climb to the moon when they decide to, why can't we save our forests? Let's go, sisters, into the mangroves!")

Since then, the women have pressed forward—meeting the DIG-BSF to request ID cards, and approaching the District Collector and Animal Husbandry Department for secure access. Their claim is clear: grazing rights also mean the right to protect the ecosystems sustaining them.

A photograph showing two women in traditional Indian clothing (one in a blue sari with a red headscarf, the other in a purple floral sari) kneeling in a forest, planting a small tree sapling. The background is filled with dense green foliage and trees.

The claims span 42,399 ha, covering 5,300 households of Fakirani Jatt, Rabari, Van Gujjar, Kanet, Gaderia Pal, Chenchu, Lambadi, and Gaddi.

Pastoralist landscapes—grazing lands, forest corridors, and seasonal water sources are not just where pastoralism happens, but what sustains it. Yet across regions, these spaces are becoming harder to access due to land conversion, restricted entry, and conservation policies that overlook pastoral use. Without secure, long-term access to forage, the viability of pastoralism itself is at risk.

The Access to Forage thematic focuses on securing these shared ecosystems by strengthening community-led governance grounded in customary use, legal entitlements, and ecological knowledge.

Despite clear provisions under the Forest Rights Act (2006), many pastoralist communities remain excluded from formal recognition—due to their mobility, the vastness of the landscapes they use, and the lack of enabling structures on the ground.

In 2024–25, work spanned Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Telangana, and was anchored in three strategic interventions: expanding FRA claims, building local institutions to manage Community Forest Resources (CFRs), and deepening community responses through paralegal support, joint planning processes, and administrative engagement.

Sustained Work

Pastoralist communities depend on shared landscapes that have sustained mobile livestock systems for generations. However access to these areas is shrinking due to industrial expansion, shifting land use priorities, and the lack of formal recognition. Our work on Access to Forage continued in response, supporting communities to file claims under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), strengthen gram sabhas, and make visible the link between pastoralism and community-led forest governance.

In 2024–25, across six states—Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, and Telangana—62 Forest Rights Committees (FRCs) were formed, enabling gram sabhas to initiate or advance their CFR

claims. Altogether, 41 claims covering more than 42,399 hectares were submitted at the sub-divisional level, representing over 5,300 households from Fakirani Jatt, Rabari, Van Gujjar, Kanet, Gaderia Pal, Chenchu, Lambadi and Gaddi communities. Progress varied by context. In some places, gram sabhas met regularly; in others, informal gatherings sustained momentum despite administrative delays. In Uttarakhand's Kushrela hamlet (Tehri Garhwal), forming an FRC also enabled ration card access for the first time, showing how claim-making can open wider entitlements.

In Telangana's Nagarkarnool district, pastoral communities presented evidence of grazing practices to the Forest Department, securing recognition of rotational grazing and moving



Training of CFRMC and BMC Members in Eastern Kachchh



State level FRA consultation_Himachal Pradesh



Meeting with the CFRMC_Vamka-Kutch



Follow-up on CFR Claims at DLC - Telangana

their claims to the DLC level. Each FRC formed and each claim submitted anchors pastoralist presence in the landscapes they have shaped for generations, strengthening both ecological stewardship and community rights.

Building a Paralegal Cadre

As claim processes move forward, they often meet predictable bottlenecks: delays at the sub-divisional level, inactive monitoring committees, missing paperwork, or limited understanding of pastoralist contexts.

To help communities persist, a strong local presence is essential—someone who knows the law, can follow up with officials, and is trusted by the gram sabha. This is where the paralegal cadre continues to play a central role.

In 2024–25, 158 community paralegals, most of them pastoralist youth, were active across Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and Telangana. They facilitated gram sabha meetings, constituted FRCs, redrafted resolutions, mapped Community Forest Resources, submitted claim forms, tracked progress, and held continuity through frequent SDM transfers and the breakdown of state-level committees. In villages where gram sabhas struggled to convene due to panchayat friction, paralegals approached block development officers to secure support for FRA Gram Sabha formation.

In Uttarakhand, Van Gujjar youth anchored and expanded Sela Parv into a 10-day multi-district event with the State Legal Services Authority, combining native plantation drives with legal awareness. Many now serve as Para Legal Volunteers with their respective District Legal Services Authorities.

In Gujarat, a Rabari youth took on routine follow-ups with the SDM to clarify village status under the Forest Settlement process. In Telangana, paralegals pursued follow-up on over 120 digital petitions, moving 27 CFR claims—pending for 1.5 years—forward to the DLC level. As the cadre of paralegals continue to be steadied, we envision our work moving from one dependent on external facilitation to one increasingly anchored within the community itself.

Constitution of CFRMCs

This year, a critical focus for pastoral communities in Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh and Telangana was to make visible their traditional systems of community-led forest governance and resource management through Community Forest Resource Management Plans (CFRMPs). The aim was to use provisions of the FRA to recognise and strengthen community-led conservation initiatives.

A total of 21 Community Forest Resource Management Committees (CFRMCs) were constituted—8 in Gujarat, 5 in Telangana, and 8

in Himachal Pradesh. These were established through gram sabha resolutions, village discussions, and follow-up meetings facilitated by community leaders, paralegals and local organisations.

Processes were grounded in everyday use and collective decision-making. In many villages, committees were shaped by seasonal access patterns, grazing routes, and local restoration priorities, ensuring they reflected how communities actually interact with their forests. Meetings were held in local languages, with deliberate inclusion of women, elders, herders and youth directly engaged in managing these resources.

In Himachal, CFRMP preparation coincided with the Forest Department's drafting of its 2025–2035 Working Plan. Nine CFR management plans were submitted during this period, enabling communities to press for the inclusion of traditional rules on grazing and NTFP use into official forest governance frameworks, and recognition of generations-long practices.

The formation of these committees marks an important step in pastoral communities' ongoing efforts to secure recognition of their traditional systems of conservation and management.

Developing Management Plans

With committees in place, communities began planning and formalising their traditional forest management practices—documenting the sustainable stewardship they have carried for generations. This year, 21 CFR management plans were initiated, shaped by seasonal access, grazing routes, and local restoration priorities.

In Gujarat, CFRMCs and Biodiversity Management Committees met regularly to discuss forest use, regeneration and protection. In villages like Mori, Jangi, Vondh, Rodasar and Tahera, five degraded plots dominated by *Prosopis Juliflora* were identified and prioritised for native species regeneration. These discussions were rooted in lived realities—fodder scarcity, declining soil health, and shifting rainfall patterns.

Women, many new to public decision-making, played a visible role. In Gujarat, they raised questions on access routes, soil stability and forest degradation. During Ramzan, 40–45 Fakirani Jatt women gathered in Mori for Iftari and turned it into a planning session on grazing access, *Prosopis* spread and mangrove erosion. The meeting led to a decision to approach the district administration and push for native regeneration.



Meeting with CFRMC- Mori Village

In Uttarakhand, Van Gujjar youth collaborated with the State Legal Services Authority to celebrate Sela Parv, their native tree festival. Alongside Forest and Social Welfare officials, they planted over 1,000 native trees on CFR lands, a collaboration that was first of its kind.

Collaboration and Convergence

Across states, a key focus this year was enabling communities and their institutions to engage directly with administrations—not only to move CFR claims forward, but also to begin implementing management plans by converging with government schemes. CFRMCs also aligned plans with long-term ecological goals, including exploring future links with carbon finance frameworks. State-level work advanced on multiple fronts. In Maharashtra, CfP trained DLC members in Chandrapur on FRA in the pastoral context; soon after, a pastoralist claim advanced to the DLC.

In Telangana, paralegals tracked 120 petitions filed by Lambada, Golla and Chenchu communities through the Prajavani portal, helping push 27 claims—pending for 1.5 years—to the DLC level. This recognition allowed gram sabhas to start planning rotational grazing in the Amrabad Tiger Reserve.

In Uttarakhand, the Van Gujjar community joined

a consultation with the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, which issued a directive halting illegal evictions and emphasising completion of FRA processes. Van Gujjar youth were also formally appointed as Para Legal Volunteers by District Legal Services Authorities.

In Jharkhand, dialogue with the State FRA Cell led to submission of a revised Form B to capture pastoralist mobility, and a formal invitation to model pastoralist-specific claims.

At the national level, nearly 30 meetings were held with Sub-Divisional Level Committees (SDLCs) and DLCs on FRA implementation for Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs). A joint KUUMS–GBMS letter to the Ministry of Tribal Affairs received a written response. We also participated in four Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan (DA-JAGUA), consultations, advocating for saturation of CFR claims, convergence with welfare and forest schemes, and recognition of pastoralist governance models.



TOP: FRA awareness building_Telangana

BOTTOM: Resource Mapping Exercise with women of Vondh Village


Reviving Sheep Wool Value Chain

Wool that once went unnoticed now turns heads

Desi Oon comes from India's herding communities. From sheep that graze across drylands and highlands, and from hands that shear, spin, weave, and dye. Building on this legacy, the Desi Oon Hub has emerged as a standout on Delhi's cultural calendar. The year's showcase at Triveni Kala Sangam drew exceptional participation, recording 36 lakhs in sales that had implications on herder and artisan incomes.

The buzz around it signals growing interest in indigenous wool and a web of creation that's possible. What was once seen as coarse and low-value is now being picked up, tried on, and talked about.

Desi Oon isn't new. But it's starting to be seen, and we cannot wait to see all the love it picks up across the nation!



Wool is not just a product;
it's a livelihood, a material
economy, and a regenerative
opportunity.

The next phase of Desi Oon
is about building
scalable, herders-to-market
value chains.

Desi Oon 2025 at Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi

Across pastoralist regions, communities are not just adapting to change — in markets, breeds, and mobility — they are actively shaping what comes next. One expression of this is the Desi Oon Hub: a CfP-anchored collaborative working across the Semi-Arid West, the Deccan Plateau, and the Himalaya.

The Desi Oon Hub brings together shepherds, spinners, felters, weavers, designers, and craft practitioners with a shared goal — to revive the pastoral wool economy. Efforts include building decentralised supply chains in Gujarat and Himachal, and co-developing products with industry partners in sectors like automotive, insulation, packaging, and textiles.

Indigenous wool in India is scarcely used for textiles due to its coarse fibre. Yet its durability, character, and connection to place offer new possibilities. This year, the Hub continued evolving into an autonomous platform with its own working group. Alongside this, on-ground systems have been taking shape: trial procurement has taken place with herders and processing infrastructure explored with technical partners.

These efforts are not only about wool and its potential, but are about pastoralists finding value for this resource. These are not stand-alone interventions — but are part of a broader framework of initiatives aimed at strengthening pastoralist livelihoods.

Setting up Supply Chains

The wool value chain in Gujarat consolidated across three areas this year: primary processing, procurement, and demand generation. More than 80 pastoralist youth were trained in machine shearing across Kachchh and Surendranagar, collectively shearing over 12,000 sheep. This marked the first widespread adoption of mechanised shearing in the state.

In parallel, 5.01 tonnes of raw wool were procured from 64 herders through a structured supply chain trial. The process followed a newly developed SOP for quality and traceability, generating ₹3.5 lakh in combined earnings and

savings. These early results helped test the viability of decentralised collection models in pastoral settings.

To enable long-term scale, land has been identified for a Common Facility Centre (CFC) in Kachchh, supported by a five-year MoU with the Gujarat State Sheep and Wool Development Corporation. A sanctioned proposal to the Central Wool Development Board will facilitate the distribution of 100 shearing machines to trained youth. We also collaborated with the Central Sheep and Wool Research Institute to prepare a detailed Feasibility and Project Report (DPR), along with a draft design for the proposed Common Facility Centre (CFC).



Sheep wool value chain discussions



A visitor marvels at the myriad textures and joys of raw wool!

We conducted exploratory research to identify efficient technologies for wool pre-processing and processing, finalizing solutions for shearing, baling, and willowing, and gaining a solid understanding of scouring. We entered into an agreement with SELCO Foundation to leverage their expertise in providing technical support for identifying and assessing appropriate processing technologies. Procurement and traceability systems were also piloted through the Desi Oon Hub in Bengaluru and Himachal Pradesh, where wool from both regions was sourced and mapped as part of a digital traceability exhibit that was first launched in New Delhi.

Skilling Youth and Women

Training and exposure visits this year were designed not as isolated workshops, but as part of a longer-term strategy to build local capability across the wool value chain.

In Kachchh, 87 pastoralist youth were trained in machine shearing—including 7 who were additionally trained in blade sharpening, enabling them to offer this as a technical service to peers. This reduced dependence on external contractors and opened up seasonal income opportunities around wool maintenance and processing.

An exposure visit was organised to the Central Sheep and Wool Research Institute (CSWRI) in Avikanagar, where delegates from the

Sheep-Goat Breeders Association (Kutch) observed a wide range of sheep breeds, shearing techniques, and primary processing infrastructure. The visit helped build confidence and strategic clarity among breeders as they prepare for decentralised procurement and localised processing models.

In collaboration with Kamdhenu University, sangathans facilitated hands-on learning for pastoralist youth and sangathan members, especially around animal health and breed management. Some women also participated in these training programs and early-stage technical trials—particularly around wool sorting and compost prototyping—building familiarity with new technologies and field operations. As new configurations and collaborations come alive, this growing cadre of trained individuals is likely to form the operational backbone of the wool ecosystem—from shearing and sorting to procurement and product development.

Desi Oon: Platform and Visibility

While the work of setting up supply chains continued in Gujarat, the Desi Oon platform expanded its national footprint—deepening its role as both a market channel and a knowledge commons for indigenous wool.

In December 2024, the Desi Oon Exhibition returned to Triveni Kala Sangam in Delhi. Over three days, it drew 4,724 visitors and generated

more than ₹36 lakh in direct sales—benefiting 1,286 artisans and 898 shepherd families linked to the Desi Oon Hub. This year's event marked a shift toward decentralised execution: hub partners demonstrated greater ownership and took on larger roles in curation, storytelling, and operations.

A digital traceability prototype, developed in partnership with UK-based organisations Here We Are and Where Does It Come From?, was launched at the British Council, in New Delhi. The exhibit traced wool journeys from Karnataka and Himachal Pradesh—from fleece to finished product—offering transparency across the value chain. British Council support has since been renewed to deepen our work on developing a traceability framework for Indian wool in 2025–26.

Since its inception, the Desi Oon Exhibition has cumulatively generated over ₹78 lakh in turnover, directly impacting more than 3,200 artisans and pastoralist families across India and engaging 18 hub partners.

Industry Engagement

In February 2025, Desi Oon anchored a Pavilion at the Bangalore International Centre as part of the Living Lightly exhibition. The Pavilion presented wool as both a material of cultural significance as well as one with regenerative properties—featuring applications in insulation, packaging, acoustic interiors and soil health.



Consultation on wool supply chains at Bangalore International Centre, as part of Living Lightly Utsav

Consultations with 70 stakeholders, including representatives from the automotive and building industries, indicated a growing interest in scaled applications of desi oon.

While a consistent demand from industry hasn't solidified yet, we plan to continue our engagement with industry moving forward to build an interest in indigenous wool, simultaneously looking at establishing a consistent supply by working with pastoral communities and government wool institutes on the ground, and building infrastructure for primary processing.

Unlocking the Future of Indigenous Wool

Through the Desi Oon initiative, the Centre for Pastoralism (CfP) has laid important groundwork: connecting pastoralist communities, building the Desi Oon Hub network, developing traceability tools, and creating visibility through exhibitions. But it is clear that the future must go towards building scalable, end-to-end, herders-to-market value chains.

This next phase focuses on translating potential into systemic change. We aim to work with committed industrial partners to co-develop products and markets, especially in sectors like automotive, insulation, packaging, and textiles. Primary processing and supply chain systems will be aligned to meet industrial specifications — while ensuring benefits flow back to pastoralist communities.

Emerging certifications, traceability systems, and government partnerships will be leveraged to build confidence and unlock public and CSR co-investment. Academic and design collaborations will be expanded to innovate around product applications, materials R&D, and training the next generation of wool innovators.

The core opportunity ahead is to show — through targeted, collaborative pilots — how Indian wool can meet modern industrial needs, while creating a model that strengthens rural livelihoods, conserves traditional knowledge systems, and drives a regenerative, low-carbon materials economy.

Community Institutions, Livestock Health and Breed Conservation



Grit, goat milk, and a leap into the limelight

Arpan Kalotra and Bhimsinhbhai Ghanghal, herding youth from Saurashtra, first met in our 2019 programme for young pastoralists to explore enterprise. With training and persistence, they mastered the craft of artisanal cheeses—feta, chèvre, halloumi—launching Panchal Dairy.

For a sector long invisible to markets and policy, it was a striking recognition. Their story shows how pastoralist youth, when supported, can create enterprises rooted in climate-hardy breeds and low-input dairying—offering models for sustainable food futures.

In October 2024, they presented their journey on Shark Tank India, bringing pastoralist knowledge and produce to national television.



The Camel Breeders' Association strategizing to secure their pasture

Institutions are where collective action takes shape. For pastoralist communities, they offer more than representation—they hold space for long-term vision and discussing the evolving realities of animal-based livelihoods. Across Kachchh and Saurashtra, sangathans continued to hold this role: coordinating health services, filing claims, responding to breed loss, and pushing for visibility in decisions that affect their grazing lands and livelihoods.

Following last year's organisation development processes, sangathans focused on translating those blueprints into day-to-day systems—holding regular meetings, registering members, identifying their priority agenda to focus on as collectives negotiating with the state to ascertain their rights for grazing and healthcare services for their animals and market for their produce.

These processes marked a shift from intermittent mobilisation to everyday governance. Women and youth stepped into roles across clusters—not just as participants, but as facilitators and trainers.

The section that follows traces institutional activity across sangathans—each with its own terrain and priorities.

Kachchh Uunt Uchherak Maldhari Sangathan (KUUMS)

The Camel Breeders' Association sustained its role in coordinating with the Animal Husbandry Department for medicines and vaccination camps, and with Sarhad Dairy to ensure uninterrupted supply of camel milk to the designated BMC.

Interactions with members through meetings at different forums were instrumental in understanding the declining numbers of the Kharai Breed, due to restricted access and large scale destruction of the mangrove

ecosystem and limited access to the milk market. Meetings with breeders highlighted key threats: restricted access, destruction of mangrove ecosystems, and limited milk market access. Shrinking grazing grounds have forced inbreeding, further weakening herd quality.

To counter this, the Association submitted a conservation proposal to the Department and made repeated representations before the Border Security Force and Forest Department to secure mangrove access, and before Deen Dayal Port Trust to curb illegal salt expansion and restore degraded mangroves.



Para Veterinary Training for Sheep and Goat Herders in Lakhpata



Youth practical health training.



Group activity with women & youth in Vad village, Banni grasslands



Technical Training of Pastoral Youth in Halar Region

Youth trained at Kamdhenu University took charge of veterinary camps across villages—planning schedules, mobilising attendance, and carrying out treatments with minimal oversight. Veterinary camps also expanded to address reproductive care, breeding male support, and wounds from migration.

Coordination across government departments improved, particularly around health services and FRA claims. The sangathan followed up on pending land claims at the sub-divisional and district levels, and passed a resolution on grazing land encroachment in Berdo, which was submitted to the Collectorate but remains unacknowledged. As grazing pressures rise and income from camel milk becomes uncertain, KUUMS is laying the groundwork for a different kind of economy: one that does not rely solely on external demand, but on collective clarity and ecological realities.

Looking ahead, the sangathan aims to scale its health system collaborations, expand women and youth leadership, and continue pushing for formal recognition of grazing rights.

Goat and Sheep Breeders' Sangathan (GBMS – Lakhpata)

A formal membership process was initiated, with 225 herders enrolling through fee-based registration. Four executive committee meetings were held, and trained youth documented the

Annual General Meeting. In Dayapar, women anchored registration tables and field logistics without needing male permission—small acts that, in the context of long-standing norms, signaled internal change. Wool, once treated as waste, became a medium for skills and leadership. Seventy youth trained in machine shearing covered 10,000 sheep across Lakhpata, saving herders over ₹2 lakh in labour costs. Earlier dominated by outside shearers from Rajasthan, shearing is now local, mobile, and community-led. Women, too, joined planning meetings, anchored outreach, and trained in wool sorting.

As sangathan structures stabilised, members engaged directly with public systems—securing deworming medicines through the Taluka Panchayat President and intervening when a livestock transport vehicle was detained at Bhuj. Strategically, the sangathan addressed breed risk. A Patanwadi sheep survey showed fewer than 900 of 4,000 animals qualified as purebred, with shrinking body size, rising crossbreeding, and a shortage of quality rams. These concerns, linked to weak wool markets, fed into a draft demand letter to the state government for genetic conservation support. GBMS also began groundwork for future infrastructure. Early discussions with GUSHEEL and the Central Wool Development Board explore a Common Facility Centre for processing and storage, with Hunnarshala contributing design and market

innovation for insulation products. Though formative, the initiative signals a move from dispersed production to shared platforms, and from individual herding to collective enterprise.

In the year ahead, GBMS will strengthen internal systems and deepen engagement with wool and breed-linked value chains.

Banni Pashu Uchherak Maldhari Sangathan (BPUMS – Banni)

This year, BPUMS renewed five Community Forest Resource Management Committees (CFRMCs), restructured its executive body, and expanded its membership through outreach across 25 villages. These processes marked a shift from top-down mobilisation to decentralised, everyday governance.

Youth and women were central to this transition. Alumni of the Salim Node course—designed to foster ecological and political literacy among pastoralist youth—returned as trainers and facilitators. They didn't just assist with meetings or mobilisations; they led them. Village discussions, livestock care sessions, and coordination with veterinary staff were all managed by this second line of leadership. As one young member said, "Earlier we didn't speak at all. Now people ask when the meeting is—and we're the ones who tell them."

At the same time, the sangathan continued to engage external systems, BPUMS followed up on FRA claims at the district and sub-divisional levels. In Berdo, the CFRMC also passed a resolution against grazing land encroachment and submitted it to the Collectorate—though the resolution remains pending.

Unlike in other clusters, economic interventions were not the headline of BPUMS's work this year. But beneath the surface, foundational steps were taken—preparing for collective dairying, deepening the Salim Node model, and building pathways between ecological governance and livelihood recovery. In a landscape where seasonal mobility and climate variability collide, these efforts are survival strategies.

BPUMS continues to be focused on defending the ecological commons of Banni, scaling pastoral youth leadership, and addressing breed health.

Halari Pashu Uchherak Maldhari Sangathan (HPUMS – Upleta / Devbhumi Dwarka)

The Halari donkey has long been integral to temple rituals, drought survival, and local mobility. Yet years of neglect, shrinking grazing commons, and declining economic value brought the breed to the brink. What once numbered over a thousand had fallen to a few hundred. Against this backdrop, the Halari Pashu Uchherak Maldhari Sangathan emerged. This year marked a new phase of maturity. The



Health Training with Youth in Surendranagar



Machine Shearing training at lakhpat, Kachchh



Annual General Body Meeting for Halari Sangathan



Meeting with CFRMC members in Lakhabo Village

sangathan was formally registered as a Trust and Society, with 154 members across clusters. Office space was established in Bhankhokhri, and executive meetings became a regular forum for coordination. The focus remained on everyday work: youth cadres tagged 100 donkeys, tracked breeding cycles, recorded milk yields, and documented market prices.

A pool of 100 elite females was identified for breeding, and veterinary access improved through collaboration with district staff. Six women, nominated to the executive during registration, continued to shape processes through record-keeping, registration, and engagement with external actors.

Economic value was also revived. Through partnerships with Aadvik and Hemani, donkey milk was marketed seasonally, generating ₹2.5 lakh in income. Youth managed logistics and data, linking conservation directly to livelihoods. While the market remains niche, its value—financial and symbolic—is growing. As senior breeder Bharabhai Bhundia reflected: “People used to say the donkey is useless. But in our traditions, it has always been sacred—linked to temples and drought survival. One male can now sell for ₹1 lakh.” In the year ahead, the sangathan will expand milk networks, scale veterinary coverage, and push for fodder access, while deepening its role as a

rare-breed institution.

Surendranagar Ghenta-Bakra Maldhari Sangathan

In the scattered drylands of Surendranagar, pastoralists raising goats and sheep are navigating a difficult terrain—marked by land-use conflicts, industrial expansion, and eroding commons. Over the past year, a networked group of herders has begun coming together under the banner of the Ghenta-Bakra Maldhari Sangathan.

Though still informal and not legally registered, the sangathan has begun taking shape: forming an executive committee, initiating a membership drive, and aligning around the shared goal of building economic and institutional visibility. A core group of young herders, many first-time organisers, have been coordinating with local veterinary officers, dairy federations, and NGOs to explore goat milk aggregation and breed-specific health support.

The sangathan also began dialogue with external institutions. This year, it engaged with the Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (Amul), Sursagar Cooperative Dairy, and the Gujarat Animal Husbandry Department to explore setting up a decentralised goat milk procurement model. Meetings were held at the taluka level to assess demand, infrastructure

needs, and potential herd-level standards. These early steps are modest—but they represent a shift: from selling milk sporadically to imagining a district-scale, collective enterprise.

In the coming year, the sangathan aims to formalise its structure by registering as a membership-based society and advancing a producer-led goat milk initiative. It will continue strengthening a cadre of para-veterinarians to provide essential care for small ruminants and ensure timely vaccination and deworming.

Alongside this, the sangathan will press for inclusion in grazing and Forest Rights Act deliberations at the block level, positioning itself as both a producer collective and a voice in local governance.

Breed Survival as Institutional Strategy

Across pastoralist regions, animals are more than economic assets. This year, work around breeds and animal health made it clear: survival isn't just about preserving bloodlines or delivering vaccines, it is also about negotiating the environmental and institutional conditions that allow herders and herds to endure together. Field data from across clusters—on Patanwadi sheep, Kharai camels, and Halari donkeys—pointed to a pattern: shrinking numbers, rising inbreeding, collapsing markets, and increasing pressure on grazing ecologies. But the responses were not passive. Sangathans linked breed

decline to systemic gaps: the absence of wool procurement, the erasure of commons, the lack of veterinary continuity, and the mismatch between state schemes and field realities. What emerged was not just complaint—but strategy.

Youth trained in animal health now operate semi-independently—organising camps, tracking herd data, facilitating government coordination. Breed surveys are not one-off exercises but the basis for policy advocacy, demand letters, and local procurement design. Health camps are increasingly being shaped by community priorities—not just treating what's visible, but addressing breeding patterns, reproductive success, and long-term viability. Veterinary work is no longer just externalised to the state—it is being re-rooted in community capacity. Sangathans are creating templates for preventive care, breed monitoring, and fodder planning.

There is urgency, yes—but also clarity. Breed work this year reminded us that the risk is not just extinction. It is abstraction: animals becoming invisible in policy, disconnected from land, and disembedded from the people who know them best. What sangathans are working towards is not just heritage. It is the continuity of knowledge and practice.

Biodiversity and Conservation

Women at the heart of ecological recovery

Restoration in Kutch has taken many forms- from grazing management to clearing *Prosopis juliflora*. In Sangnara, the work entered a new phase when the local Biodiversity Management Committee piloted biochar production, led by a group of women.

Among them: Paanben Babubhai, Devalben Pareshbhai, Monika Jayantibhai, Manjula Umrabhai, Daiben Haribhai, Dhaniben Jayantibhai,

Manuben Babulalbhai, Kanuben Shivjibhai, and Kalpeshbhai Koli. Together, they restored 30 hectares of thorn forest and later contributed to a wider effort reclaiming 1,100 hectares of grazing commons.

Women's leadership, rooted in daily management of fuel, fodder, and pastures, has been pivotal in shaping these repaired landscapes.



Rare desert fox spotted roaming across the Banni grasslands

Sahjeevan’s biodiversity work supports communities to steward their landscapes by strengthening Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs) and Community Forest Resource Management Committees (CFRMCs) under the Forest Rights Act (2006) and the Biological Diversity Act (2002). These frameworks enable documentation of biodiversity, traditional knowledge, and formal conservation plans, with our role focused on keeping the process rooted in local priorities.

In 2024–25, six People’s Biodiversity Registers (PBRs) and eight CFR Management Plans were completed across Kachchh and Surendranagar. Each combines species records, seasonal calendars, and oral histories with community-led actions such as reviving water bodies, clearing invasive species, and replanting native vegetation.

Our strategy rests on four pillars: community-led conservation, participatory research, youth stewardship through the Certificate Course on Pastoral Ecology, and multi-pronged outreach—together reinforcing custodianship and making pastoralist perspectives visible in ecological and policy spaces.

Our Working Landscapes

Our work extends across three ecologically linked landscapes: the thorn forests and mangrove ecosystems of Eastern and Western Kachchh, and the savanna grasslands of Surendranagar. Each sustains distinct biodiversity and cultural traditions, yet all face intensifying pressures from industry, infrastructure, and shifting land use.

Eastern Kachchh’s coastal zone includes the Hadakiya Creek mangrove system, home to diverse marine and intertidal species, and vital for local fisheries. Western Kachchh’s thorn and scrub forests provide critical habitat for wildlife while supporting pastoral livelihoods dependent on seasonal grazing. Surendranagar’s open grasslands and grazing commons sustain a range of grassland species, including wild canids and chinkara, while also being central to the migratory routes of pastoralists. These landscapes are not just ecological

assets—they are working landscapes where biodiversity, pastoralism, and cultural heritage are deeply intertwined. By supporting community institutions to document, plan, and manage these areas, we aim to maintain their ecological integrity while securing the livelihoods and resource rights of the people who depend on them.

Community-led Conservation Actions

In 2024–25, six BMCs (Jangi, Vondh, Vamka, Rodasar, Sangnara, Reshamiya) and eight CFRMCs (Jangi, Vondh, Vamka, Shikarpur, Kanthkot, Tahera, Rodasar, Mori) advanced ecological planning under the FRA and BDA. Committees met through gram sabhas, focus groups, seasonal walks, and mapping exercises to set concrete restoration and resource management priorities.

Capacity-building included training on roles and responsibilities for BMCs and CFRMCs, two paralegal training with 48 youth on FRA and



Flamingos and the thriving mangrove ecosystem of Kachchh



Conversation with elders on land use and recurring threats to biodiversity



Top L to R - Leopard captured in the camera trap, Indian fox posing in the vides of Surendranagar,
Bottom L to R - Youth Training on data collection, Youth training course on pastoral ecosystem

CFRMC functions, and the inauguration of BMC and CFRMC offices in Vondh. Resource mapping was carried out with women, youth, and elders across all six BMC villages.

Village plans became more specific and grounded in observation. In Tahera, discussions focused on managing restored forest patches, fencing, and upkeep. In Mori, members prioritised mapping grazing sections and clearing Prosopis, while women proposed replanting trees near mosques and temples.

In Jangi, women suggested reviving old water bodies and restoring paths linking temples, grazing spots, and settlements—elders recalled how potters once used pond soil, linking ecology to cultural memory. In Rodasar, women led the design and early implementation of a pond restoration plan for wildlife and livestock. In Vamka, youth mapped abandoned routes and fenced corridors once used by herds.

Sangnara became a focal story: 30 hectares of degraded thorn forest were cleared of Prosopis juliflora, producing 110 tonnes of biochar in FY 2024–25 through a carbon-linked pilot. Momentum grew when women from the Koli community took charge of operations, turning the initiative into a community-run effort with both ecological and economic aims.

Participatory Research

Six People's Biodiversity Registers and eight Community Forest Resource Management Plans were completed this year, each bringing together species lists, grazing calendars, ethnobotanical knowledge, and detailed resource maps to serve as long-term references for community governance.

In Eastern Kachchh, surveys of the Hadakiya Creek mangrove system identified around 34 species of crustaceans, fish, plankton, and mangrove-associated flora. Avicennia marina dominated the landscape, with Salicornia species forming dense patches across a fifth of the area. In Surendranagar, a camera-trap study spanned 13 villages across Chotila and Thangadh, capturing images of Indian grey wolf, golden jackal, Indian fox, leopard, striped hyena, and chinkara. Two pastoralist youth—Baldev Sasla and Jaypal Tramta—were trained and hired as field assistants, their understanding of seasonal wildlife movement and water points guiding where and when cameras were set.

Conversations with elders added another layer, revealing how views on wolves are shaped as much by shrinking grazing lands and industrial expansion as by predation losses. As one pastoralist in Thangadh put it, "Wolves didn't increase. Our grazing decreased."

In Western Kachchh, biodiversity surveys recorded 18 mammals, 4 amphibians, 15 reptiles, 119 bird species, and 73 insects in Sangnara, and 17 mammals, 4 amphibians, 15 reptiles, 184 birds, and 47 insects in Rodasar. At RAMBLE research station, a trial applying biochar to grasslands showed up to a 21% increase in biomass within one season—pointing to its promise for restoration in arid landscapes.

Youth Stewardship

The Certificate Course on Pastoral Ecology offers pastoralist youth an intensive 300-hour programme across 14 modules that blend fieldwork with classroom learning. Endorsed by Shiv Nadar University, the course now carries academic recognition, with the University also expressing interest in developing it into a diploma course: Over the past year, its faculty collaborated with Sahjeevan to refine the curriculum and prepare detailed module workbooks, ensuring

the course combines scientific rigour with local relevance.

Graduates have carried this learning back into their landscapes—walking gauchars to map water sources, retracing old grazing routes, identifying grasses by touch and smell, and recording the uses of plants shared in conversations with elders. Some have stepped into the role of facilitators themselves, guiding new cohorts through exercises in species identification and resource mapping, creating a growing circle of peer-to-peer learning.

In Sangnara, ten young women stepped into an unfamiliar role—learning the essentials of biodiversity law and documentation. Eight chose to keep going beyond the training, moving from house to house with notebooks in hand, gathering stories about plants, mapping daily pastoral routines, and recording memories of how people cared for their commons.



Training young women on the essentials of biodiversity law and documentation in Sangnara



Marine Biodiversity Survey in Hadakiya Creek



Top L to R - Nature Education programme at Gugaliyana Village , Rangeland Management Experience sharing in national workshop, Thriving thorn forest ecosystem in Kutch

In Surendranagar, youth trained in biodiversity monitoring joined field teams to set camera traps and map key habitats. Their knowledge of grazing routes and seasonal wildlife movement shaped where the cameras were placed—and what they eventually captured.

At the Community Conference on Commons, 19-year-old Mital Tramta stood before pastoral leaders and researchers to share her work on wild plants used to keep livestock healthy, blending traditional care with systematic documentation. And in Gugaliyana and Reshamiya, children walked out of their classrooms and into the commons, joining nature trails and hands-on sessions where birds, reptiles, and familiar plants were named, observed, and connected to the pastoral knowledge they had grown up with. On a trail with the Kabir Project's Shabad Shala, children, elders, and facilitators walked together—not to be taught something, but to observe and name together, creating a shared language for commonly held land.

Networking and Outreach

Team members contributed to national and regional dialogues, including the Ecological Restoration Alliance conference in Panchgani, a CEEP workshop on renewable energy impacts in Gujarat and Rajasthan, and the Rangeland Management for Sustainable Rural Development

workshop in Jammu & Kashmir. They also presented on wolf–pastoralist relationships at the LL–NCBS Conference on Futures of Pastoralism and Grasslands and joined a YUVA panel on local inputs to global forest and climate policy.

Public outreach included the Gugaliyana Biodiversity Meet, which drew nearly 200 participants, posters on grassland mammals for schools, blogs such as "Jungle no Jamavado" in Conservation Optimism, and collaborative nature trails with the Kabir Project's Shabad Shala, connecting diverse audiences to pastoral landscapes.

These exchanges — from village commons to national forums — strengthen a shared understanding that the health of these landscapes rests in the hands of the people who live within them.

In the year ahead, the relationships, knowledge systems, and practical tools built through this work will continue to guide community action, ensuring that biodiversity here is not only recorded and restored, but actively lived, used, and passed on.

Research

The maps that moved the state

Over four years, our mapping work in Himachal Pradesh sought to represent pastoralist grazing routes and halting sites of nearly 20,000 families. These routes—handed down through generations of Gaddi, Kanet, Kinnaura, and Rajput herders, sustain a production system built on seasonal mobility and access to grazing.

Yet, for decades, they have been constricted, as well-meaning tree plantation drives have resulted in narrowed grazing corridors.

By recording latitude, longitude, and seasonal use, we created evidence both irrefutable and useful—maps and data that spoke to policymakers.

On 24 January 2025, the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department used this record to formally recognise 1,637 verified sites, showing how careful documentation, when validated, can safeguard pastoralists' spatial realities across geographies.

Trainees in Maharashtra documenting migratory routes through field engagement.



CfP researchers holding a group discussion with Kurumar and Golkar pastoralists in Gadchiroli.

This year, Centre for Pastoralism's research programme moved forward in its iterative way. Our project with WWF-India entered its second year, focusing on value chains and livelihoods in Ladakh and a baseline for pastoralism in Arunachal Pradesh. For the Atlas on Indian Pastoralism, we began work in a new landscape—the Deccan plateau in Maharashtra—while continuing long-term engagements in Himachal Pradesh (pastoralist transitions) and Uttarakhand (alpine conservation).

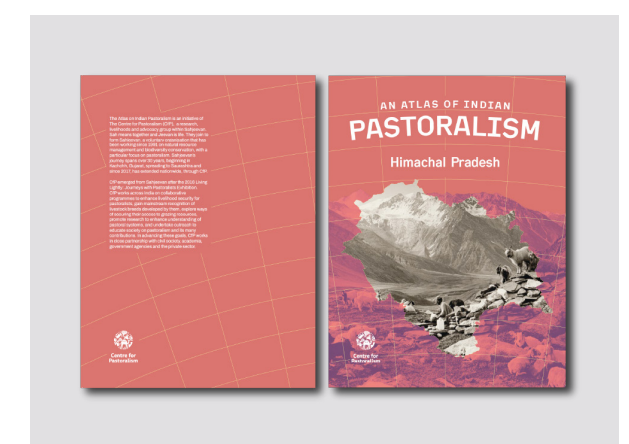
The year also brought diverse presentations and public engagements. Advocacy by our partners on the ground achieved notable gains, including the Himachal Pradesh Forest Department's January 2025 notification recognising pastoralists as legitimate users of forest lands, which and their required involvement in decision making and policy processes.

Through mapping, value-chain studies, alpine conservation and transition research, CfP continues to deepen pastoralist studies in India. Our work not only asks big-picture questions about grasslands, mobility and pastoral livelihoods, but also generates evidence that unsettles dominant assumptions about pastoralist lives and livelihoods. At the same time, applied studies feed directly into programme design—informing conservation practice, shaping policy conversations, and strengthening pastoralist institutions on the ground.

Mapping pastoralism

Now in its fourth year, the Atlas project has reached a stage of replicability. Our methodology for mapping pastoralist mobility has stabilised over the past two years, setting core principles for data collection while allowing flexibility across landscapes. A central component of this survey is documenting household incomes and expenditures to estimate the scale of the pastoralist economy—moving beyond ideas to concrete numbers for the sale of animals, wool, and milk.

By starting at the household level, we use micro-sampling to build a macro picture. This enables extrapolation to the sub-district scale, producing figures that inform district and state perspectives while preserving local diversity. The approach challenges assumptions in



Atlas on Indian Pastoralism

large-scale production studies—for example, that pastoralism is uniform or that herds behave similarly regardless of size or composition. Earlier estimates valued Indian pastoralism's annual turnover at Rs. 1.6 lakh crore, a figure now being refined.



Trainees in Maharashtra documenting migratory routes through field engagement.



Trainees documenting migratory routes through field engagement.

This year, surveys were conducted in Arunachal Pradesh and Maharashtra. In Arunachal, livestock keeping is common, but pastoralism is limited to the western districts of Tawang and West Kameng. Field teams faced short windows to meet herders at home, along with difficult terrain and weather.

In Maharashtra, work began in Vidarbha, one of the state's largest pastoralist regions. Progress there has been steady, reflecting the state's scale and diversity and requiring close collaboration with pastoralist youth and community leaders. Although field mapping occurred only in these two states, our cartography unit continues to produce maps and visualisations illustrating pastoralist mobility and its national extent.

Keeping a Toehold in pastoralism

A dominant global narrative holds that pastoralism, as extensive livestock keeping, is in decline. In India, the term "sedentarisation," long used in policy and research, reflects this view. Phrases such as "Ye toh pehle hota tha, ab toh shayad khatam ho gaya hai" ([pastoralism] used to happen earlier, now it has probably ended) are common not just in cities but also in villages where the livelihood has faded from daily conversation. Only older generations recall when herders routinely crossed their lands en route to distant pastures.

Our early research showed that while pastoralism is under pressure, it is far from fully sedentarised. Findings challenge the idea that the practice is disappearing, and instead highlight changing strategies. We track shifts in mobility, herd composition, and labour to see the directions pastoralism is taking.

This work began in Himachal Pradesh and has since extended to Maharashtra. Results suggest mobility is not simply declining but being recalibrated. Many herders now shorten routes, avoiding long winter journeys for nearby grazing. Others reduce herd sizes, easing grazing pressure and labour needs. The picture is nuanced: pastoralists are adapting to remain viable within changing social and economic conditions.

A related strand, with the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS), examines grazing's ecological impacts across 50 sites—studying soil, grazing inputs, and carbon sequestration to establish the ecological value of extensive grazing systems.

Alpine Conservation

This project in the high-altitude alpine ecosystems of the Gori river basin in Kumaon works with pastoral communities to conserve snow leopards and their habitats while making livelihoods more secure. To guide strategies and measure impact, we are building a baseline of alpine ecosystem health and drivers of change.

Camera traps estimate snow leopard populations, their distribution, and prey base. This multi-year estimation is being done in collaboration with WWF-India at the request of the Uttarakhand Forest Department. Initial results were used by the Government for the Snow Leopard Population Assessment of India.

Our conservation action is multi-pronged, aiming to reduce livestock losses and build community resilience. Indigenous sheep are being bred back into herds, as their predator-wary behaviour reduces attacks compared to exotic breeds, which also suffer higher disease and mortality. We procured 120 indigenous sheep and distributed them to 24 shepherds at subsidised rates. We are also reintroducing effective guard dogs, though Tibetan Mastiffs—once integral—have nearly vanished. After an extensive search, we located one pup and placed it with a shepherd. Predator-deterrent measures were scaled up: solar-powered strobe lights adopted by ten more shepherds, and a rebar device using gandhak and chira that mimics a gunshot. Two bear-proof caches were built to secure grain supplies during seasonal migrations.

Linked to the reintroduction of indigenous sheep, whose coarse wool holds little market value, is the development of a high-end apparel line—the Snow Leopard Line. Prototypes of coats and capes were showcased at two Desi Oon exhibitions in Delhi, affirming design and production trajectories. The line is intentionally small-scale and high-value, aiming to improve returns for shepherds, create markets for coarse wool, and sustain cultural practices of pastoral artisans.

To further strengthen alpine livelihoods, we are promoting short-cycle cultivation of high-altitude vegetables. Seeds sourced from Ladakh are being introduced in alpine villages, enabling communities to add fruit and vegetables to their seasonal crop cycles.

Outreach, Outputs and Reflections on our Research

At the Living Lightly Utsav in Bengaluru, CfP and the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) co-hosted a two-day conference, Futures for Grasslands and Pastoralists. The event

gathered academics and researchers to discuss pastoralist–wildlife interactions, livelihood risks, carbon sequestration, soil health, and the ecological roles of grasslands. CfP also presented early drafts of forthcoming reports, including the Himachal Pradesh Atlas.


CfP's initiatives have steadily raised pastoralists' visibility in local, regional, and national forums, generating wider interest in pastoralism and grassland research. While our programme continues to address data gaps and challenge mainstream assumptions, we are especially encouraged by the growing cohort of young Indian researchers taking up these questions. Our economic analysis of pastoralism drew attention, but the more lasting impact has been the Himachal Pradesh government's notification, which has inspired community groups to begin their own data collection.

The notification has also opened dialogues with the governments of Karnataka and Maharashtra, both keen to explore mapping pastoralist grazing routes and quantifying pastoral economies.

These developments reflect the core purpose of the Atlas project: using mapping as a basis for meaningful engagement with policy and practice. Looking ahead, we will complete work on pastoralist transitions in Himachal Pradesh and Maharashtra, expand studies on grassland ecology and carbon, and scale the Atlas through state-level outputs, policy briefs, and open-access resources—while safeguarding respondent anonymity.

Living Lightly 2025





*"Akal mein dakhal nahin, aur
jungal ka darwaza nahi"*

*("You cannot control thought,
and you cannot place a door
on a forest.")*

- Mallya Nayak, a Lambada cattle herder

Mallaya Naik

The Living Lightly exhibition in Bengaluru (January 31–February 16, 2025) brought together the various intrinsic narratives of pastoralist communities from across the Deccan, including 5 states - Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Tamil Nadu, - carrying its histories of migration, ecological knowledge, and cultural expression. These were not isolated accounts, but threads that intertwined across regions, with shepherding practices echoing in different tongues, songs sung under different skies, and crafts shaped by shared relationships with land and animals.

The exhibition wove these strands into an immersive journey, bringing together storytelling through materials from the pastoral world and audio-visual forms such as animation, virtual reality, films, and photographs that conveyed the pulse of pastoral life. Textiles and artefacts carried generations of skill, while workshops and performances brought living traditions into the present, inviting visitors to listen, participate, and learn.

Hosted at the Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), the exhibition welcomed over 300 pastoralists from across the Deccan, along with smaller groups from other parts of the country. Close to 2,000 school students from 16 schools and an estimated 8,000 visitors in total engaged with them and their stories. The Karnataka government also participated in pastoralist-led consultations, marking a significant gain for Deccani pastoralism. Created by more than 80 collaborators, the exhibition's heart lay with the pastoralists themselves, whose openness and lived knowledge gave Living Lightly its enduring warmth and meaning.

Exhibitions and Curatorial Direction

Deciding which stories to foreground was an emotional challenge, for each voice was not just content but a relationship nurtured over years of dialogue—shaped by the love, wisdom, generosity, and experience of hundreds of pastoralists and experts across the Deccan who opened their homes and hearts. Living Lightly emerged as a platform where unheard voices and diverse stakeholders could come together. Designed by Oroon Das and curated by Sushma Iyengar, the exhibition celebrated pastoral movement and resistance to fixed boundaries. Though herders today live within state borders,

their traditions follow ecological lines across the Deccan.

Visitors entered through the stories of Banai and Mhalsa—companions of Khandoba—embodying forest and agrarian lifeways. At the centre hung a striking embroidered map, created with Morii Design and Paper Ark, tracing herding routes from over 50 herders' accounts. Around it, walking stories revealed mobility not as hardship but as ecological knowledge shaped by land, weather, and memory.



Homes on the Move installation

Join the Jatre installation



Hand-crafted still from stop-motion animation, *Desi Oon*, dir. Suresh Eriyat of Studio Eeksaurus



Young visitor experiencing VR film, *Tiger Speaks*, dir. Ram Alluri

Pastures of Poetry showcased verses by pastoralists in Marathi, Kannada, Tamil, and Telugu, each embedded in its geography and tradition.

The Calls of Kaval, curated by Abhijeet Tambe, immersed visitors in the sonic world of herders, where voice and call guided, soothed, and communicated with audiences.

Songs of the Grindmill, curated by folk artist Shilpa Mudbi, carried oral textures of folk and traditional life through herding songs, Beeso Haadu (grindmill songs), and devotional music.

The Sacred Flock honoured Balumama, the shepherd saint of North Karnataka, and his wife Satyawa. His flock, now tended by the Balumama Trust, numbers 40,000 sheep across Maharashtra. A stop-motion film, *Desi Oon* by

Suresh Eriyat (Studio Eeksaurus), retold his story and celebrated Deccani wool as sacred fibre.

The Kuri's Gift traced coarse black wool from shearing to its transformation into Kambali and Gongadi blankets, while narrative textiles voiced the sheep's own story of loss and adaptation.

Hooprints of Deccan brought alive 4,000 years of cattle herding through illustrations by leather puppet artist Anjannappa, evoking the enduring legacy of cow-herding communities.

High-bred highlighted pastoralists' finely tuned genetic knowledge, contrasting it with industrial breeding, and showing their ability to raise resilient animals adapted to local ecologies.

Dung Trails shifted focus to penning, where

livestock graze and fertilise farmland—humorous yet insightful, it revealed long-standing herder–farmer relationships that keep soils fertile and crops thriving.

The Secrets of Savannah presented India's grasslands as ecosystems sustained by pastoral presence, guiding visitors through Bengaluru and Karnataka landscapes—increasingly defined by hyper-development and shrinking pastoral land.

Whispers of Pastoral Scents, an immersive installation by Indu Antony, evoked the smells of livestock, rain, and grazing fields, mirroring sensory knowledge pastoralists and animals use to detect danger, illness, and direction.

Tiger Speaks, a virtual reality film by Ram Alluri, gave voice to Pedamma, the tiger goddess, recalling coexistence between herders and tigers, now disrupted by fences and shrinking forests.

Join the Jatre captured the colour and vitality of pastoral gatherings—spaces for trade, worship, and conflict resolution—blending sounds of deities with visual recreations of shrines.

Homes on the Move spotlighted women's roles in migration: managing and packing goods on horseback, preserving inherited techniques, and sustaining knots, rhythms,

and skills that make mobility a shared art. A shorter edition of the exhibition presented the songs, crafts, and knowledge systems of Kutch's Maldhari communities. Its entryway featured a canopy of 992 embroidered patches, each created by a pastoralist woman.

Rooh Ji Rehaan carried soundscapes of Kutchi kafis, Sindhi wayees, and bhakti bhajans, echoing pastoral rhythms and beliefs.

Kudrat Ji Kalaayi highlighted the connection between pastoralism and Kutch crafts, including bell-making and leatherwork, while embroidered panels traced the annual camel migration across ecosystems.

The Bhediya Panel showcased herder–weaver relationships on a woven textile offered to the sheep goddess.

Heddan-Hoddan combined a 360° film with community narratives to portray pastoral wisdom, traditional knowledge, and conservation practices.

Performances

Performances at Living Lightly created space for the oral transmission of knowledge and cultural memory. Planned evenings and spontaneous moments brought pastoralist worlds a step closer to the audience through music, poetry, dance, theatre, and oral traditions.



Mukhtiyar Ali performing



Shabnam Virmani singing



Pastoral Youth Conclave



Focused group interaction with Deccani pastoralist women on traditional veterinary knowledge

Beeso Haadu, curated by **Shilpa Mudbi**, opened the exhibition with grind mill songs sung by women from northern Karnataka. Kurubar Haada, also led by Mudbi, celebrated the Kuruba community's relationship with sheep and wool, carrying the rhythms of Deccani herding into an urban setting. Thinayiruppu, directed by **A. Mangai** with music by **Bindhumalini**, gave voice and movement to Sangam poetry.



Shilpa Mudbi performing kith Kalaburgi Kala Mandali

Some performances drew directly from community memory. In Veera Tammanna Nayaka, **Mohan Kumar** performed with his family, sharing stories from the Kadu Golla oral tradition. A Kannada play by poet **Kotiganahalli Ramaiah**, directed by **Shankarayya R. Ghanti**, featured over 20 children from a government school in Badamakanahalli and explored a shepherd's intuitive bond with his flock. Gwale Mathwale, directed by **Narendra Sachar** and **Maya Rao**, honoured Karnataka's Dhargar Gavli community.

One evening, **Kadu Golla herders** from Chitradurga broke into a lively folk dance, filling the courtyard with energy. Sahitya Akademi Yuva Puraskar winner **Ramesh Karthik Nayak** offered a moving reading from Chakmak, bringing Banjara life and language to the fore. The exhibition closed with a Bhakti-Sufi performance by **Mukhtiyar Ali** and **Shabnam Virmani**, including a song tracing cotton's journey from bud to garment. The courtyard remained alive long after the last note.

Maatu kathe

The Living Lightly exhibition draws depth and significance from the dialogues and exchanges that take place around it. At IGNCA, BIC, and NCBS, pastoralists, researchers, practitioners, and policymakers gathered to deliberate on present concerns, envision future possibilities, and explore opportunities to redefine their economy, ensure forage access, and reaffirm their collective identity.

Pastures and Possibilities: Karnataka's pastoralists step into the spotlight. At a dynamic state-level consultation, voices from across Karnataka's pastoral landscape, including Alemari Kuruba, Kadu Golla, Krishna Gawli, Lambada or Banjara, Handi Jogi, Masbeda, and Beda Kampana, came together with policymakers, scholars, and practitioners for a rare and powerful dialogue. Urgency and optimism filled the air as participants demanded overdue recognition, infrastructure, and cultural visibility. An exhibit walk led into presentations by Dr. Raghupati, Kotiganahalli Ramaiah, and Dr. Rahmat Tarikere, followed by panels on pastoral realities and future

pathways. Dr. Banjagere Jayaprakash urged government-led action on grazing rights, livestock insurance, financial aid, and breed conservation. Dr. Nel Kunte Venkateshaiah called migratory routes Karnataka's "ecological heritage" and pressed for a unified pastoral identity beyond caste divisions. Resolutions included legal protection for routes, welfare for shepherds' children, and hygienic meat parlours. With 1.5 crore small ruminants sustaining over 15 lakh households, the call to centre Karnataka's pastoralists was clear and urgent.

Consultation on Urban Pastoralism

The first consultation on Urban Pastoralism, anchored by Ishita Shah (Curating for Culture), highlighted the hidden presence of pastoral communities around Bengaluru. It asked: Where are these communities, and how does their unseen ecosystem enrich urban life? Curatorial walks and discussions with activists, educators, architects, and researchers explored ways to map these territories and translate data into narratives. The consultation closed with a commitment to make pastoral contributions visible at Bengaluru's living, grazing edges

Tanning Futures

At IGNCA, the scent of leather and the weight of history set the tone as artisans, pastoralists, government officials, and activists gathered for a roundtable on leather procurement and processing. Convened by Dr. Raghupathy, Chief Veterinary Officer from Mysore, it brought together leaders from the Karnataka Sheep and Wool Development Corporation. Leather artisans Davalappa,

Anjinappa, and Manmath spoke of shrinking markets, stigma, vanishing knowledge, and the decline of vegetable-tanning practices. LIDKAR's Dr. Vasundhara acknowledged the gaps and pledged change, promising better procurement, stronger infrastructure, and meaningful collaboration. It felt like the start of a revival rooted in dignity, ecology, and craft.

Connecting through Dung

Discussion on Dung, organized by WASSAN, pastoralists, farmers, researchers, and practitioners from across the Deccan explored the cultural and regional variations of penning, alongside its decline due to changing land use, fertiliser dependence, and altered cropping patterns. Farmers shared experiences, while research from Tamil Nadu Agricultural University & the Soil Initiative underscored penning's benefits for soil fertility and microbial health.

Herbs and Herds

At a consultation led by Dr. Nitya Ghotge with support from Priyashri Mani, four pastoral women from Tamil Nadu met 20 Dhargar women from Maharashtra to exchange traditional veterinary knowledge—from herbal tonics to livestock remedies. Stories ranged from resisting grazing restrictions in Umbalacherry to building a herbal veterinary enterprise in Coimbatore. The idea of a women's pastoral forum emerged, with Tamil Nadu participants forming a women's wing under the State Pastoral Association. The meeting closed with laughter, resolve, and Dhargar songs carrying into the future.



Two day Pastoral Youth Consultation, with youth participants across states



Industries Consultation during Desi Oon Pavillion at BIC



Alemari Bazaar showcasing pastoral crafts



Craft demonstrations at Alemari Bazaar

Pastoral Landscape of Tamil Nadu

Moderated by Prof. Purnendu Kavoori, a conversation on Tamil Nadu's ancient pastoral landscapes explored how pastoralism endures in song, soil, and stone. Prof. Ravichandran highlighted the ecological richness of native grasses and rangelands, while art historian Gandhirajan shared rare rock art depicting pastoral life. The session reclaimed Tamil Nadu's place in pastoral narratives as a living, evolving legacy.

Conference: Futures for Grasslands and Pastoralism in India

The Centre for Pastoralism and National Centre for Biological Sciences co-organised a two-day interdisciplinary research conference to challenge narratives portraying pastoralism as irrational, harmful, or outdated, and to question the misclassification of grasslands as wastelands. Nearly 100 participants, including researchers, policymakers, and civil society actors, engaged in four thematic panels and three discussions. Topics included mobility, identity, conservation, and policy, with case studies from across India. Panels addressed gendered resource access, climate change impacts, political marginalisation, and the role of pastoralists in grassland ecosystems. Discussions critiqued afforestation models, highlighting research showing grasslands match or exceed plantations in carbon storage and efficiency. The event emphasised the resilience and adaptability of pastoralists, the need for climate justice, and the value of their knowledge. It

concluded with a visit to the Living Lightly exhibition at IGNC Bengaluru, reinforcing the importance of public engagement with pastoralist livelihoods and ecological stewardship.

Desi Oon Pavillion

The Desi Oon Pavillion, organised by the Centre for Pastoralism (CfP) and Desi Oon (DO) at the Bangalore International Centre, repositioned indigenous Indian wool as a valuable resource. With 300 visitors and 50 participants including industry professionals, researchers, and policymakers, it combined exhibits, speaker sessions, and networking to showcase innovations in acoustics, automotive, insulation, packaging, and biofertilisers, while addressing supply chain challenges. Designed by Dharmesh Jadeja (Dustudio), the exhibition highlighted wool's heritage, ecological value, and potential through key exhibits such as The Miracle of Wool, The Wool Library, and Pastoralism & Sustainability. Sessions featured experts from Mercedes, Royal Enfield, CSWRI, Control Union, Go Do Good, Icarus Design, and Wipro Cares, alongside pastoral advocates and academic voices from NIFT, Srishti, and IICD. Discussions spanned innovation, certification, traceability, and decentralised processing. A proposal for a Wool Lab and Material Library emerged. Curated by the Desi Oon team, the Pavillion embodied the collaborative ethos of Living Lightly.

Alemari Bazar: Pastoral craft market

Curated by Shabri Wable and Anshu Arora, the Alemari Bazaar unfolded as a living tapestry of pastoral life, where wool, leather, grass, and thread came together in dialogue and creation. Community studios buzzed with artisans sharing skills, stories, and craft traditions, inviting visitors into the heart of pastoral material culture. Workshops ran alongside, blending quiet weekday collaborations with vibrant weekend sessions, creating an active teaching and learning space. The Bazaar's community studios fostered collaboration, with artisans observing, learning, and experimenting together. Designed by DUSTUDIO (Auroville), the space favoured earth over excess, with cloth replacing print and dung and goatskin signages adding warmth. Total sales exceeded ₹33 lakh, spanning a wide range of products from pastoral craft traditions.

Ali Kali Nali: Workshop with schools

The Living Lightly school workshops engaged over 800 students from 16 schools across Karnataka, including government, municipal, and private institutions from rural, peri-urban, and urban areas. For most students aged 11 to 14, it was their first encounter with pastoralism. While many began with the idea that herders faced only hardship, by the end, they saw them as skilled problem-solvers, climate navigators, and ecological stewards. Teachers requested similar workshops at their schools, recognising their value. Designed by Bhawna Jaimini in partnership with Quest Alliance, Bengaluru.

Pastoral Cheese: Workshop and Café

The pastoral café was organised by Trippy Goat Café, while pastoral cheese was presented by Asma Sayed of Bombay Fromagerie. Visitors received pastoral recipe cards. Over two days, Namrata Sundaresan, an internationally certified cheesemaker, educator, and co-founder of Käse Cheese in Chennai, led a hands-on workshop on the potential of pastoral milk. She highlighted how cheese made with indigenous techniques and pastoral milk is often absent from markets and menus. More than 30 participants made Queso Fresco, learning how acidity, temperature, and bacterial cultures shape taste and texture. The workshop celebrated artisanal methods and highlighted livelihood opportunities for pastoral dairy farmers.



Choice selection of artisanal cheeses made with dairy supplied by pastoral communities

Communications & Outreach





Outside IGNC Bangalore campus, Living Lightly promotions

Over the last year, the Communications team has supported both programmatic and public-facing activities across the organisation. The team works across mediums and platforms, contributing to documentation, design, and outreach.

We assisted in amplifying the Living Lightly Utsav and the Desi Oon Hub activities across digital platforms, ensuring wider audiences, subsequently positioning pastoralism more prominently in public dialogue. Additionally we supported the ideation and production of long-form, multi-format collateral, such as a publication and digital interface on the pastoral communities of India; a High-Bred installation and book; state-wise pastoral atlases; and a census report. Our aim was to create reference resources for students, researchers, policymakers, diverse audiences, and community institutions for years to come. These efforts reflect a growing emphasis on communicating not just activities, but the ideas, identities, and ecologies that shape them. At the same time, the team has continued to support a wide range of internal and external functions: preparing reports, maintaining communications platforms, archiving field documentation, coordinating media relationships, and refining the organisation's visual and narrative presence.

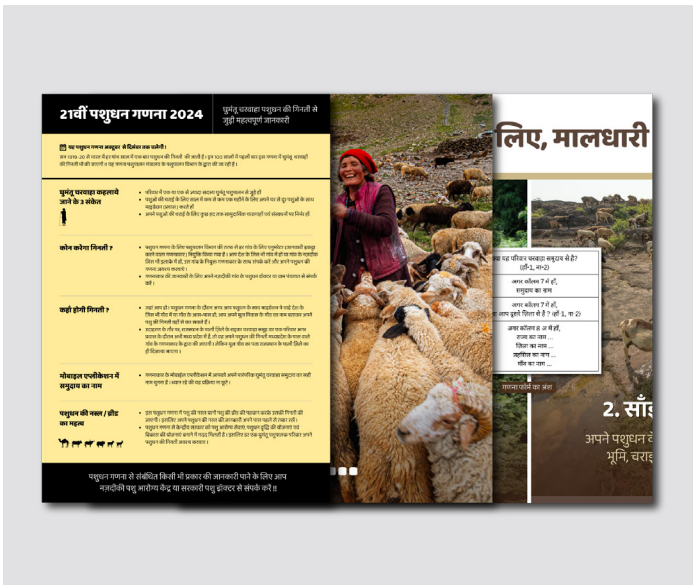
What follows is a summary of the year's communications work across public events, publications, digital infrastructure, and in-house initiatives.

Living Lightly Utsav 2025

Communications managed the brand identity, digital platforms, and media coordination of the third edition of Living Lightly—a month-long exhibition and convening in Bengaluru. We commissioned Georgie Paul to help revitalise the visual identity for our landmark Living Lightly Utsav spotlighting Deccani pastoralist culture. The team ensured consistency across all collaterals—print, social, and digital—and built a new exhibition website along with an external consultant, Project Nirvana. Our social media activities resulted in an addition of over 4,000 new followers. Poster placements, influencer collaborations, and email campaigns further amplified reach. Physical collaterals included standees, signage, donor walls, invites, venue

maps, and leaflets. CfP-branded merchandise was designed in-house and an exclusive stall was managed at the Alemari Bazaar at Living Lightly. We worked with ASAR Social Impact Advisors to organise a press conference for Kannada and English media outlets. The resulting coverage appeared in The Hindu, Deccan Herald, Times of India, Bangalore Mirror, and Mint Lounge.

A digital archive of all images and videos from the exhibition was curated and established. Additionally, a detailed Living Lightly report and conference documentation was prepared.



2025 Livestock Census campaign materials



L-R: Pastoral communities of India, Dharini Padh's children's books



High Bred book



Pastoral Atlas' on Indian Pastoralism

Desi Oon

The communications team supported visual marketing, event branding, and on-ground materials for Desi Oon festival held annually at Triveni Kala Sangam in New Delhi. This included designing and coordinating city-wide poster placements, producing wayfinding signage, and managing pre-event digital outreach. The team liaised with Echostream, CfP's design partner, to create visuals and storytelling elements—including banners, signages, and standees.

Pastoral Census Campaign

Communications supported the rollout of the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying pastoral census campaign by developing multilingual print and visual materials for community outreach. This included brochures, posters, and banners in multiple Indian languages. Infographics and simplified content were created to support both digital circulation and grassroots mobilisation. The team also supported internal briefings and presentations by designing digital decks and visual tools for use in workshops, review meetings, and with government stakeholders. Twelve chapters of the Census Report were drafted and laid out using a design template in Google Docs that allows for simultaneous and integrated writing and layout. Migration maps for ten states were produced, while additional maps and graphics are yet to be executed.

Publications

Annual Calendar

The 2025 Calendar highlighted Deccani pastoralist communities, featuring their culture, herds, and migratory patterns. Designed to align with the Living Lightly Utsav, it carried forward the exhibition's themes.

Publications on the Pastoral Communities of India

The communications team advanced the content and design of a comprehensive publication on pastoral communities of India. Developed with contributions from writers and practitioners across diverse landscapes, the book builds on earlier documentation while incorporating fresh fieldwork from Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Telangana.

To widen its reach, a simplified workbook version was prepared for grassroots use. digital edition is in progress, offering open-access through a searchable platform. The project has also opened space for regional collaborators and subject experts to contribute essays and articles, further enriching the CfP resource database.

Graphic Narratives

As part of her graduation project, intern Dharini Padh explored the linguistic and ecological knowledge embedded in pastoral communities. Supported by the Centre for Pastoralism, her fieldwork in Banni (Kachchh), Belgaum, and

Andhra Pradesh laid the foundation for a Pastoral Language and Knowledge Archive (PKLA). This archive documents proverbs, ecological observations, anecdotes, and place-based vocabulary, reflecting generations of lived experience.

The research inspired two children's books—one completed and one storyboarded—that bring the lifeworlds of pastoralists from Belgaum and Banni to younger audiences through visual storytelling. Insights also shaped installations and zine workshops showcased at the Living Lightly Utsav in Bangalore. Both titles will move into publication once final edits and tweaks are completed.

High-Bred Exhibit and Book

The High-Bred book combined editorial work, layout, and image curation to create a photographic and narrative exhibit celebrating pastoral animal breeds. This exhibit was later adapted into a compact book version for distribution and sale. Both formats foreground the role of pastoral knowledge in sustaining India's livestock diversity.

Pastoral Atlas (Himachal Pradesh)

CfP communications also supported the creation of a set of pastoral atlases, developing a structure, visual language, and thematic maps. Georgie Paul set a visual design in place and created illustration templates. The Himachal

Pradesh Atlas was developed in detail and presents maps, data, and visual documentation of pastoral routes, communities, and ecologies. Initial prototypes were designed, with final designs awaiting additional content.

Digital Platforms & Reach

CfP's digital presence was actively managed, with Instagram followers growing from ~4,500 before Living Lightly to over 6,655 by year-end. Alongside regular field updates and external collaborations, the team produced engaging posts on pastoralism—such as how herders keep the nation fed and what parenthood looks like during mobility. Ongoing stories and coverage kept Instagram active and visible between major events.

Reports & Internal Outputs

The Communications team also delivered key organisational reports—the Annual Report, funding documents, and the Living Lightly report.



Research reports

A Turning Point for Policy on Indian Pastoralism

Mobile herds enter national record for the first time

Pastoral livestock were formally counted in the 21st Livestock Census—a breakthrough decades in the making. For the first time, mobile herds and their keepers are visible in the very data that informs budgets, schemes, and national planning.

This inclusion is the outcome of years of advocacy by pastoralist communities and allies, and it creates the ground for more responsive programs on grazing access, breed conservation, and livelihood preservation.

With 2026 declared the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists, this recognition marks not just a statistical correction, but a decisive step toward acknowledging pastoralism as integral to India's ecological future.

Civil society will remain crucial in closing the gap between pastoral communities and institutions.

- Ramesh Bhatti, Advisor & Programme Director



Raikas welcoming enumerators, Madhya Pradesh

The consistent efforts of pastoralist leaders, civil society organisations, and research networks to bring mobile livestock keepers into the policy fold have led to a significant shift: for the first time, pastoral livestock were officially counted in the 21st Livestock Census. In a related move, the Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying has set up a Pastoral Cell within the Department of Animal Husbandry. Existing government schemes have also seen gradual changes, with provisions now being expanded to better include the needs and realities of pastoralist communities.

Camels, donkeys, and horses have now been brought under the purview of the National Livestock Mission. In a related global development, the United Nations has declared 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP)—a potentially landmark moment for the recognition of pastoral production systems worldwide, particularly in a country like India.

The Livestock Census, conducted every five years, forms the basis for how central and state governments design schemes, allocate budgets, and determine coverage across livestock species. With pastoral livestock now included, it is expected that both existing and new government programs will begin to reflect the needs of pastoral communities more systematically. Specific attention is likely to be given to areas such as mobile veterinary services, breeding and conservation of indigenous livestock, and stronger market linkages for milk, wool, and other products.

MoEFCC and MoFAHD are expected to collaborate on designing both celebration events and a strategic roadmap for IYRP 2026, with FAO serving as the coordinating agency at the international level.

Our Policy Advocacy

At the national level, the Pastoral Youth Federation has a critical role to play in mobilising young pastoralists across states—to assert their identity, protect access to grazing lands,

and claim entitlements under laws such as the Forest Rights Act (FRA) 2006. Priorities in the coming years include large-scale health camps, facilitating access to government services, submitting CFR claims, and mapping migratory routes to enable more tailored service delivery. Civil society organisations will remain central to bridging gaps between communities and institutions.

There are currently 10–12 states with substantial pastoral populations, and it is anticipated that these states will move toward setting up dedicated cells and programs for pastoralists—complementing the Pastoral Cell already established within MoFAHD.

To ensure this emerging policy movement leads to lasting change, there is a need for sustained advocacy and coordination. Organisations like Sahjeevan and CFP, which are deeply invested in pastoral systems, Centre for Pastoralism can anchor this process. Wider networks such as the Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture Network (RRAN-WASSAN) and Rainfed Livestock Network (RLN-FES) will also play an important role by creating collaborative platforms for policy engagement. At the international level, FAO's ongoing work on non-bovine milk markets could open new opportunities for pastoralists through upcoming policy recommendations.



Lambadi herder and his son, Telangana



Organisational Governance

The Central Coordination Unit (CCU) continues to serve as the governance and finance anchor for Sahjeevan. It provides strategic, administrative, and compliance-related support across the organisation. In 2024–25, the CCU continued to strengthen institutional systems, support organisational learning, and ensure regulatory compliance.

Governance and Compliance

Sahjeevan convened two Governing Board meetings (September 2024 and March 2025), one Annual General Body Meeting (September 2024), and three Finance Committee meetings (May 2024, August 2024 and January 2025). In addition, Advisory Committee meetings were held for the Biodiversity thematic (April and March).

Statutory compliance remained a strong focus. Trustee changes were reported to the Charity Commissioner, FCRA-MHA, and NGO Darpan portals. Income Tax and FCRA returns were filed before due dates, and TDS and Professional Tax were deposited on time. The statutory audit was completed with all queries addressed.

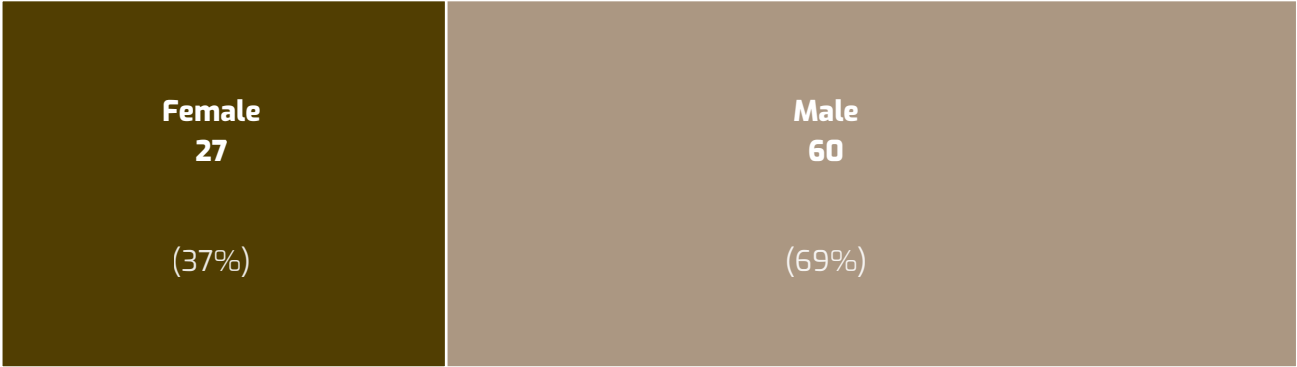
Contributions toward the Provident Fund were submitted regularly, and the Gratuity Scheme along with staff insurance policies (accident, asset, and money) were renewed on time. Under POSH compliance, one case was filed during the year that has been processed and successfully resolved by the Internal Committee.

Organisation Development

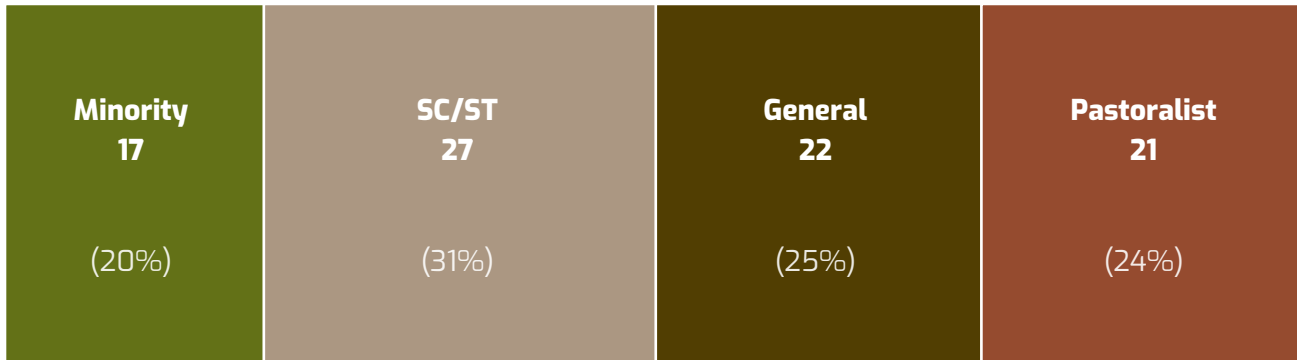
Sahjeevan continued to strengthen decentralised and participatory systems across the organisation. Over the year, attention was placed on enabling sangathans and teams to take greater ownership of their work and to exercise initiative in decision-making. Equal focus was given to embedding the values of equity and inclusion within internal processes, ensuring that representation and voice remain integral to how the organisation functions. In parallel, structural

Cfp-Sahjeevan Diversity (2024-25)

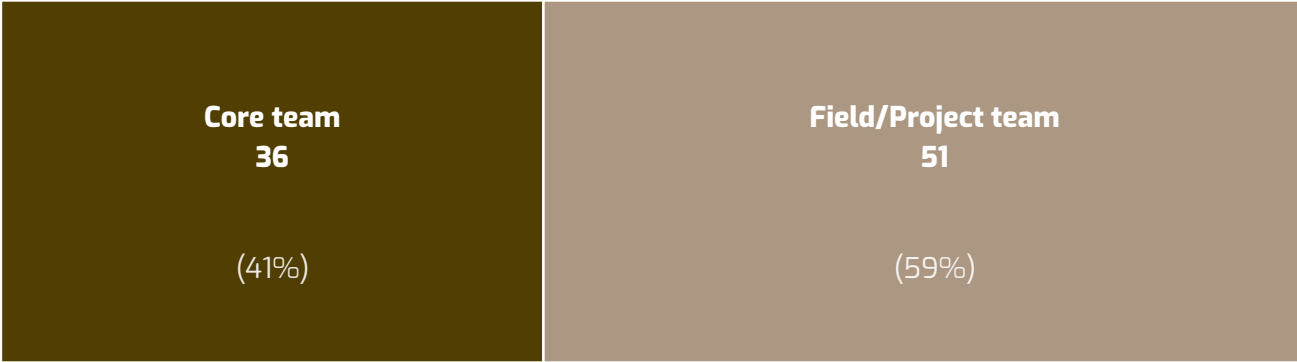
Gender diversity in team: Total 87



Socio Cultural diversity in team: Total 87



Diversity in competence level: Total 87



Financials

The Bombay Public Trusts Rules, 1961 (Gujarat)
SCHEDULE IX

(see rule 17(1))

Name of the Public Trust : SAHJEEVAN
Registration No. : F-421 (Kutch)
Address of the Trust Office : 175, Jalaram Society, Vijavnagar, Bhuj-Kutch Phone No. (02832) 251814
FCRA Registration No. : 042050027 Date 03-10-2001
Bank Account number relating to transaction of Foreign Contribution of Trust
Name of Bank State Bank of India Branch Sansad Marg New Delhi Address New Delhi Account No. 40068721903

Income and Expenditure Account for the year ending on 31st March, 2025

Expenditure	Amount	Income	Amount
Expenditure in respect of property		Rent	-
Rates, Taxes, Cesses	-	Interest- As per Annexure XXII	
Repairs & Maintenance	-	On Security	20,80,599
Salary	-	On Loan	-
Insurance	-	On Bank Account	8,62,485
Depreciation	-		29,43,084
Other Expenses	-		
Establishment Expences- As per Annuxure XIV	1,04,41,044	Dividend	-
Remuneration to Trustee- As per Annuxure XV	3,65,000	Donation	
Rent Expenses- As per Annuxure XVI	15,93,677	As per Annexure XXIII	
Legal Expences	-	Domastic	32,65,001
Audit Fees- As per Annuxure XVII	1,59,300	International	1,66,601
Professional Fees	-		34,31,602
P.T.Contribution- As per Annuxure XVIII	50,000	Grants	
Miscellaneous Expenses	-	As per Annexure XXIV	
Depreciation- As per Annuxure XIX	11,16,086	Domastic	7,37,22,266
Amount Written-off		International	5,07,91,784
Loss on Sale of Assets- As per Annuxure XX	-		12,45,14,050
Old TDS Receivable W/off	-		
Amount transferred to Reserve or Specified Funds	-		
Expenditure on objects of the trust			
As per Annuxure XXI			
Religious	-		
Education	-		
Medical Relief	-		
Relief of Poverty	-		
Other Charitable Objects-			
Preservation of Environment	11,33,92,679		11,33,92,679
Surplus carried over to Balance Sheet			
	37,70,950		
Total Rs.	13,08,88,736	Total Rs.	13,08,88,736

Place : Bhuj - Kutch
Date : 19/09/2025

Executive Secretary

Name : Yungandher Mandavkar
Address : 175m Jalaram Society, Vijaynagar, Bhuj-Kutch
M.No. : 940378540



As per our report of even date
For I. H. Desai & Co.
FRN No.102309W
Chartered Accountants

(Nikit A. Desai)
Partner
M. No. 164027

The Bombay Public Trusts Rules, 1961 (Gujarat)
SCHEDULE IX

(see rule 17(1))

Name of the Public Trust : SAHJEEVAN
Registration No. : F-421 (Kutch) Date 02-7-1997
Address of the Trust Office : 175, Jalaram Society, Vijavnagar, Bhuj-Kutch Phone No. (02832) 251814
FCRA Registration No. : 042050027 Date 03-10-2001

Balance Sheet as on 31st March 2025

Funds & Liabilities	Amount	Property and Assets	Amount
Trust Fund or corpus		Immovable Properties	
As per Annexure I	80,04,895	As per Annexure VI	25,35,628
Other Earmarked Funds		Movables Properties	
As per Annexure II	5,34,269	As per Annexure VII	54,69,267
Project Fund-As per Annexure III	1,75,34,517	Investments	
	1,80,68,786	As per Annexure VIII	1,52,91,008
Loans (Secured or unsecured)		Loans (Secured or unsecured)	
From Trustees	-	Good / doubtful	-
From Others	-	Loans scholarship	-
	-	Other Loan	-
Liabilities		Advances	
For Expenses-As per Annexure IV	6,02,703	To Trustee	-
For Advances	-	To Employee- As per Annexure IX	3,53,065
For Rent & other Deposit	-	To Contractors	-
For sundry credit balances	-	To Lawyers	-
	6,02,703	To Other Current Assets- As per Annxu	1,41,07,418
Income & Expenditure Account		To Others- As per Annexure X	22,76,662
As per Annexure V	5,19,67,789		1,67,37,145
		Income Outstanding	
		Rent	-
		Interest	-
		Grant Receivables- As per Annexure XI	40,55,347
		TDS Receivables- As per Annexure XII	1,72,763
		Other Income	-
			42,28,110
		Cash & Bank Balance- As per Annexure XIII	
		a) Balance with Banks	3,43,83,015
		b) Cash in Hand	-
			3,43,83,015
Total Rs.	7,86,44,173	Total Rs.	7,86,44,173

The Above Balance Sheet to the best of our belief contains a true account of the Funds and Liabilities and of the Property / Assets of the Trust.

Income Receivable
Rent : -
Interest : -
Others : -

Place : Bhuj - Kutch
Date : 19/09/2025

(Signature)
Executive Secretary



As per our report of even date
For I. H. Desai & Co.
FRN No.102309W
Chartered Accountants
(Nikit A. Desai)
Partner
M. No. 164027

Donors and Partners

We are deeply grateful to our supporters, whose commitment over the past years has helped us strengthen pastoralist livelihoods, rights, and ecosystems. Their flexibility in how funds are

used, coupled with their active engagement, has allowed us to respond to community priorities and stay true to the realities on the ground.

Philanthropies, CSR Foundations, and other Funding Partners



Azim Premji Foundation



Bajaj Finserv



British Council



Darwin Initiative - WWF UK



Dasra



Eicher Motors



Ford Foundation



Global Initiative Resilience Fund



Microland Foundation



Rainmatter Foundation



Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies



Samāgata Foundation



Titan Company Limited



The Greencliffe Foundation



The Habitats Trust

Government



Central Sheep and Wool Research Institute



Central Wool Development Board



Department of Animal Husbandry, Government of Gujarat



Department of Animal Husbandry, Karnataka



Gujarat Forest Department



Gujarat Sheep and Wool Development Corporation



Himachal Pradesh Forest Department



Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA), Bengaluru



Kamdhenu University, Gandhinagar



Karnataka Sheep and Wool Development Corporation



Ministry of Culture, Government of India



Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change of India



Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying



Ministry of Tribal Affairs



Mukhyamantri Laghu Evam Kutir Udyam Vikas Board, Jharkhand



NBAGR



Uttarakhand State Legal Services Authority

Research & Academia



ATREE



Indian School of Business



Kranti Guru Shyamji Krishna
Kachcch University



NCBS



Shiv Nadar University



Shristi Manipal Institute of Art
Design and Technology



WWF - India



CEPT



Bombay Natural History Society

Networks



Climate RISE Alliance



Desi Oon Hub



Ecological Restoration Alliance



International Union for
Conservation of Nature, IUCN



Kachcch Navnirman
Abhiyan



Lantana Collective



Living Labs Network



Rainfed Livestock Network



Revitalising Rainfed Agriculture



Kalpvriksh

Industry Partners



Agrocel Industries Limited



Amul



Royal Enfield



Sarhad Dairy



Sursagar Cooperative Dairy

Programme Partners



Anthra



Asar



FES (Foundation for Ecological
Security)



Avani



Bakkarwal Crafts



Earthen Tunes



Bandipora Weavers
Producer Co.



Chandra Marti Evam Bal
Kalyan Samiti



CONARE



Centre for People's Collective



Chubako



DUSTUDIO



Cotton Rack



Dakhni Diaries



ELDF

Gaderia Mahasabha



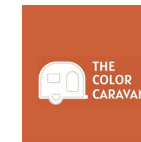
Ghongadi.com



Go Do Good

SOH

Shepherds of Himalayas



The Color Caravan



Triveni Kala Sangam, New Delhi



Hunnarshala



Janastu



Kambl



Urmul Setu



Vankar Shamji Vishram



WASSAN



Khamir



Kullvi Whims



LIVE Foundation



Zapurza Museum Pune



Varaha



Satvik Promoting Ecological Farming



Living Labs Network



Looms of Ladakh



Maati Sangathan

Community Based Organisations



Van Gujjar Tribal Yuva Sangathan



Banni Pashu Uchherak Maldhari Sangatan (BPUMS)



Ghenta Bakra Maldhari Sangathan (GBUMS)



Manthan Yuva Sansthan



Miyar Mufflers



Norbu / Its All Folk



Panchal Dairy



Kachchh Unth Uchherak Maldhari Sangathan



Halari Pashu Uchherak Maldhari Trust

Pal Yuva Sangh



Peoli



Quest Alliance

Amrabad Poda Laxmi Govu Sangham

Surendranagar Ghenta-Bakra Maldhari Sangathan

Himachal Pradesh Ghumantu Pashupalak Mahasabha



Rangsutra



Samakhya Sustainable Alternatives / Urmul Desert Crafts



Setu Abhiyan

Sahjeevan's Board



Sandeep Virmani
President

He is an architect, conservationist and institution builder who has spent the last 3 decades in Kachchh, Gujarat, working with communities to enhance their livelihoods and improve the quality of their environments. Over the years he has helped set up four organisations in the region, including Sahjeevan; Arid Communities and Technologies, which focuses on water in all its dimensions; Satvik, for ecological farming; and the Hunnarshala Foundation, an non-profit working towards sustainable human habitation. Sandeep is on the board of a large number of organisations; he is CfP's founder mentor and is actively involved in all of the organisation's work.



Gagan Sethi
Vice President
till August 2024

He is the founder of Janvikas, an NGO whose programmes led to the establishment of Sahjeevan. He is an institution development expert and human rights activist and has played a crucial role in setting up many organisations, including Kachchh Mahila Vikas Sangathan, Drishti Media Arts and Culture, Centre for Social Justice and ECONET. He is a highly respected trainer on organisational development, project planning and evaluation and has co-authored two books, 'Reconstructing Gender towards Collaboration' and 'Right to Free Legal Aid'. Gagan has a bachelor's degree in economics and statistics from St. Xavier's College, Ahmedabad and a master's degree in social work from MSU Baroda.



Yugandhar Mandvekar
Executive Secretary

He has over 35 years of experience working on rural livelihoods and community-based natural resource management. He has worked on several watershed developments, climate-resilient agriculture and livelihoods programmes, and has supported over a hundred CSOs and FPOs on strategies, implementation systems and managed result chains, including capacity-building in those areas. He is on many governing boards, including Grass Roots Action for Social Participation, Aurangabad (GRASP), Marathwada Sheti Sahayya Mandal, Jalna (MSSM) and Society for Action in Community Health, New Delhi (SACH). Yugandhar holds a master's degree in management from the Indian Institute of Management and a B.Tech from Punjabrao Krishi Vidyapeeth, Akola.



Sushma Iyengar,
Trustee since
September 2024

Sushma Iyengar is a social worker and educator. In the past three decades she has led transformative action with marginalized communities in the area of gender justice, indigenous cultures, cultural livelihoods, local governance, and post-disaster rehabilitation. Based in Kutch, she is also the lead curator of the exhibition 'Living Lightly - Journeys with Pastoralists' - an outcome of her long-standing interest in and experience with indigenous communities, including nomadic pastoralists.



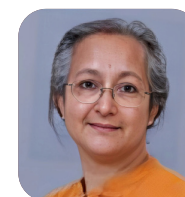
Krupa Dholakia
Trustee

A strong community mobiliser, organiser and trainer, Krupa has 23 years of experience in strengthening local communities on gender perspectives and building community-based organisations to manage natural resources and traditional livelihoods. She has made significant contributions to resolving issues of water scarcity. She holds a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Gujarat University, a bachelor's in education and a post graduate diploma in ecology and environment from the Indian Institute of Ecology and Environment, New Delhi.



Dr. Sabyasachi Das
Trustee

He served as Sahjeevan's CEO for many years where he was instrumental in conceptualising and developing much of its current work. He is the director of Watershed Support Services and Activities Network (WASSAN), where he oversees the RRA Network hub and the livestock programme. He has extensive experience as a researcher and a development professional. His areas of interest include sustainable agriculture, pastoralism, water and natural resource management, livelihood promotion, institution building, and policy advocacy.



Dr. Rajeshwari Raina
Trustee

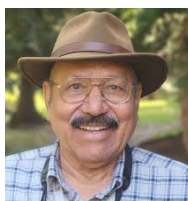
She is a professor at Shiv Nadar University with research and teaching experience of close to 30 years. Her research interests are centred on the relationship between knowledge and economic development, specifically in agricultural and rural contexts. Equipped with a multidisciplinary education and social commitment to equitable and sustainable development, she undertakes individual and collaborative research projects and is part of various strategic knowledge alliances with partners in academia, civil society, industry and the state.



Dr. Devinder Kumar Sadana
Trustee

Dr. Devinder Kumar Sadana is an eminent scientist who has an extensive research and teaching experience of 31 years. His work includes some of the most significant contributions to the arena of Characterization of defined and lesser known livestock breeds and populations of India. He has worked as principal scientist with renowned organizations such as NDRI and NBAGR. He has been guiding several PhD and MSc Scholars and been a trainer at several international organizations. He is also a respected author and has several publications to his credit.

Steering Committee members Biodiversity



Dr. Asad Rahmani

India’s foremost conservationist and an ornithologist, Asad Rahmani obtained a doctorate degree from AMU, with his thesis on Fish’s Olfactory Organ. For almost a decade, he worked exhaustively on endangered species, bird migration, and the Great Indian bustard. In a career spanning 40 years at Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS), he served as the Director from 1997- 2015 and later Senior Scientific Adviser from August 2015 to July 2017. Asad Rahmani was Chairman, Department of Wildlife Sciences for six years and also Scientific Consultant to the Corbett Foundation and Hem Chandra Mahindra Trust. Rahmani also served as Global Council member of Bird Life International, UK and Chairman, Birdlife Asia Council (2006-2013). He has been awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by Vasundhara, Pune, and Member of Honour by Birdlife International, UK.



Dr. Ambika Aiyadurai

Dr. Ambika Aiyadurai is an environmental anthropologist studying human–animal relations and people–nature dynamics in the Indian Himalayas. Her long-term research with indigenous communities, especially the Mishmi of Arunachal Pradesh, explores how local worldviews and global forces shape collaboration and conflict in conservation. Trained in wildlife sciences (Wildlife Institute of India) and anthropology (University College London), she holds a PhD in Anthropology from the National University of Singapore.



Dr. Justus Joshua

With over three decades of experience across India’s diverse ecosystems—from the Western Ghats and Himalayas to the arid landscapes of Gujarat and Rajasthan—Dr. Joshua has worked on species-specific studies (elephants, lions, giant squirrels, butterflies, birds, reptiles, and amphibians) as well as large-scale habitat assessments. His expertise spans wildlife biology, ecological restoration, biodiversity documentation, watershed management, and conservation planning. He has also taught ecology and biodiversity at the Wildlife Institute of India and other institutions, and continues to focus on strengthening community participation in conservation.



Sandeep Virmani

He is an architect, conservationist and institution builder who has spent the last 3 decades in Kachchh, Gujarat, working with communities to enhance their livelihoods and improve the quality of their environments. Over the years he has helped set up four organisations in the region, including Sahjeevan; Arid Communities and Technologies, which focuses on water in all its dimensions; Satvik, for ecological farming; and the Hunnarshala Foundation, anon-profit working towards sustainable human habitation. Sandeep is on the board of a large number of organisations; he is CfP’s founder mentor and is actively involved in all of the organisation’s work.

Sahjeevan team

Administration

Kavita Mehta (Executive Director)
Nimish Gor (HR & Administration)
Dhara Pithadia (HR & Governance)
Valji Jepal (Office Assistant)

Livelihoods

Aslam Palani (Programme Coordinator)
Kheraj Maheshwari (Field Coordinator)

Communications

Girbani Dutta (Communication Lead)

Finance

Bishwash Tiwari (Chief Finance Officer)
Dipika Thacker (Accountant)
Trijal Chhaya (Account Assistant)
Muneerahmed Memon (Account Assistant)

Support staff

Bhavna Barot (Pantry Staff)
Navin Bhanushali (Driver)
NarendraSinh Sodha (Driver)

Community Institutions, Livestock Health and Breed Conservation

Ramesh Bhatti (Programme Director)
Bharati Sanjot (Programme Coordinator)
Kiran Patel (Programme Coordinator)
Sandip Kanojiya (Project Coordinator)
Narendra Nandaniya (Project Coordinator)
Mahesh Garva (Project Coordinator)
Jabbar Sama (Project Coordinator)
Jayesh Paraliya (Project Coordinator)
Suresh Kuvadiya (Project Coordinator)
Parbat Parmar (Project Coordinator)
Savita Batta (Assistant Project Coordinator)
Ankita Kathecha (Assistant Project Coordinator)

Biodiversity

Ritesh Pokar (Programme Coordinator)
Khyati Thacker (Project Coordinator)
Mansi Gor (Project Coordinator)
Malaika Chawla (Project Coordinator)
Abhinav Rajan (Project Coordinator)

Resource Rights

Vishwa Thacker (Project Coordinator)
Pratap Chavda (Project Coordinator)



CfP's Steering Committee

CfP is guided by a Steering Committee responsible for programmatic and financial oversight of the unit housed within Sahjeevan. This five-member body serves a three-year term and convenes once every four months.



Dr. Amrita Patel

She is the recipient of numerous awards, including the Padmabhushan for her contribution to India's dairy sector. She headed the National Dairy Development Board, which led the world's biggest dairy development program - Operation Flood, from 1998 to 2014. She is the founder of the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES) and is currently a member of its Governing Board. She is also the Former Chairperson of Shree Krishna Hospital, Anand.



Jaya Jaitly

She is the Founder of Dastkari Haat Samiti, the remarkable space in Central Delhi that hosts and showcases the work of craftspeople from across the country. She is a passionate advocate for crafts people and has spent decades working to enhance their visibility and identify means by which they might have improved access to mainstream markets. She has authored numerous books on Indian crafts and has curated shows all over the world. Jayaji was the former President of the Samata Party.



Dr. Jayashree Ratnam

She is currently at the National Centre for Biological Sciences, Tata Institute of Fundamental Research where she serves as Director of the Wildlife Biology and Conservation Program. She is particularly interested in the history, ecology, function and conservation of tropical savannas, forests and grasslands. Current work includes paleo-history and functional ecology of Asian savannas and grasslands and long-term monitoring of Asian tropical forests and savannas.



Sandeep Virmani

He is an architect, conservationist and institution builder who has spent the last 3 decades in Kachchh, Gujarat, working with communities to enhance their livelihoods and improve the quality of their environments. Over the years he has helped set up four organisations in the region, including Sahjeevan; Arid Communities and Technologies, which focuses on water in all its dimensions; Satvik, for ecological farming; and the Hunnarshala Foundation, a non-profit working towards sustainable human habitation. Sandeep is on the board of a large number of organisations; he is CfP's founder mentor and is actively involved in all of the organisation's work.



Sunil Parekh

He is an author, an empanelled arbiter, and senior strategy advisor with Zydus Life Sciences Group and Jubilant Bhartia Group. He has 45 years of work experience with corporates in India, Africa and the USA. He is a Member of the National Executive Committee FICCI, and Chair, FICCI Gujarat since 2010. He currently chairs FICCI Gujarat's Social Compact Committee (2021-22) for improving labour standards. He is also involved with two global organisations- WEF Geneva's Shapers Initiative and The Value Web and serves on the board of several organisations within and outside India. He is the recipient of several awards, including the Outstanding Contribution to National Development in 2014.

Administration

Vasant Saberwal (Director)
Akash Naoghare (Coordinator)
Mohammed Shahid (Administrator)

Accounts

Syed Kashif Raza (Accounts Associate)

Support Staff

Ramashankar (Office Staff)

Forest rights act

Rituja Mitra (National Coordinator)
Amit Rathi (Uttarakhand Coordinator)
Amiya Walia (Research Associate)
Raghav Srivastava (Research Associate)
Nausheen Akhtar (FRA Coordinator)

Livelihoods

Riya Sequeira Shetty (Wool Anchor)
Richa Keshri (Junior Coordinator)
Rahul Noble Singh (Strategic Advisor)

Research

Aniruddh Sheth (Research Coordinator)
Shital Devidas Sangewar (Associate Cartographer)
Rudre Malik (Associate Cartographer)
Priya Rajput (Post-Doctoral Researcher)
Deepika Chhetri (Project Lead - Arunachal Pradesh)
Chamba Tsetan (Project Lead - Ladakh)
Vidur Datt (Field Researcher)
Yash Ketkar (Lead Cartographer)
Ajinkya Ukey (Maharashtra Coordinator)
Emmanuel Theophilus (Project Anchor)
Narain Nitwal (Field Staff)
Mahendar Singh (Field Staff)
Prem Rana (Field Staff)
Trilok Rana (Field Staff)

Policy Advocacy

Ramesh Bhatti
Ankita Marwaha

Living Lightly

Sushma Iyengar (Lead Curator)
Tatsama Motilal (Co-ordinator)
Priyashri Mani (Curatorial Team)
Khyati Vinod (Designer)
Komal Jain (Associate Curator)
Gauri Subbarammu (Intern/Designer)

Communications

Sarita Sundar (Thematic Strategist)
Tanya Maheshwari (Coordinator)
Nehla Salil (Communications Associate; Jan-March 2024)
Sayali Kute (Graphic Designer)
Sayan Biswas (Graphic Designer)
Mahadevan Ramaswamy (Communications Consultant)

Learning, Dialogue and Impact

Capacity Building

Over the years, our teams invested in strengthening their own capacities while taking pastoralist knowledge into wider dialogues. From focused trainings to global forums, these engagements built skills, shaped conversations, and amplified pastoralist perspectives

- **Tango Performance Course (Timshel)** – Dhara Pithadia | Built accountability through trust and transparency.
- **Self-Leadership (Oasis Valleys)** – Dhara Pithadia, Kavita Mehta | Reflected on value-based work culture
- **Communication for Social Impact (Ahmedabad Management Association)** – Aslam Palani, Rohan Shinde | Enhanced communication tools for social initiatives.
- **Leverage Change (DESTA)** – Vishwa Thacker, Sandip Kanojiya | Applied systems thinking to complex challenges.
- **PoSH Essentials (Navjivan Centre for Development)** – Bharti Nanjar, Mansi Gor | Strengthened workplace safety and compliance.

Workshops, Seminars & Conferences

- **Ajab Gajab Bazaar (Shabd Shala)** – Abhinav Rajan, Malaika Mathew Chawla, Savita Batta, Ankita Kathecha, Kiran Patel, Suresh Kuvadiya | Sessions blending ecology, art, and Kabir's poetry.
- **Himalaya Initiative Partners' Consultation (ATREE)** – Vasant Saberwal | Regional collaboration on Himalayan policy and research.
- **Cambridge Mongolia Forum, Ulaanbaatar** – Aniruddh Sheth | CfP's pastoralism research programme.
- **Exploring Social & Historical Dimensions of Conservation (NCF)** – Vidur Datt, Amiya Walia | Histories and practices of conservation.
- **FRA Convergences Training (TISS, Mumbai)** – Amiya Waliya, Rituja, Ajinkya, Abbey.
- **Living Lightly Conference (NCBS, Bengaluru)** – Vidur Datt | Paper on "Transhumant Contemporaneity."
- **Govt. of Karnataka Consultation** – Living Lightly Utsav 2025 – Aniruddh Sheth, Yash Ketkar | Grazing route mapping for state policy.
- **Oxford Interdisciplinary Desert Conference (Oxford University)** – Aniruddh Sheth | Paper on the political economy of pastoralism.
- **Seminar Talk (SOAS, London)** – Aniruddh Sheth | Pastoral transitions research.
- **National Seed Festival – Beejotsav (Maharashtra)** – Rituja Mitra | Pastoralist-farmer relationships.
- **Conference on Natural Resource Management & Restoration (Restoration Hub)** – Rituja Mitra | Restoration of pastoral landscapes.
- **India Land Development Conference (Landstack)** – Amanat Ali, Suleman Lodha | Community stewardship in climate action.
- **Forests, Stewardship & PES Markets Workshop (Landstack)** – Amiya Waliya | Case study on Van Gujjar stewardship.
- **National Workshop on Forest Governance (TISS, Mumbai)** – Sushupti.
- **Deccan Consultation (CfP)** – Pastoralists, officials, researchers | Rights, tenure, forage access.
- **Restoring Natural Ecologies (Ecological Restoration Alliance)** – Khyati Thacker, Rohan Shinde | Restoration strategies.
- **Common Grounds: Inclusive Energy Transition (CEEP)** – Khyati Thacker, Ritesh Pokar | Biodiversity and inclusive energy futures.
- **Living Lightly Conference (NCBS, Bengaluru)** – Malaika Mathew Chawla | "Interactions between wolves and Pastoralists in Surendranagar Landscape"
- **Webinar Series – University of Greenwich, UK, England** - Kavita Mehta | talk on "Pastoralism in India, current challenges and way forward"

Publications

This year’s research outputs spanned journals, national conferences and community platforms. Together, they reinforced pastoralism’s relevance to ecology, policy and livelihoods

- **Restoring the Banni Grasslands** – Thacker, Nanjar, Singh | Proceedings of the 12th International Rangeland Congress.
- **Interactions between wolves and Pastoralists in Surendranagar Landscape, Gujarat.**– Chawla, Kuvadiya | Presented at Living Lightly Conference.
- **Restoration Strategies: Removing Senna uniflora** – Thacker, Chhatbar, Chawla, Kuvadiya | Ecological Restoration Alliance.
- **Commiphora shankarsinhiana – A New Species from Gujarat** – Thacker, Joshi P., Joshi E., Rajput, Vasava | Published in Rheedea.
- **Glory Days, Last Gasp or Somewhere in Between** – Sheth, Saberwal | Submitted to Bahá’í Chair, DAVV.
- **Towards Greener Pastures** – Sheth, Kohli, Ratnam, Saberwal, Sankaran | Accepted in Economic and Political Weekly.
- **Pastoralism and Himalayan Forests** – Sheth, Saberwal, Ketkar, Thadani | Forthcoming book chapter.
- **Steppes and Skylines** – Sheth | Blog for Oxford University.
- **Sustainable Pastoralism amid Climate Change** – Priya Rajput | Published in GeoJournal (2024).
- **Counter-mapping the Forest** – Suleman, Amiya, Hamja | Presented at India Land Development

Interns/ Fellows knowledge building and contribution

Sr.no.	Name	University / College	Project they worked on
1	Sreekanth Sanjay	India Fellowship Program	Wool as an Agree Input
2	Rohan Shinde	India Fellowship Program	Biochar Project
3	Divyajyoti Ganguly	Jaikrishna Indrajithaker Fellowship	Understanding the socio-economic status and socio-ecological interactions of the Vada Koli community of the Banni grasslands, Kutch, Gujarat”

Interns hosted

Sr.no.	Name	University / College	Project they worked on
1	Akshat Kumar	Independent	Worked on mapping pastoralist routes in Surendranagar.
2	Dhirendra Kumar	Azim Premji University, Bangalore	Worked on developing cluster profiles across Western Kacchh, Eastern Kacchh, and Saurashtra.
3	Bipin Kumar	Azim Premji University, Bangalore	Worked on developing cluster profiles across Western Kacchh, Eastern Kacchh, and Saurashtra.
4	Rajeev Ranjan Kumar	Azim Premji University, Bangalore	Worked on developing cluster profiles across Western Kacchh, Eastern Kacchh, and Saurashtra.
5	Rohit Kumar	Azim Premji University, Bangalore	Worked on developing cluster profiles across Western Kacchh, Eastern Kacchh, and Saurashtra.
6	Sohit Kumar	Azim Premji University, Bangalore	Worked on developing cluster profiles across Western Kacchh, Eastern Kacchh, and Saurashtra.
7	Thrupti Vora	Nirma University, Ahmedabad	Gained organisational governance and administrative experience.
8	Ritika Sharma	Savitri Bhai Phule University, Pune	Worked on legal documentation, grazing access, and assisted with Living Lightly FRA consultation.
9	Sushupti Kalbande	IIT Gandhinagar	Assisted with Living Lightly FRA consulted and the CFR management plans in Himachal Pradesh.

Sr.no.	Name	University / College	Project they worked on
10	Aditi Purnima Bandu	Fergusson College, Pune	Assisted with the Living Lightly FRA Consultation.
11	Ambika Subramaniam	Mount Carmel College, Bangalore	Assisted with the Living Lightly FRA Consultation.
12	Gagan Holkar	National Institute of Design, Bhopal	Designed a technical document on the use of goat hair and manure in sustainable agriculture.
13	Yashika Bhutani	Chitkara University, Chandigarh	Assisted in the development of the CfP Merchandise platform, along with designing various collaterals for social media.
14	Dharini Padh	National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad	Developed two children's books on the unique linguistic and cultural registers of Pastoralists.
15	Jinoodhaya SS	Woxen University, Hyderabad	
16	Yashita Bajaj	TERI, New Delhi	Assisted in developing cartographic outputs for research initiatives
17	Shanehil Borah	Shaheed Sukhdev College of Business Studies (University of Delhi)	
18	Kajal Mahla	The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda	Worked on documenting ethno-medicinal practices in Western Kachchh.
19	Navin Suthar	The Maharaja Sayajirao University of Baroda	Worked on documenting floral composition in the four Rakhals (Reserve forests) of Lakhpat.

Glossary

BMC – Biodiversity Management Committee

Village-level institutions under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002 that document biodiversity and develop conservation plans.

PBR – People's Biodiversity Register

Community-prepared registers documenting species, seasonal resource use, and traditional ecological knowledge.

CFR – Community Forest Rights

Legal rights of communities to access, manage, and conserve forest resources under the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

CFRMC – Community Forest Resource Management Committee

Committees formed by Gram Sabhas to manage forests under CFR, ensuring sustainable use and conservation.

FRA – Forest Rights Act, 2006

A law that recognizes the rights of forest-dwelling communities over land and resources they depend on.

MoTA – Ministry of Tribal Affairs

The nodal Government of India ministry overseeing FRA implementation and tribal policy.

FRC – Forest Rights Committee

Village-level committees constituted under FRA to process and verify community and individual claims to forest rights.

SDLC – Sub-Divisional Level Committee

An administrative body under FRA that reviews and forwards forest rights claims for approval.

DLC – District Level Committee

The highest authority under FRA at the district level, empowered to approve or reject claims.

Our Ecosystem



Sahjeevan
Works with pastoralist and forest-dependent communities to secure rights, strengthen livelihoods, and restore ecosystems in arid and semi-arid regions.



Centre for Pastoralism (CfP)
A national initiative advancing research, policy, and practice to support pastoralist systems, livestock breeds, and knowledge creation.



Desi Oon Hub
A platform connecting herders, artisans, and markets to revive and promote India's indigenous wool economy.



Living Lightly
A travelling exhibition and dialogue space showcasing the cultures, ecologies, and knowledge systems of pastoralist communities.



RAMBLE
Research and Monitoring in the Banni Landscape—
an open platform supporting research on the Banni grassland ecosystem, its pastoral communities, and their interlinked futures.



Charobar Foundation
Charobar Foundation is a community-led initiative in Kutch focused on restoring degraded grassland and thorn forest ecosystems, reviving indigenous wool and craft economies, and strengthening pastoral livelihoods through ecological and cultural regeneration.



Rooted in thorn and soil, his thoughts travel skyward

