

GEF Small Grants Program

Support to

Rangelands and Pastoralism

2003 - 2024

Mapping Pastoralism Across SGP

Pastoralism is one of the world's oldest and most widespread livelihood systems, practiced across grasslands, rangelands, mountains, drylands and wetlands on every continent. Pastoral communities manage livestock in environments where mobility, adaptation and stewardship of natural resources are essential for sustaining livelihoods. Beyond supporting food security and local economies, pastoral systems contribute to biodiversity conservation, ecosystem management and the sustainable use of vast landscapes.

Rangelands cover more than half of the Earth's land surface and provide critical ecosystem services, including carbon storage, water regulation and habitat for wildlife. Yet many pastoral areas are increasingly affected by land degradation, climate change, biodiversity loss, fragmentation of grazing lands and growing competition over natural resources. Supporting pastoral communities to strengthen their resilience while safeguarding the landscapes they manage is therefore an important component of sustainable development and land restoration efforts.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Small Grants Program (SGP), implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), has worked with Indigenous Peoples, local communities, pastoralists and small-scale producers for more



than three decades. While SGP has not historically maintained a dedicated pastoralism portfolio, many community grants have supported activities closely linked to pastoral livelihoods, including sustainable grazing management, rangeland restoration, livestock production, biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, water management and natural resource governance.

This briefing note presents preliminary findings from a portfolio-wide keyword scan of the SGP global database undertaken in preparation for UNCCD COP17. Using a trilingual (English, French and Spanish) keyword methodology, the scan identified **2,094 projects** worth approximately **USD 65.9 million** in SGP grant financing across **121 countries** between Operational Phases 3 and 7 (2003–2024). Together, these projects provide a window into the ways local communities have addressed pastoralism, livestock-based livelihoods and rangeland management across diverse socio-ecological contexts.

Portfolio at a Glance

- **Africa leads by a wide margin**, with 850 projects and USD 28,504,433 – over 40% of all projects and 43% of funding, more than the next two regions combined.
- **Mongolia is the most active country** (111 projects), while **China is the largest recipient by funding** (USD 2,822,333).
- **Activity is concentrated in the drylands**: Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Ghana, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, and Iran are classic pastoralist and rangeland economies.
- **Pastoralism extends far beyond livestock production**. Projects frequently combine livelihoods with biodiversity conservation, climate adaptation, rangeland restoration, water management and community governance.
- **Community-led stewardship is a defining feature of the portfolio**. Across regions, local communities play a central role in managing landscapes, conserving biodiversity and strengthening resilience in pastoral systems.

Preliminary findings, July 2026. Based on a trilingual (EN/FR/ES) keyword scan of the GEF SGP global project database for pastoralism-, livestock- and rangeland-relevant grants. Covers SGP Operational Phases 3 – 7, covering a timespan from 2003-2024. Regions follow UNDP classification (data.undp.org). Figures are close estimates pending validation.



2094
Projects

USD 65,867,425
Total Funding

121
Countries

USD 31,455
Avg. Grant

By Region

Pastoralism is practiced in highly diverse ecological and cultural contexts, from the grasslands of Central Asia and the Andes to the drylands of Africa and the mountain landscapes of Asia. The regional distribution of SGP-supported projects reflects this diversity, while also illustrating where pastoralism, livestock-based livelihoods and rangeland management have emerged as particularly important development and environmental priorities.

The results show a strong concentration of projects in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, and Europe and Central Asia, regions that include many of the world's largest pastoral and rangeland systems. This reflects both the importance of pastoral livelihoods in these regions and the range of challenges pastoral communities face, including land degradation, climate variability, biodiversity loss, water scarcity and growing pressures on natural resources. At the same time, significant activity is also found in Latin America and the Caribbean and the Arab States, highlighting the global relevance of pastoralism and sustainable rangeland management.

The table and chart below compare the portfolio by region, showing both the number of projects identified through the keyword scan and the total value of SGP grant financing.

Region	Projects	Funding (USD)	% Projects	% Funding	Avg (USD)
Africa	850	\$28,504,433	40.6%	43.3%	\$33,535
Asia & Pacific	449	\$12,841,410	21.4%	19.5%	\$28,600
Europe & Central Asia	369	\$9,956,568	17.6%	15.1%	\$26,983
Latin America & Caribbean	287	\$9,703,176	13.7%	14.7%	\$33,809
Arab States	139	\$4,861,838	6.6%	7.4%	\$34,977

Several patterns emerge from the regional analysis. Africa accounts for the largest share of both projects and funding, underscoring the scale and significance of pastoral and agro-pastoral systems across the continent. Asia and the Pacific and Europe and Central Asia together represent almost 40% of projects, driven in part by countries such as Mongolia, China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan, where pastoralism remains an important component of rural livelihoods and landscape management.

Meanwhile, the presence of projects across all five UNDP regions demonstrates that pastoralism and rangeland stewardship are not confined to a single geography but are globally relevant development, biodiversity and climate issues.

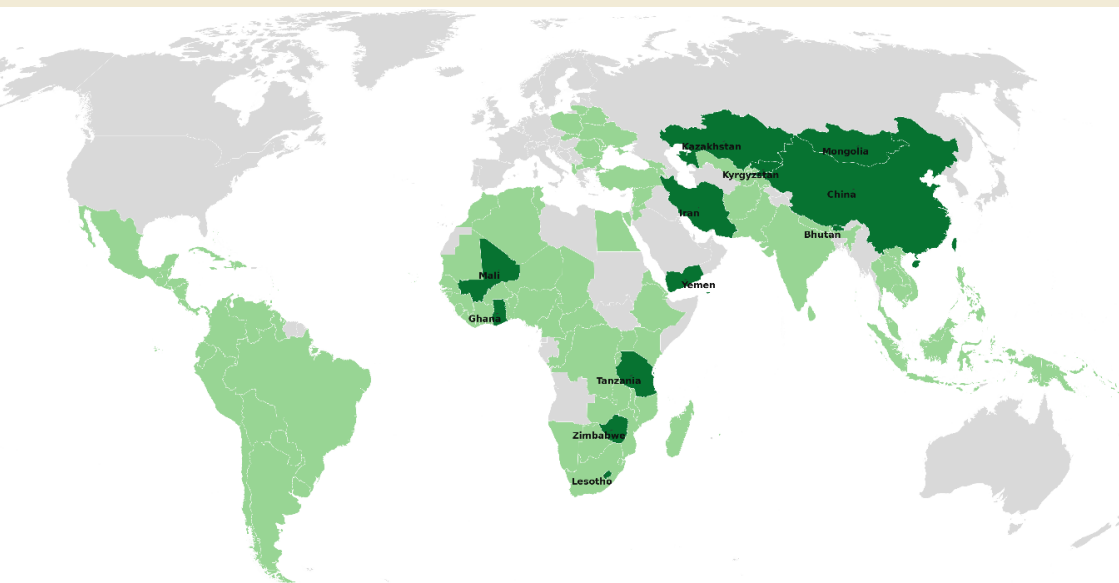


By Country

The SGP portfolio spans **121 countries**, demonstrating the broad geographic reach of pastoralism-, livestock- and rangeland-related community action. However, activity is not evenly distributed. Rather, projects cluster in a relatively small group of countries where pastoralism and rangeland management are central to rural livelihoods, landscape management and local economies. Many of the countries with the highest number of SGP project are characterized by extensive drylands, grasslands, mountain rangelands or mobile livestock production systems.

The country distribution highlights the extraordinary diversity of pastoral systems represented within the SGP portfolio. These range from the nomadic herding cultures of Mongolia and Central Asia, to the livestock-dependent drylands of Africa, and the high-altitude camelid systems of the Andes. Despite their different ecological and cultural contexts, these countries face many common challenges, including land degradation, climate variability, biodiversity loss, competition over natural resources and the need to strengthen the resilience of rural livelihoods.

The ranking shifts depending on the measure used. Mongolia records the highest number of projects, reflecting the central role of pastoralism within the country and the long-standing engagement of local communities with rangeland management. China, meanwhile, ranks first in total grant funding, reflecting a portfolio that combines pastoral livelihoods, biodiversity conservation and landscape-scale management initiatives. Together, the country-level findings demonstrate that pastoralism remains both globally significant and highly locally specific, requiring solutions that are tailored to different ecological, social and governance contexts.



Top 12 countries by number of projects

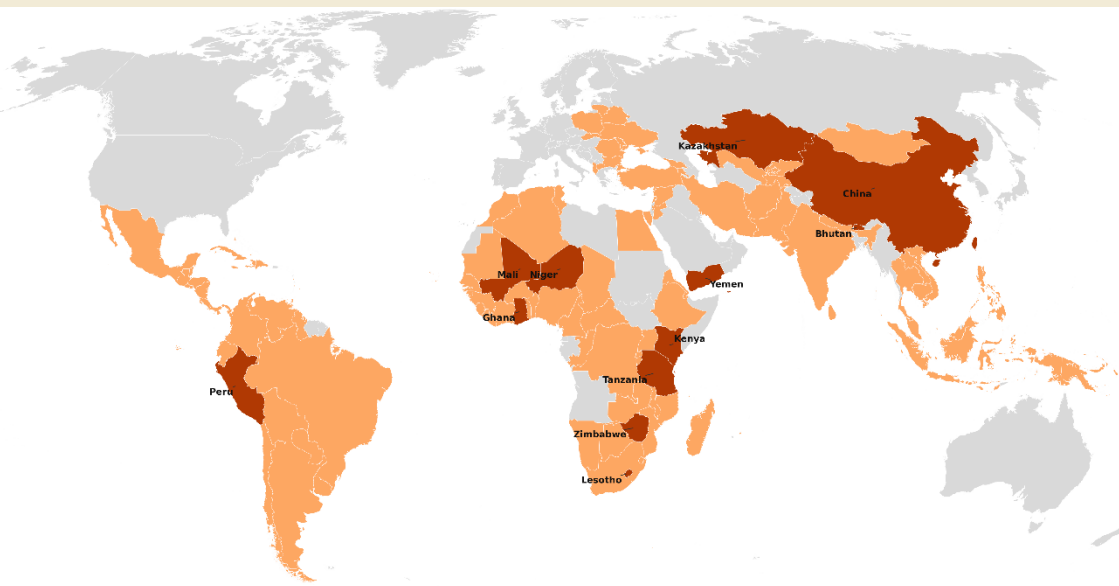
	Country	Region	Projects	Funding (USD)
1	Mongolia	Asia & Pacific	111	\$1,305,331
2	Kazakhstan	Europe & Central Asia	101	\$2,675,719
3	Ghana	Africa	99	\$2,499,025
4	Tanzania	Africa	68	\$2,375,764
5	China	Asia & Pacific	55	\$2,822,333
6	Zimbabwe	Africa	53	\$2,565,515
7	Lesotho	Africa	52	\$1,543,139
8	Iran	Asia & Pacific	51	\$1,222,050
9	Kyrgyzstan	Europe & Central Asia	49	\$1,019,510
10	Bhutan	Asia & Pacific	47	\$1,481,640
11	Yemen	Arab States	46	\$1,674,342
12	Mali	Africa	45	\$1,612,107

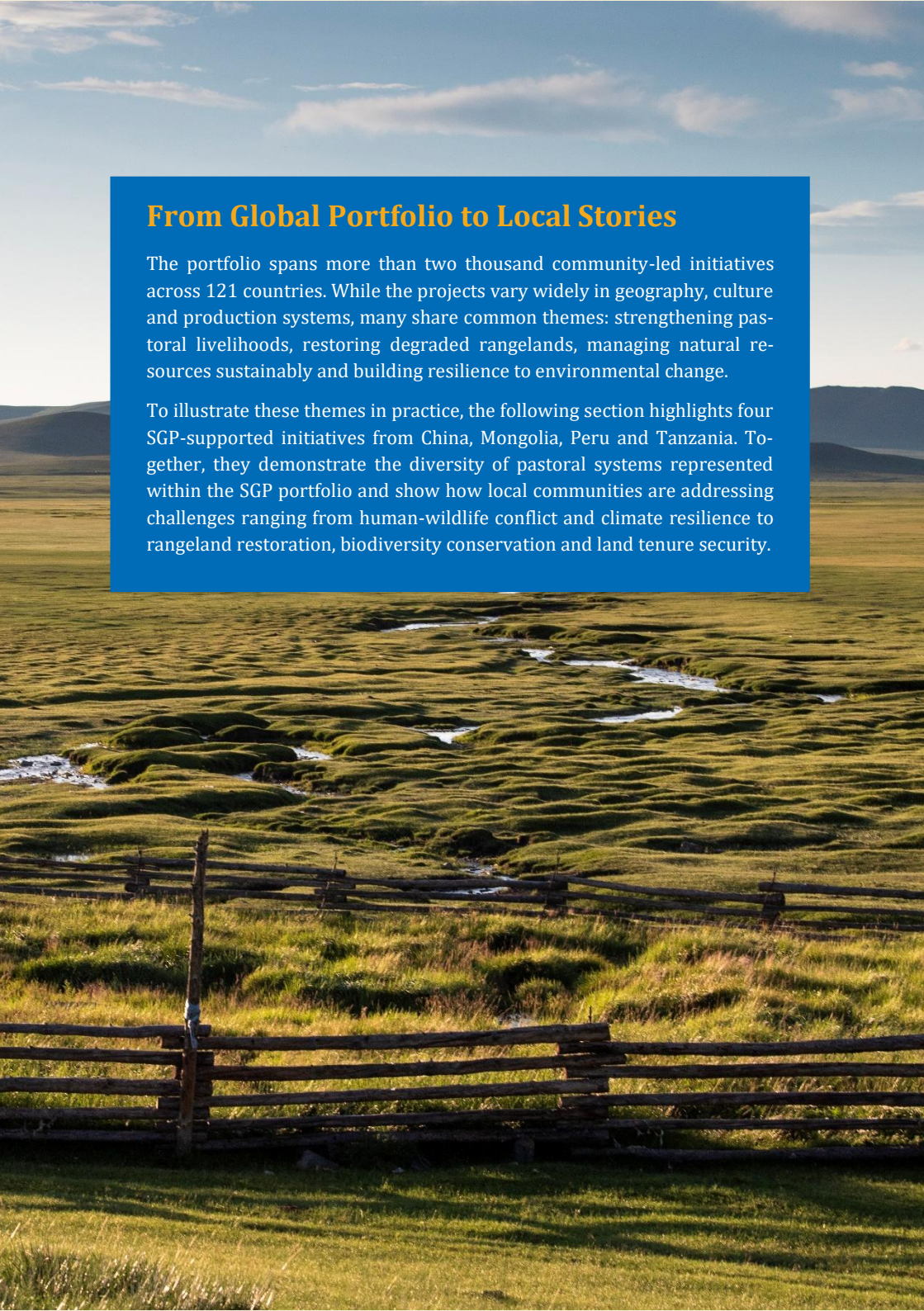
Several patterns emerge from the country-level analysis. First, countries with extensive rangelands and long pastoral traditions dominate the rankings, including Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Tanzania, Lesotho, Iran and Kyrgyzstan. Second, the portfolio demonstrates that pastoralism is closely linked to broader issues of biodiversity conservation, climate resilience and sustainable land management, helping explain the prominence of countries such as China and Peru. Finally, while the total grant values are modest compared with large development programmes, the concentration of projects across key pastoral landscapes highlights the important role that community-led action can play in addressing local environmental and livelihood challenges.

Top 12 countries by total funding

	Country	Region	Funding (USD)	Projects
1	China	Asia & Pacific	\$2,822,333	55
2	Kazakhstan	Europe & Central Asia	\$2,675,719	101
3	Zimbabwe	Africa	\$2,565,515	53
4	Ghana	Africa	\$2,499,025	99
5	Tanzania	Africa	\$2,375,764	68
6	Kenya	Africa	\$1,873,815	44
7	Yemen	Arab States	\$1,674,342	46
8	Mali	Africa	\$1,612,107	45
9	Lesotho	Africa	\$1,543,139	52
10	Bhutan	Asia & Pacific	\$1,481,640	47
11	Niger	Africa	\$1,423,478	40
12	Peru	Latin America & Caribbean	\$1,407,010	29

Mongolia runs the most grants but at lower average value (\$11,760), so it sits outside the funding top 12. **China, Kazakhstan, Zimbabwe, Ghana and Tanzania** pair solid project counts with larger average grants, placing them at the top of the funding ranking. Kazakhstan is the only country in the top three on both measures.





From Global Portfolio to Local Stories

The portfolio spans more than two thousand community-led initiatives across 121 countries. While the projects vary widely in geography, culture and production systems, many share common themes: strengthening pastoral livelihoods, restoring degraded rangelands, managing natural resources sustainably and building resilience to environmental change.

To illustrate these themes in practice, the following section highlights four SGP-supported initiatives from China, Mongolia, Peru and Tanzania. Together, they demonstrate the diversity of pastoral systems represented within the SGP portfolio and show how local communities are addressing challenges ranging from human-wildlife conflict and climate resilience to rangeland restoration, biodiversity conservation and land tenure security.



CHINA

Snow Leopard Landscape Conservation at the Source of the Lancang River

CPR/SGP/OP6/Y3/STAR/BD/18/01

In the high-altitude landscapes of Sanjiangyuan National Park, pastoralism remains an essential source of livelihood for local communities. Across these grassland ecosystems, herding families rely on livestock for income, food security, and cultural identity. The same landscape also supports one of the world's most iconic mountain predators: the snow leopard. In this shared environment, the relationship between people, livestock and wildlife is both complex and closely intertwined.

The project was implemented in one of the core habitats of the snow leopard at the source of the Lancang River. Scientific monitoring conducted in the area recorded 27 snow leopards within a 1,000 km² landscape in 2015, highlighting the global importance of the region for snow leopard conservation. At the same time, local communities depend heavily on livestock production, creating an everyday interface between wildlife conservation and pastoral livelihoods.

For pastoral households, the presence of large predators can present significant challenges. Livestock losses caused by snow leopard predation can have serious economic consequences, particularly for families whose livelihoods depend on relatively small

herds. While compensation mechanisms existed, they often covered only part of the losses experienced by herders. As a result, tensions between wildlife conservation objectives and local livelihoods could emerge, creating challenges for both communities and conservation practitioners.



Community herders – China – photo by Li Yuhua

The project recognized that successful conservation depends on addressing the concerns of local people. Rather than focusing exclusively on protecting wildlife, it sought to create practical mechanisms that would support coexistence between pastoral communities and snow leopards. This included strengthening human-wildlife conflict management mechanisms and supporting community-based biodiversity.

Through these interconnected approaches, the project aimed to reduce the challenges faced by pastoral households while strengthening community participation in conservation.

At the same time, the project explored ways to create additional livelihood opportunities linked to conservation. Drawing on camera monitoring and the unique appeal of snow leopard habitat, the initiative developed a “snow leopard natural experience” eco-tourism model. Community members received training and support to participate in these activities, creating new opportunities for local households to benefit directly from protecting the landscapes in which they live.

The project generated practical results in strengthening coexistence between pastoral communities and wildlife. Through community-based wildlife monitoring, 38 local residents were trained to participate in infrared camera monitoring, data collection and wildlife observation, strengthening local capacity for biodiversity monitoring. The monitoring data contributed to improved understanding of snow leopard distribution, activity patterns and habitat use, providing valuable information to support long-term conservation planning. The community-based monitoring approach also strengthened local awareness and ownership of conservation. Residents developed a deeper understanding of the ecological value of their homeland through their

direct participation in observing and documenting wildlife. During the severe snow disaster in 2019, several community monitoring participants voluntarily organized efforts to provide supplementary food for wild ungulates, demonstrating growing community engagement in protecting the broader ecosystem that supports snow leopards and other wildlife. The project also laid the foundation for conservation-linked livelihood opportunities by developing a snow leopard natural experience model, designing two potential natural experience routes, supporting community training and establishing a co-management mechanism for future implementation.

An important feature of the initiative was its commitment to learning and replication. The lessons learned from the project also contributed to the development of two policy documents for the Sanjiangyuan National Park Administration. These policy recommendations could contribute to strengthening the role and participation of local pastoral communities in national park management, while improving the framework for concession management to balance the priority of ecological protection with opportunities for local communities to benefit from conservation. In this way, local experience could contribute to broader efforts to strengthen coexistence between pastoral livelihoods and wildlife conservation.

Volunteer Zhang Yaoting reflected on her experience participating in camera trap monitoring in Diqing Village:

"The places that took me great effort to reach are places that pastoralist community rangers have to visit alone every month for monitoring.

During our visit to Diqing Village, snow was falling heavily. We parked the car by the roadside and looked toward the glaciers among the Ranzhe snow mountains. A community member, Awo Dajie, said: 'Twenty years ago, when I was still young, the mountain peaks were completely covered in white. I wonder whether, twenty years from now, when I am old, there will still be any ice left on the mountains.'

Today, some of the intense conflicts between people and other species may have been reduced, but the balance between destruction and conservation remains far from stable.

Thanks to the application of camera traps in wildlife monitoring, more and more people have come to learn about Sanjiangyuan's flagship species, such as snow leopards and common leopards. Perhaps the first step toward inspiring more people to take action is simply allowing them to understand that such a beautiful, diverse, and sacred world is changing."

This approach reflects a broader lesson for pastoral landscapes around the world. Conservation efforts are often more sustainable when local communities can see tangible benefits from protecting wildlife and ecosystems. For pastoralists, coexistence with wildlife is easier to maintain when mechanisms exist to reduce risk, compensate losses and create new economic opportunities to benefit from conservation. The project demonstrates that pastoralism and biodiversity conservation do not have to be competing objectives. Healthy ecosystems support both wildlife and

pastoral livelihoods, while community participation is often the key to long-term conservation success. By helping herders manage the risks associated with wildlife, while also creating opportunities to benefit from conservation, the initiative offers a practical example of how nature and livelihoods can be supported together. In the grasslands of Sanjiangyuan, the future of snow leopards and the future of pastoral communities are closely connected, and this project shows how both can thrive through partnership, innovation and shared stewardship.



Shan Shui staff member Liu Zhiqu wrote after the Diqing Eco-tourism training:

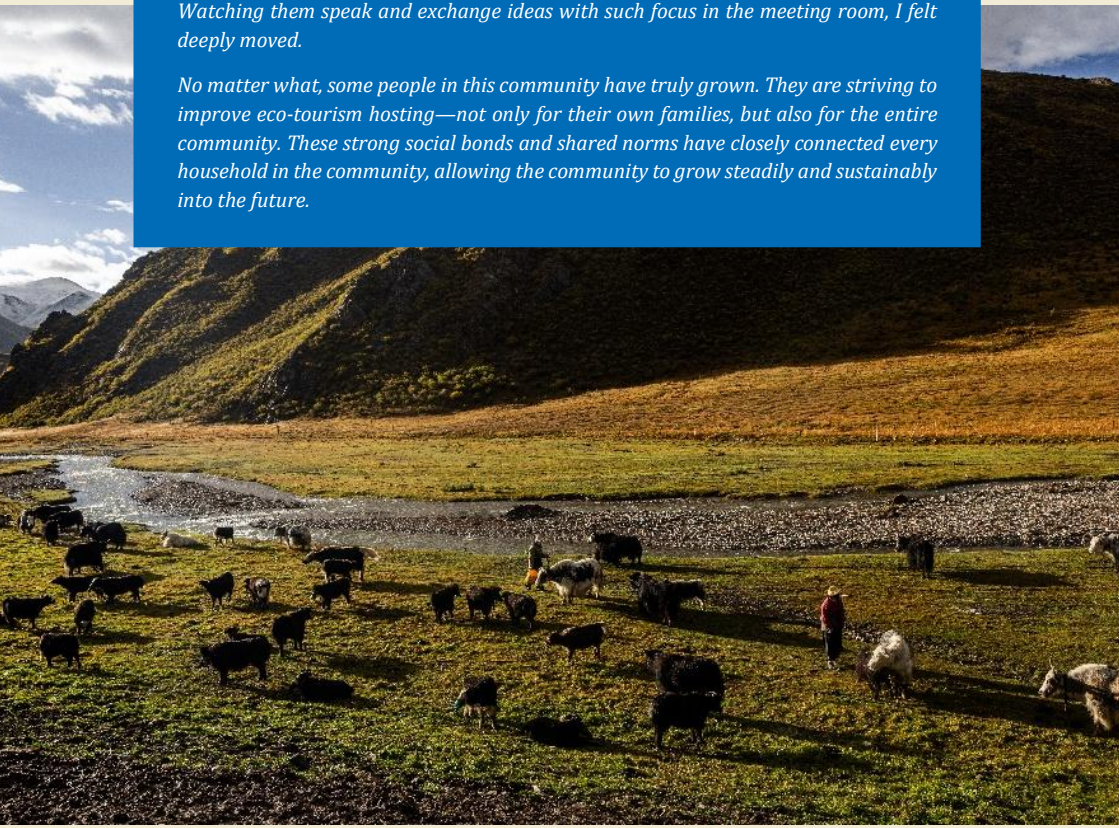
"Terry, the training expert, reflected that when he first came to the community, people already had some knowledge about mammals, but had almost no understanding of birds. After being away for some time and returning again, he was amazed by the progress made by community members. Their strong ability to learn had enabled them, within just a few years, to actively pay attention to birds and mammals, accumulate extensive knowledge, and express their perspectives more confidently and fluently. They had also begun to think more about public affairs within the community. Their growth truly surprised and delighted him.

"If this were an exam, everyone would get a perfect score!" he said.

I felt relieved. I thought to myself: if this really were an exam, it would also be an exam for us. If we measured our work by the growth of the community, perhaps we could at least say that we had passed.

After the training ended, community members said goodbye to us one by one. It was rare for everyone to gather together, and after leaving the meeting room, they once again formed a circle in the courtyard, discussing something else among themselves. Watching them speak and exchange ideas with such focus in the meeting room, I felt deeply moved.

No matter what, some people in this community have truly grown. They are striving to improve eco-tourism hosting—not only for their own families, but also for the entire community. These strong social bonds and shared norms have closely connected every household in the community, allowing the community to grow steadily and sustainably into the future.



MONGOLIA

Green Fodder for Herders

MON/SGP/OP7/Y2/CORE/CD/2022/03

Across Mongolia's vast grassland landscapes, pastoralism remains both a livelihood and a way of life. For generations, herding families have depended on healthy pastures to sustain their livestock through the country's highly variable seasons. Access to sufficient grazing land and livestock feed is particularly important during the long winter months, when harsh climatic conditions can place significant pressure on both animals and herder households.

Pastoral systems are closely linked to the health of rangeland ecosystems. When grazing pressure exceeds what pastures can support, vegetation can decline and land degradation can follow. Maintaining a balance between livestock production and pasture health is therefore essential not only for pastoral livelihoods but also for the sustainability of Mongolia's grassland landscapes.



The Green Fodder for Herders project was developed to address these interconnected challenges. Implemented through the Small Grants Program, the initiative introduced a practical approach: cultivating green fodder near winter and spring livestock holding areas with the participation of local herders. The project sought to create additional fodder reserves that could reduce pressure on natural pastures while strengthening preparedness for periods when grazing resources are limited. The approach also helps herder households prepare for extreme winter conditions, when heavy snowfall, prolonged cold temperatures and limited access to grazing can threaten livestock survival and household livelihoods. By improving access to supplementary fodder, communities are better equipped to cope with climate-related shocks while reducing pressure on surrounding rangelands.

Beyond supporting livestock production, fodder cultivation is increasingly recognized as a practical tool for addressing rangeland degradation. By reducing grazing pressure and creating opportunities for vegetation recovery, it can contribute to healthier ecosystems and strengthen the long-term sustainability of pastoral production systems.

At its core, the project recognized that resilience in pastoral systems is often built through relatively simple but strategic interventions. When alternative

feed resources are available, livestock do not need to rely exclusively on natural grazing areas throughout the year. This can ease pressure on grasslands, particularly during vulnerable periods, and help reduce the risk of overgrazing.

The initiative encouraged herders to participate directly in establishing fodder production around winter and spring manure fields. Rather than treating herders as beneficiaries alone, the project positioned them as active managers of both livestock production and grazing resources. This approach reflects an important principle of sustainable pastoralism: long-term solutions are often most effective when they build on the knowledge, experience and stewardship of people who depend on the land for their livelihoods.

The project also highlights the close relationship between livestock management and ecosystem management. Pastures are not simply a source of feed; they are the foundation of pastoral production systems. Protecting them requires planning, seasonal management and efforts to distribute grazing pressure more evenly across the landscape. In Mongolia, fodder cultivation is increasingly viewed as part of a broader approach to sustainable land management, helping degraded rangelands recover while supporting ecosystem functions, including carbon sequestration. While developed as a practical solution for herders, such measures can generate wider environmental benefits that extend beyond livestock production alone.





Although modest in scale, the intervention addresses an issue that is relevant across pastoral regions worldwide. In many rangeland areas, livestock keepers face increasing pressure from land degradation, climate variability and changing patterns of resource use. Investments in fodder production can help improve the resilience of pastoral systems by providing greater flexibility during periods of environmental stress. In Mongolia, where extreme winter events can cause significant livestock losses, building fodder reserves is an important strategy for strengthening preparedness and reducing vulnerability among herding households. At the same time, fodder cultivation is increasingly being promoted as a nature-based solution that supports rangeland

restoration and more sustainable livestock management. The project therefore represents a practical example of how targeted support can strengthen both livelihoods and ecosystem health at the same time.

Another important lesson emerging from the project is that sustainable pastoralism is not only about increasing livestock productivity. It is equally about safeguarding the rangelands that make pastoral production possible. Efforts that reduce grazing pressure, support pasture recovery and improve resource management can generate benefits that extend beyond individual households, contributing to the long-term sustainability of entire pastoral landscapes.

The experience also demonstrates how local innovations can influence broader change. According to project partners, successful examples such as this helped demonstrate the value of fodder cultivation as a response to both rangeland degradation and climate risks. Lessons from these early initiatives contributed to wider discussions on enabling herders to cultivate fodder, with subsequent policy changes creating opportunities for broader adoption across Mongolia. In this way, a practical solution developed at the local level has helped inform a wider shift in approaches to pastoral resilience and rangeland stewardship.

The Green Fodder for Herders project demonstrates how local action can support broader goals of rangeland restoration and sustainable pastoral development. By helping herders build additional fodder reserves and reduce pressure on grazing lands, the initiative contributes to more resilient livelihoods while supporting the stewardship of Mongolia's grassland ecosystems. In doing so, it offers a simple but powerful example of how pastoral communities can strengthen their ability to adapt while continuing to manage the landscapes on which they depend

Pastoralism in Mongolia

Mongolia's grasslands have been managed through nomadic pastoralism for more than 3,000 years, making it one of the world's oldest continuously practiced pastoral traditions.

24-30% of the population depends directly on herding and pastoral livestock production (approximately 600,000-700,000 people).

117 million hectares are classified as permanent pasture, covering the vast majority of the country's agricultural land.

Livestock numbers peaked at 71.1 million head in 2022 and are currently estimated at 57.6 million, reflecting the impacts of recent severe winters and climate variability.

Goats account for 39.8% of the national herd, compared to roughly 20% in 1990, driven largely by demand for cashmere.

Major pressures on pastoral systems include climate change, rangeland degradation, mining expansion, increased livestock density, and reduced mobility.

Livestock production contributes approximately 80-85% of Mongolia's agricultural output, and Mongolia supplies around 40% of the world's raw cashmere.



PERU

Restoration of Coloured Alpaca Populations & Integrated Management of Grasslands in the Apacheta Vicuña Management Association

PER/SGP/OP7/Y1/STAR/BD/2022/21

High in the Peruvian Andes, pastoral livelihoods have long been shaped by the relationship between people, camelids and grasslands. Across these mountain landscapes, alpacas, llamas and vicuñas depend on native high-altitude pastures that provide the foundation for local livelihoods, biodiversity and cultural traditions. For communi-

ties living in these environments, maintaining healthy grasslands is closely tied to sustaining both people and nature.

The Apacheta landscape is home to pastoral production systems that have developed over generations in some of the world's highest inhabited ecosystems. Alpacas provide fibre, income and cultural value, while vicuñas represent one of South America's most iconic wildlife species. Both depend on healthy Andean grasslands, wetlands and reliable water sources, making sustainable pasture management central to the future of local communities and biodiversity alike.



Like many mountain pastoral regions, however, these ecosystems face growing pressures. The decline of coloured alpaca populations threatens valuable genetic diversity and traditional pastoral livelihoods. At the same time, low market prices for coloured alpaca fibre, overgrazing and increasing water scarcity have contributed to the degradation of native rangelands and wetlands, reducing the availability of forage for livestock. Together, these challenges affect both ecosystem health and the resilience of pastoral families who depend on these landscapes.



The project was implemented through the Association for the Management of Vicuñas of the Apacheta community and focused on two closely connected objectives: restoring coloured alpaca populations and strengthening the integrated management of Andean grasslands. By addressing livestock production, water management and ecosystem restoration together, the initiative recognized that pastoral livelihoods depend on the health of the wider landscape rather than on livestock production alone.



At the heart of the project was the idea that biodiversity conservation and pastoral production can reinforce one another. Efforts to recover coloured alpaca populations contribute to the preservation of valuable genetic resources while also creating opportunities for fibre production and livelihood improvement. To strengthen the quality and diversity of local herds, the project supported the selection and introduction of coloured breeding animals, helping reduce inbreeding while improving animal health and fibre quality.

At the same time, the initiative promoted a broader landscape approach to pastoral management. Through family and community management plans, pastoral households organized grazing activities and implemented sustainable land-use practices, including rotational grazing, organic fertilization, restoration and cultivation of native and forage species, water harvesting, construction of reservoirs and improvement of irrigation channels. These activities helped strengthen the natural resource base upon which alpaca production depends while improving resilience to water scarcity and land degradation.



The scale of the work demonstrates the importance of community stewardship. A total of 2,149 hectares were brought under sustainable management through 15 family and community plans for alpaca and rangeland management. In addition, 840 hectares of degraded rangelands were placed under restoration, helping improve forage availability and water retention across the landscape. The project also supported community commitments to conserve 180 hectares of polylepis forest, an important component of high-Andean ecosystems that contributes to water regulation, biodiversity conservation and ecosystem resilience.

The initiative also invested in people. A total of 49 producers, including 28 men and 21 women, adopted improved high-Andean rangeland management practices. In addition, 12 local promoters were trained in alpaca breeding and animal health, helping strengthen local technical capacity and creating a foundation for continued knowledge sharing within the community.



The project highlights the broader role that pastoral communities play as stewards of mountain ecosystems. Through their day-to-day management of grazing lands, wetlands, forests and water resources, pastoralists actively shape landscapes that support both wildlife and livestock. In the Apacheta landscape, this includes habitats used by vicuñas, a species that has become a symbol of Andean conservation success. The project therefore demonstrates how community-based approaches can contribute simultaneously to biodiversity conservation and sustainable livelihoods.

An important dimension of the initiative is the emphasis on integration. Rather than treating livestock production, grassland management, water management and biodiversity conservation as separate objectives, the project addressed them together. This reflects a pastoral systems approach, recognizing the interconnections between animals, ecosystems and the people who depend on them. Such approaches are increasingly important in mountain environments where ecological health and livelihood resilience are closely linked.

The project also generated benefits beyond the participating households. By engaging with local government authorities, the association successfully advocated for the establishment of an alpaca fibre collection facility. This investment extends benefits to producers across the district by improving market access and strengthening opportunities for local value addition in the alpaca fibre sector.

The Apacheta experience offers broader lessons for pastoral development beyond the Andes. Around the world, pastoral communities manage extensive landscapes that support both biodiversity and livelihoods. Strengthening these systems often requires investments not only in livestock production, but also in ecosystem restoration, water management, genetic diversity

and community stewardship. The project demonstrates how local action can contribute to all of these objectives at once.

By supporting the restoration of coloured alpaca populations, strengthening community management of rangelands and water resources, and improving the ecological condition of high-Andean landscapes, the project contributes to the resilience of pastoral livelihoods while helping conserve biodiversity. It demonstrates that pastoralism is not only a production system, but also a landscape management system that connects people, livestock and ecosystems. In the high Andes of Peru, that connection continues to shape both communities and the landscapes on which they depend.



TANZANIA

Securing Tenure for Pastoral Communal Grazing Lands and Capacity Building for Land Rights in Simanjiro District, Manyara Region

TAN/SGP/OP6/Y5/ICCA-GSI/2021/02

For generations, pastoral communities in Tanzania's Simanjiro District have depended on mobility, communal grazing lands, and traditional knowledge to sustain livestock production in a challenging environment. Located in the country's arid and semi-arid rangelands, pastoral livelihoods have evolved around seasonal patterns of rainfall, pasture availability, and access to water. Mobility has long been central to this system, allowing livestock and people to move between grazing areas in response to changing environmental conditions.

These pastoral landscapes are more than grazing areas. They provide the foundation for local economies, cultural identity, and food security. For the Maasai communities living in Simanjiro, access to grazing land and water determines settlement patterns and guides community agreements on seasonal resource use. Historically, interconnected rangelands, water sources, vegetation, mineral licks, and migration routes enabled the sustainable management of livestock in a highly variable climate.

Over time, however, these systems have come under increasing pressure. Expanding crop cultivation, migration of farmers into pastoral areas, invasive grass species, and growing competition for land have reduced the space available for grazing.



Areas traditionally used by pastoralists have become fragmented, limiting mobility and weakening customary systems of resource management. Increasingly, communities have faced conflicts over land and natural resources, while climate change has intensified droughts and environmental degradation. These trends have reduced the ability of pastoral households to cope with ecological uncertainty and have affected the resilience of pastoral production systems.

The project emerged in response to these challenges. Led by the Pilot Light Development Organization (PILIDO), the initiative sought to strengthen land tenure security and build the capacity of pastoral communities to exercise and protect their land rights. The project focused on three joint grazing land clusters shared by three villages (about 1,270 ha) in Simanjiro District and aimed to support communities in securing communal grazing lands while improving their resilience to climate change. The initiative mobilized local communities and the district authority through a participatory land use planning process which involved village demarcation and certification, resource mapping and zoning and provision of certificates of customary rights of occupancy (CCROs).

At the heart of the project was the recognition that secure tenure is fundamental to sustainable pastoralism.

While Tanzania's land legislation recognizes customary tenure and provides mechanisms for securing community land rights, implementation can be slow and resource-intensive. Many pastoral communities continue to face difficulties in securing formal recognition of grazing lands and customary rights. The project therefore worked to strengthen awareness, build capacity, and support communities in navigating land governance processes.



By focusing on communal grazing lands, the initiative addressed a critical component of pastoral systems and reduced boundary conflicts between adjacent villages. Secure access to grazing resources helps maintain mobility, reduce conflicts, and support sustainable rangeland management – directly benefiting over 12,477 pastoralists. It also creates conditions for communities to plan for the future, invest in natural resource stewardship, and strengthen collective management of shared landscapes. Through active engagement with women, the initiative involved women in land use committees and empowered them on rights related to equal access and control of land resource.

The project also highlights a broader lesson for pastoral development. In many dryland regions, strengthening pastoral livelihoods is not only about livestock production. It is equally about governance, land rights, and the systems that enable communities to adapt to environmental change. By supporting pastoral communities to secure tenure over communal grazing areas, the project contributes to both livelihood resilience and the sustainable management of rangelands.

Today, the Simanjiro initiative stands as an example of how community-based approaches can support pastoral landscapes. Rather than replacing traditional systems, the project builds on existing pastoral knowledge and customary practices while helping communities engage with formal land governance processes. In doing so, it demonstrates how securing rights to land can strengthen resilience, reduce vulnerability, and help sustain pastoral

livelihoods in an era of increasing environmental and social change.

Pastoralism in Tanzania

In pastoral landscapes of Tanzania, pastoralism and livestock keeping in general employs 50% of the rural population.

Pastoralism is mostly dominated in dry and moderate dry regions of Tanzania which accounts for over 35% of the total population.

Pastoralism contributes only up to 6.2% of the national GDP.

Pastoralism is practiced as a traditional way of life and not necessarily commercially practiced.

During 2024, the total cattle population in Tanzania was 36.6 million heads – an 11% of the African total cattle population

Over 90% of the beef and 70% of the milk in Tanzania are sourced from local pastoralists.





The Small Grants Program (SGP) is a corporate programme of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Since 1992, SGP has provided financial and technical support to over 30,000 locally-led initiatives that conserve and restore the environment while improving livelihoods and well-being. By partnering with civil society and community-based organizations, with special consideration for Indigenous Peoples, women, youth, and persons with disabilities, SGP demonstrates that local action can deliver global environmental benefits. Guided by the principles of innovation, inclusion, and impact, SGP supports solutions that promote integrated landscape and seascape approaches to address challenges related to biodiversity loss, climate change, land degradation, chemicals and waste, and international waters, while contributing to resilient communities and sustainable development.