

# A CASE OF BENIGN NEGLECT

## KNOWLEDGE GAPS ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY IN PASTORALISM AND RANGELANDS





Ассоциация «Оленеводы Мира»  
Association of World Reindeer Herders



**RISZA**  
RED INTERNACIONAL PARA  
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**IPICYT**  
INSTITUTO POTOSINO DE  
INVESTIGACIÓN CIENTÍFICA  
Y TECNOLÓGICA, A.C.

## ***A case of benign neglect: Knowledge gaps about sustainability in pastoralism and rangelands***

### **Editorial team**

Kathrine I. Johnsen, GRID-Arendal  
Maryam Niamir-Fuller, Independent consultant  
Abdelkader Bensada, UN Environment  
Ann Waters-Bayer, Coalition of European Lobbies  
for Eastern African Pastoralism (CELEP)

### **Advisory board**

Anders Oskal, International Centre for Reindeer  
Husbandry (ICR)/Association of World Reindeer  
Herders (WRH)  
Elisabeth Huber-Sannwald, Instituto Potosino de  
Investigación Científica y Tecnológica (IPICYT)  
Jonathan Davies, International Union for  
Conservation of Nature (IUCN)  
Mounir Louhaichi, International Center for  
Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA)

### **Research assistance**

Lucas Plummer, Intern, GRID-Arendal  
Nicole Rokicki, Intern, GRID-Arendal

### **Acknowledgements for special contribution**

Barbara Hutchinson, University of Arizona  
Fiona Flintan, International Livestock Research  
Institute (ILRI)  
James O'Rourke, International Rangeland Congress  
& Society for Range Management  
Mounir Louhaichi, ICARDA  
Razingrim Ouedraogo, IUCN  
Ruijun Long, Lanzhou University  
Yegor Volovik, UN Environment

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**Graphics:** Levi Westerveld, GRID-Arendal

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*Sudan goats, camels and camp. Wolfgang Bayer*

# Foreword

**Pastoralism is practised by millions of people worldwide and represents an intimate relationship between people, the animals they care for and the landscape. Yet despite existing for millenniums, little is known about pastoralist societies and the interlinkages between their practices and the rangelands on which these depend.**

Due to widespread gaps in understanding pastoralists and rangelands, there are many questions that currently cannot be answered with confidence concerning who pastoralists are, where their natural rangelands are located, how land-use policy is affecting their land, what effect climate change is having on their land and lifestyles, and how the international community can best support and promote sustainable rangeland management and pastoral livelihoods. Finding answers to such questions is paramount, since these will have profound implications for national and international policy and thus influence how climate change is addressed.

Benjamin Mutambukah, from the Eastern and Southern African Pastoralists Network, was one of the contributors to this report. He points to the increasing competition for land between pastoralists and mining companies, resulting in pastoralist communities losing parts of their traditional land and with this, their options for mobility. This not only greatly impacts pastoralists' ability to use seasonally

available pasture and water, but increases land degradation and poverty, forcing many to search for alternative livelihoods.

Over the years, UN Environment and other United Nations organizations have compiled and assessed data and trends on various regional and global environment and socioeconomic issues. However, as this gap analysis shows, global assessments tend not to disaggregate natural rangelands from other habitats, and pastoralists from other rural dwellers, which has resulted in significant knowledge gaps.

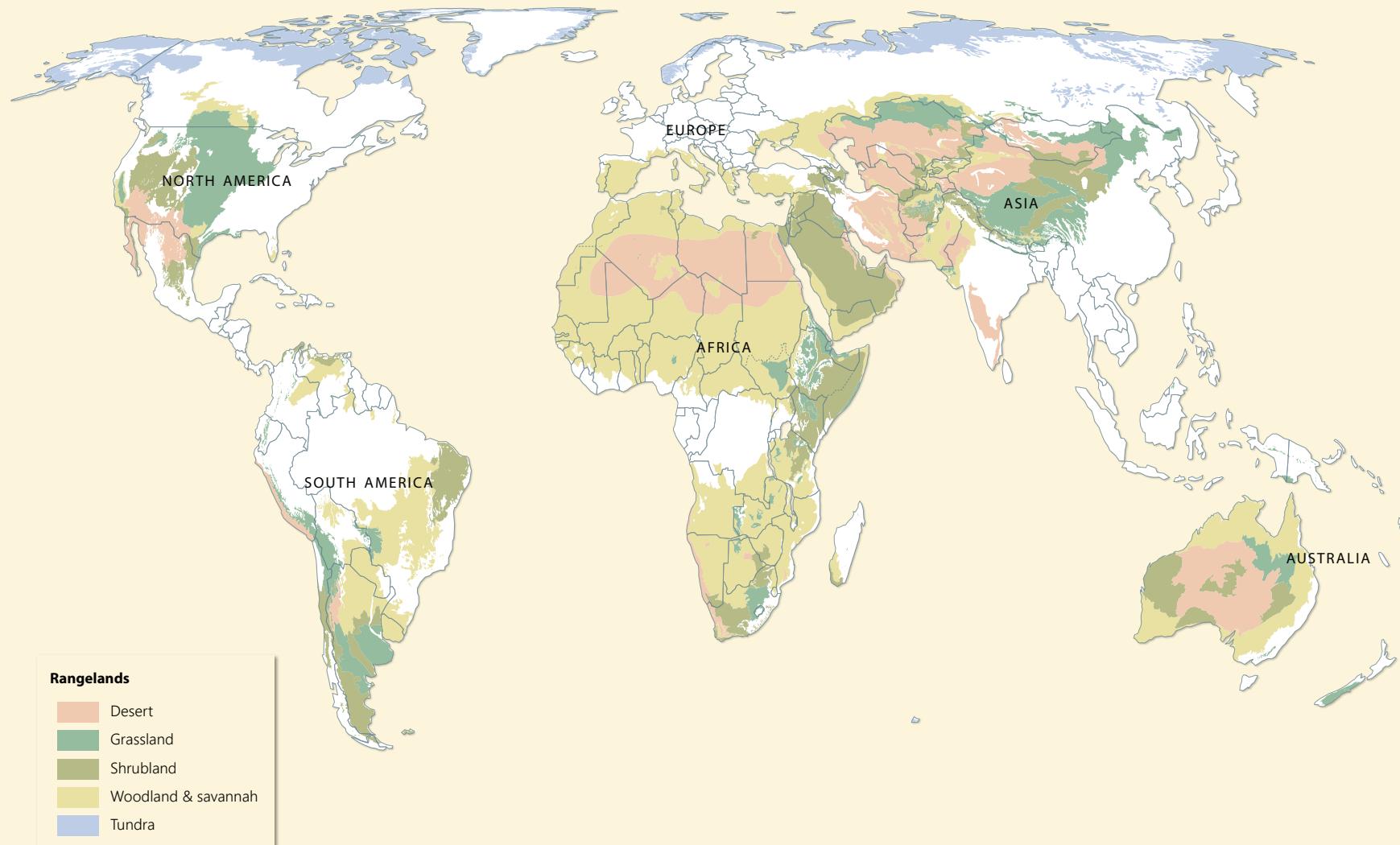
It is hoped that a global integrated assessment of rangelands and pastoralists will provide a baseline, which is crucial for monitoring the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals among pastoralists. Furthermore, it will help countries develop appropriate policies and programmes that reach out to the remotest and most mobile pastoralists and support their role in building a greener economy – a global challenge we all share.

This is exciting work with great potential. Thanks to advances in the Internet, communications technologies and satellite imagery, innovative solutions can be found to generate high-quality data that can inform policymaking to support these often nomadic communities and equip them to better address climate change and other environmental challenges.



  
**Joyce Msuya**  
Acting Executive Director  
UN Environment

## One way of defining and illustrating rangelands of the world



### Rangelands

- Desert
- Grassland
- Shrubland
- Woodland & savannah
- Tundra

**Sources:** Olson, D. M., Dinerstein, E., Wikramanayake, E. D., Burgess, N. D., Powell, G. V. N., Underwood, E. C., D'Amico, J. A., Itoua, I., Strand, H. E., Morrison, J. C., Loucks, C. J., Allnutt, T. F., Ricketts, T. H., Kura, Y., Lamoreux, J. F., Wettenberg, W. W., Hedao, P., Kassem, K. R. 2001. Terrestrial ecoregions of the world: a new map of life on Earth. *Bioscience* 51(11):933-938. ; Natural Earth.

# Executive summary

## Observations and findings

### Pastoralism and rangelands are globally significant, but under-recognized and undervalued.

It is often assumed that data currently being collected on agriculture, livestock and forestry are adequate for informing policymaking on rangeland-based livestock systems. The report *A case of benign neglect: Knowledge gaps about sustainability in pastoralism and rangelands* shows, however, that current statistics and data are not sufficiently disaggregated to capture the different needs, circumstances and opportunities for sustainable pastoralism and rangeland management.

Rangelands are areas with diverse ecosystems that are grazed or have the potential to be grazed by wild animals and domesticated livestock. These lands provide important benefits to humans, such as food security, medicine, local and regional economies, wildlife, biodiversity, tourism, regional climate through carbon sequestration, and land and water preservation and rehabilitation.

Pastoralists are people who raise or care for wild or semi-domesticated animals or domesticated livestock on rangelands, and include ranchers, nomads, graziers, shepherds and transhumant herders. Pastoralism is increasingly recognized as one of the most sustainable production systems on the planet and plays a major role in safeguarding ecosystems and biodiversity in natural grasslands and rangelands. Where official statistics are available, there is evidence that pastoralism contributes significantly to national gross domestic product

(GDP). For example, pastoralists contribute 10–44 per cent of the GDP in African countries and 30 per cent in Mongolia.

However, the report also shows that there is inconsistency in how pastoralism and rangelands are defined. For example, estimates of land area covered by rangeland vary from 18 per cent to 80 per cent of the world's land surface, with the estimated number of pastoralists ranging from 22 million to 500 million people worldwide. By using a wide and inclusive definition, the report finds that pastoralism and rangelands are a global phenomenon and can be found in two thirds (66 per cent) of all countries in the world.

Due to their extensive use of rangelands, pastoralists – especially nomadic and remote pastoralists – have different interests and needs than other people. Rangeland ecosystem functions and services are very different from those of forests or croplands. Without further knowledge on pastoralists and rangelands, it is not possible to judge the impacts of current policies on their livelihoods and these ecosystems. For example, underestimating the number of pastoralists and underrating the benefits of livestock mobility may mean that governments do not provide sufficient or appropriate services to pastoralists. Furthermore, insufficient attention to gender and youth issues of pastoralists may mean misunderstanding what pastoral women and children need and want.



Nomadic pastoralist boy, Turkey. Engin Yilmaz/Yolda Initiative

If governments do not value rangelands correctly, they may rush towards afforestation programmes to the detriment of biodiversity and carbon capture. Undervaluing rangelands (sometimes termed “forgotten rangelands” by scientists) may lead to a lack of resources for studying, protecting and monitoring rangeland resources, despite the increasing need to understand them as climates continue to change.

In the age of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which promise to achieve universal benefits and leave no one behind, knowledge gaps in pastoralism and rangelands should be addressed rather than ignored.

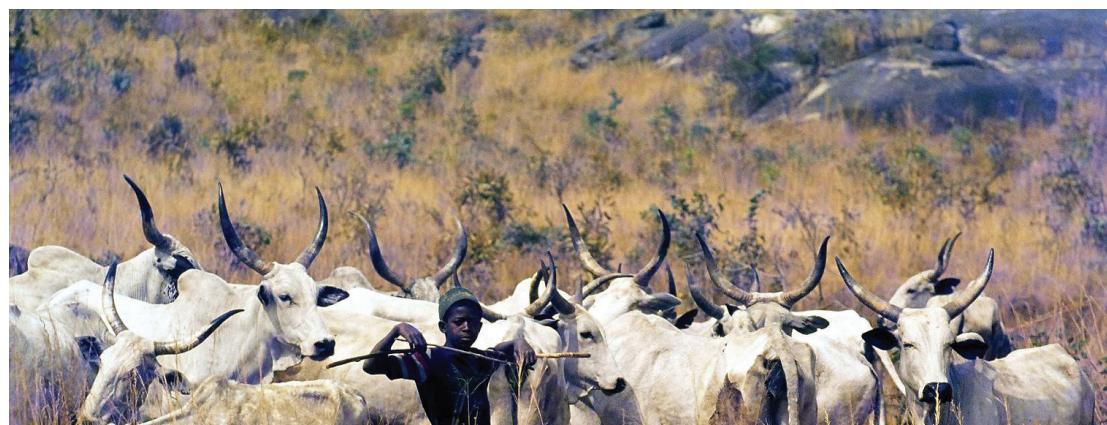
**Despite the many challenges of conducting a rapid gap analysis, the conclusions and recommendations of this report are applicable to all relevant countries.**

This report directly responds to one of the resolutions<sup>1</sup> approved at the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) in May 2016, which acknowledges the dearth of information on pastoralism and rangelands. The resolution calls for a gap analysis of environmental and socioeconomic information and the provision of technical support for promoting pastoralism and rangelands. This report is also guided by the mandate of UN Environment to conduct

integrated assessments and analyses, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and specifically the SDGs and their targets and indicators related to pastoralism and rangelands.

The gap analysis is based on a rapid study conducted from May 2017 to August 2018, covering information available since 2000. It analyses the accessibility and availability of and level of confidence<sup>2</sup> in data on

pastoralism and rangelands publicly available from various Internet sources, including assessments, databases, scientific publications in Scopus (an online database of peer-reviewed literature) and multilateral environmental agreements. The gap analysis also examines types of technical support for pastoralism provided by multilateral organizations and through official development assistance (ODA) of member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In addition to the rapid study, a survey on the perspectives of different organizations and pastoralists was used to inform the gap analysis, covering issues such as information collection methods, confidence in the data, perceptions of gaps in information, and technical support for pastoralism and rangeland management. The inclusion of local and indigenous knowledge and technologies (LIKT) in the information sources reviewed was also examined as far as possible. A final worldwide peer review verified the conclusions and recommendations based on the analysis. Despite not being able to cover some types of non-English information, documents and databases, as well as some thematic areas due to the analysis' rapid



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