

# NOMADIC HERDERS



Photo: Kari M. Utsi, IPY EALÁT/ ICR, 2007

## Pastoralists' vital role in resource management

Nomadic pastoralism provides a highly efficient way of managing sparse vegetation. In essence, pastoralists adapt their social and herding systems according to seasonal or spatial weather conditions and the availability of fertile pastures. Biological diversity is enhanced and ecosystem integrity and resilience is maintained. In other words, pastoralism is vital for conserving large areas of natural and semi-natural habitats, and the abandonment of pastoralism threatens biodiversity.

It has been estimated that pastoralism is practised on approximately 25% of the global land area, providing 10% of the world's meat production. Where pastoralism is practiced effectively, and where local knowledge and institutions are strong, the environmental outcomes are positive.

However, where local institutions are undermined, and knowledge is constrained, pastoral environments are easily degraded. Pastoralists are increasingly under threat from legal, economic, social and political obstacles. Pastoral livelihoods are further stressed by land degradation and loss of biodiversity due to increased infrastructure development, resource exploitation and other forms of human activities that create barriers to livestock mobility.

Major drivers behind this development are the world's need for energy and natural resources, also potentially linked to and facilitated by climate change. Globalization is very much influencing pastoralists and the sustainability of their communities. The cumulative effects of land fragmentation, natural resource exploitation, pollution, and

declining access to land together with the multiple effects of climate change on ecosystems, have and will continue to put hard pressure on pastoral communities in many parts of the world.

Against this background there is a clear need to develop and implement integrated management plans for pastoralism and pastures, at both the local and national levels, to secure the future sustainability of ecosystems and indigenous herding communities in the face of climate change and land use change.

**PASTORALISTS ARE INCREASINGLY UNDER THREAT FROM LEGAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL BARRIERS TO MOBILITY OF LIVESTOCK**



Photo: Svein D. Mathiesen,  
IPY EALÁT/ICR, 2009



Photo: Lawrence Hislop,  
UNEP/GRID-Arendal, 2011



Photo: Lawrence Hislop,  
UNEP/GRID-Arendal, 2011

# Project proposal: enhancing the resilience of pastoral ecosystems and livelihoods of nomadic herders

The geographical scope of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) proposal is the pasture areas of reindeer herders in Russia and Mongolia. This includes snow-capped mountains, tundra, permafrost, forests, taiga and grassland. The project aims to improve the conservation and resilience of rangeland habitats, as well as strengthen and increase the sustainability of the reindeer herders' livelihoods. It deals with local challenges and impacts of land degradation, biodiversity and climate change, as well as adaptation options and opportunities. The project will facilitate investigation and studies on the degradation of grazing land in the reindeer herding areas.

These baseline studies will be used to develop tools and strategies for maintaining or improving the management of rangelands that sustain the livelihoods and cultures of the pastoral communities, while also conserving globally important biodiversity. The project will also provide and test frameworks for improving rangeland management and sustainable pastoralism, increasing the resilience of both the ecosystem and livelihoods to climate change and other environmental changes.

The GEF project is unique, as it will facilitate exchange of information and experience between reindeer herding communities in Russia and Mongolia. It aims at building partnerships between communities, strengthening local institutions, and

increasing the capacity of nomadic herders to engage in land-use and natural resource management.

The project will also empower the nomadic herder communities, enabling them to participate more fully in information sharing, education and training, technology transfer, organizational development, and policy development, - and thereby gaining more access to commercial, social and political opportunities.

The project will facilitate interaction between state, local authorities, industry and nomadic herders, assisting in creating dialogue, building confidence and sharing information.

The project will directly benefit the nomadic herders and improve ecosystem management through its capacity building and awareness raising activities. Information products and training materials will be developed on the basis of a communications strategy and training needs assessment, and will be adapted to each selected target audience (including nomadic herders, local authorities, industrial companies operating in the region, and the global community).

**MARCH 2012 THE NOMADIC  
HERDERS INITIATIVE WAS  
ENDORSED AS AN ARCTIC  
COUNCIL PROJECT BY CAFF**

## PROJECT COMPONENTS

**1. RANGELAND CONSERVATION**  
Improving the conservation and resilience of reindeer pasture ecosystems in Russia and Mongolia

**2. SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS**  
Strengthening and increasing the sustainability of the reindeer pastoralist livelihoods of Russian and Mongolia

## INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT

The Nomadic Herders initiative is endorsed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The project was welcomed by the 9th Session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues in New York 2010. A side-event was organised for the 10th Session May 2011. Results have provided input for the land-use change study of the Special Rapporteur in 2012.

## KEY PARTNERS

- UNEP/GRID-Arendal
- All-Russian Research Institute for Nature Conservation
- Saint-Petersburg State University
- Mongolian Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism
- Taiga Nature Society, Mongolia
- Association of World Reindeer Herders
- International Centre for Reindeer Husbandry
- UArctic EALÁT Institute for Circumpolar Reindeer Husbandry

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

[www.nomadicherders.org](http://www.nomadicherders.org)  
[kathrine.johnsen@grida.no](mailto:kathrine.johnsen@grida.no)



Photo: Lawrence Hislop,  
UNEP/GRID-Arendal, 2011



Photo: Lawrence Hislop,  
UNEP/GRID-Arendal, 2011