

IYRP 2026



Webinar  
1/2024

# Webinar Brief Report

*“Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Practices for Sustainable Rangeland Management in the Face of Climate Change”*



Prepared by  
Southern Africa Support Group

Date

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Hosts

Lumko Mboyi || Khululiwe Ntombela



**GRASSLAND SOCIETY**  
OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

# Southern Africa IYRP Background



The United Nations General Assembly officially declared 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralist officially. This global initiative is supported by 102 countries and 328 organizations worldwide and has 3 Global co-chairs including Dr Igshaan Samuels (Agricultural Research Council, South Africa). In South Africa, our pastoralists are livestock farmers, and our rangelands are known as the veld. To spread the work far and wide there IYRP has regional groups (location based) and working groups (theme based).

Dr Andiswa Finca (Agricultural Research Council, South Africa) along with two representatives from Kenya and Uganda are co-chairs of the Eastern and Southern African Regional Support Group. While significant progress has been made, much work remains to raise awareness and engage more groups—pastoralists, scientists, NGOs—in activities related to the IYRP as we prepare for the 2026 event.

To this end, a South African IYRP Support Group was initiated and has been working hard to address our country's unique challenges concerning rangelands and livestock farming. With representation from industry, research, NGOs, and farmers from across South Africa, the group has developed priority themes with their key concepts and issues that will be addressed through video clips and a series of webinars highlighting the importance of the role of rangelands and pastoralists (farmers in our context).



# Webinar Summary

The webinar, titled "Indigenous Knowledge and Cultural Practices for Sustainable Rangeland Management in the Face of Climate Change," that was held on 28 November 2024 was the first instalment of the webinar series that the SA-IYRP support group is planning to embark on. It was attended by over 70 delegates from across South Africa, several African countries, and the United Kingdom.

Key topics included strategies for building climate change resilience, understanding the multifunctional role of rangelands, promoting intergenerational knowledge transfer, and integrating traditional laws into modern policies. The discussions emphasized the vital role of rangelands in supporting biodiversity, livelihoods, and cultural heritage while addressing the pressing challenges posed by climate change. These topics were tackled by very esteemed speakers, Prof Prisca Mugabe, Ms Sissie Matela, Prince Xolisa Cibi and Mr Sinegugu Zukulu and concluded by Mr Clement Cupido.

## 2025 Southern Africa IYRP Topics

- Indigenous Knowledge (IK) and culture (focus of the webinar).
- Defining pastoralists and rangelands.
- Biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- Sustainable livestock production.



# Speakers



## Prof. Prisca Mugabe

Prof. Prisca Mugabe is a seasoned expert in rangeland systems with nearly 4 decades of experience in university teaching, research, and community outreach. She has developed and taught over 10 rangeland-related courses and conducted research on sustainable land management, climate change adaptation, and socio-ecological systems. Her work spans diverse socio-ecological landscapes, including communal areas and trans frontier conservation zones, supported by funding from organizations such as IDRC, British Council, and EU. She has co-authored several influential books and published extensively on rangeland management, One Health, and smallholder farming systems.



## Ms Sissie Matela

Mrs Sissie Matela is the Director of Environmental and Rural Solutions (ERS), a non-profit organization she co-founded in 2002 in Matatiele, Eastern Cape. For over two decades, ERS has focused on creating green jobs and sustainable self-employment through landscape restoration, livestock farming, and climate-smart smallholder farming. In recognition of her work, Mrs Matela and co-founder Nicky McLeod received the WWF Living Planet Award in 2019, and their partnership was featured on the BBC StoryWorks platform.



## Prince Xolisa Cibi

Prince Xolisa Cibi is a distinguished traditional leader and an Executive Committee Member of the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa (CONTRALESA) in the Buffalo City Metropolitan Region. He also serves on the Executive Committee of the Gompo Farmer's Association (GFA), CONTRALESA's business development arm dedicated to transforming subsistence farming into commercial enterprises.

# Speakers



## Mr Sinegugu Zukulu

Sinegugu Zukulu is a dynamic and inspiring educator, storyteller, and passionate social and environmental activist, deeply committed to advocating for the protection and promotion of indigenous knowledge as a cornerstone for sustainable development. Holding a BA Ed in Geography and Education, as well as a Master of Philosophy in Environmental Management from Stellenbosch University, Zukulu has made significant contributions to both education and environmental advocacy. In recognition of his outstanding environmental work, he was honored with the prestigious Goldman Environmental Prize in 2024 and received the WESSA Gold Award for Conservation in 2022.



## Mr Clement Cupido

Clement is a Rangeland Ecologist and researcher at the Agricultural Research Council, based in the Biodiversity and Conservation Biology Department at the University of the Western Cape. His work focuses on arid and semi-arid environments in Southern Africa, collaborating with rural livestock-dependent communities.

With a background in teaching, he later pursued a BSc Honours in Nature Conservation at Stellenbosch University and completed his Master's under Prof. Sue Milton through the Western Cape Department of Agriculture's Young Professional Programme. Clement has published with social scientists and economists and has a strong interest in anthropology and community development in Namaqualand. He has managed restoration projects, mentored agricultural organizations, and gained valuable insights into the challenges of rural self-reliance and sustainable resource use.

# Key Messages



## The Role of Indigenous and Local Knowledge (IK & LK)

- IK and LK provide valuable insights for climate adaptation, particularly through natural indicators like termite activity, bird behaviour, and astrological signs.
- Traditional systems, such as the Maasai's Alalili silvo-pastoral model, promote biodiversity and conservation.
- The loss of Indigenous Knowledge due to modernization and urbanization threatens sustainable land management.

## Rangelands as Multifunctional Landscapes

- Rangelands support biodiversity, soil stability, and freshwater conservation while providing essential cultural and economic functions.
- Challenges such as erosion, invasive plant species, and climate change require community-driven interventions.
- Successful examples, such as the Upper Umzimvubu Catchment initiative, highlight the benefits of collaborative, cross-sectoral approaches.

## Challenges in Rangeland Management

- Alien plant invasions, unregulated grazing, and lack of water storage infrastructure threaten the sustainability of communal rangelands.
- Climate change exacerbates these issues by impacting water availability, grazing land, and livestock health.
- Knowledge gaps exist due to the erosion of traditional rangeland practices, with limited mechanisms for intergenerational transfer.

## Collaborative and Holistic Approaches

- Strong partnerships with Traditional Authorities, governments, conservation agencies, and research institutions are key to sustainable management.
- Initiatives like Eco Champs and citizen science programs empower local communities to lead environmental stewardship.
- A blend of scientific research and Indigenous Knowledge can yield innovative, context-specific solutions for rangeland restoration.

## The Importance of the IYRP 2026

- Platform to amplify the voices of pastoralist communities and advocate for supportive policies. Raising awareness of rangelands' ecological and cultural significance is crucial for global conservation efforts. Strengthening global, regional, and local partnerships will enhance knowledge sharing and capacity building



# Way Forward



## Knowledge Preservation and Integration

- Develop strategies for documenting, validating, and integrating Indigenous Knowledge with scientific research.
- Advocate for the incorporation of traditional rangeland management practices into formal education systems.

## Strengthening Collaborative Governance

- Facilitate partnerships between Traditional Authorities, government agencies, academia, and conservation groups.
- Establish structured farmer associations and cooperatives to enhance collective decision-making and knowledge exchange.

## Scaling Community-Led Restoration Efforts

- Expand initiatives such as alien plant clearing programs and rotational grazing schemes.
- Promote green enterprises that create sustainable employment opportunities while restoring degraded landscapes.

## Advocacy and Policy Development

- Engage policymakers to support rangeland-friendly policies, including financial incentives for conservation efforts.
- Leverage the IYRP platform to amplify the significance of rangelands and pastoralist livelihoods at national and global levels

## Monitoring and Impact Assessment

- Utilize citizen science and participatory monitoring tools to track rangeland health and inform adaptive management strategies.
- Ensure that knowledge-sharing platforms remain accessible to rural communities and policymakers alike.

## Conclusion

By taking these steps, stakeholders can work collectively to enhance rangeland resilience, secure livelihoods, and sustain biodiversity for future generations.

