

**ALL- INDIA MEETING  
of  
PASTORALISTS and HERDERS ORGANIZATIONS**

22-23<sup>rd</sup> March 2002  
in  
Sadri, Rajasthan

***BACKGROUND***

Pastoralists are people who primarily depend on livestock for their income and keep them on communally owned grazing resources (CPR). The World Herders Council (WHC) is an intercultural forum for the exchange of information and experiences of pastoralists throughout the world. A proponent of ecologically and socially responsible animal husbandry, the WHC was founded in Burkina Faso in 1996 and has its secretariat in Lucerne, Switzerland. It also has sections in several African countries, incl. Senegal, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Cameroon, as well as some European countries. An Indian section was started in September 2002, which is administered by Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan, a local NGO that has been working with the Raika pastoralists in Rajasthan since its inception in 1996.

The annual meetings/conferences of the WHC have taken place at various places in Africa and Europe. The next meeting is scheduled to take place in India from November 4-11, 2002. It will be organized by the Indian section of the WHC, in cooperation with the National Dairy Development Board in Anand, Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan and the League for Pastoral Peoples, an international advocacy and support organization for pastoralists.

***THE PROBLEM***

Although India is home to a large number of pastoral groups – which include the Rebari/Raika of western India, the Gaddi, Gujjar, and Bakharwal of the Himalayas, the Monpas, the Dhangar of Maharashtra, as well as various groups in South India – these grazing communities have very low public and political profile. The various groups are much less organized than their African colleagues and are even hardly aware of each other's existence. All of them share similar existential problems, are being sidelined or ignored by government policies and accused by scientists of clinging to an outmoded form of production, despite their large contribution to the national economy in terms of the production of milk, meat, leather, dung, and other products.

Despite the common discrimination the Indian pastoralists face, there has never been any attempt to bring them together to build a common platform.

**In order to build a forum of India's pastoral groups and of preparing the ground for the first World Herders Council meeting in India, Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan, Sadri, is hosting a three-day preparatory meeting for Indian pastoralists and representatives of herders organizations with the support of Winrock International India.**

## **OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the planned meeting/workshop is to better understand and analyze the problems experienced by pastoralists, especially with respect to grazing and their resource base, and to discuss possible strategies for influencing policy makers. The realization that they all share common problems, particularly with respect to their traditional grazing rights, is expected to galvanize the diverse groups into one common forum.

## **FOCUS OF THE WORKSHOP**

The largest crosscutting problem of Indian pastoralists is undoubtedly the shrinking of their pasture resource base. The establishment of national parks and sanctuaries, in combination with the expansion of agriculture into marginal areas has undermined the traditional livelihoods of all of them. As a result, practically all of the groups are involved in long standing conflicts with forest authorities and many of them have experienced the forceful expulsion from their traditional grazing areas. These policies continue even though there is now mounting evidence that livestock grazed in national parks may actually contribute to the conservation of biodiversity and the overall health of the eco-system. Some recent insights include:

- Livestock forms a large component of the diets of large carnivore species that are protected by the parks. Exclusion of livestock often leads to the outmigration of predator species (lions, leopards, tigers) from the parks. One example for this is the Gir Lion sanctuary where, in a reversal of the earlier policy, once again livestock is allowed into the park to prevent lions from straying and seeking prey outside the park.
- Lack of grazing by livestock can destroy nesting habitats for rare bird species – as has been observed in Bharatpur sanctuary.
- Livestock grazing also represents an important means of nutrient recycling from forests to adjacent agricultural fields – whose fertility can not be maintained without the dung of animals grazed in the forest. (Example: Kumbhalgarh Sanctuary in Rajasthan.)

Making such information available to pastoralists can enable them to better argue their case versus the Forest department and other concerned authorities.

## **VENUE AND DATE**

The meeting will be held at the LPPS training center in Sadri, District Pali which is located in the heart of the Raika/Rebari area of Rajasthan, and adjacent to the Kumbhalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary.

## ***PARTICIPANTS***

Efforts are made to invite pastoralists from all parts of India and especially to encourage women herders to attend. A few NGOs working with pastoralists will also be invited for translation and acting as facilitators.

## ***PROGRAMME***

The programme will consist of the following points:

- Sharing of knowledge between participants about their respective cultures and their way of life
- Discussion of the problems faced by them, specifically with respect to grazing conflicts and access to protected areas
- Orientation about the activities and goals of the World Herders Council, the global context of pastoralism and grazing conflicts
- Agreeing on a common agenda, possibly arriving at a joint statement that outlines the situation of Indian pastoralists and suggests possible solutions to grazing conflicts.
- Field visits to Raika herders, to the Kumbhalgarh sanctuary, audiovisual shows etc.

## ***OUTPUTS***

The expected outputs of the meeting include

- Overview of different pastoral groups and their problems, especially in regards to grazing conflicts
- Heightened awareness among pastoral groups through exchange of knowledge and interaction among themselves
- Formation of an informal network of Indian pastoral groups and of NGOs working with them.
- Raised public awareness about pastoral groups and their problems

## ***ORGANIZERS and more information:***

Hanwant Singh Rathore, Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan, Desuri Road, Sadri 306702, District Pali, Rajasthan. Tel 02934-85086, e-mail [lpps@sify.com](mailto:lpps@sify.com) Website: [www.lifeinitiative.org](http://www.lifeinitiative.org)

Mr. WMK Warsi, World Herders Council, India section ([wmkwarsi@yahoo.com](mailto:wmkwarsi@yahoo.com)), at above address. Website: [www.condial.org](http://www.condial.org)

Dr. Ilse Köhler-Rollefson, League for Pastoral Peoples, Prugelatostr. 20, 64372 Ober-Ramstadt, Germany. Tel. 0049-6154-53642. E-mail [gorikr@t-online.de](mailto:gorikr@t-online.de), Website: [www.pastoralpeoples.org](http://www.pastoralpeoples.org)