

## Call for Sponsorship of Pastoralist Women: Global Gathering of Pastoralist Women (MERA +16)

26–29 May 2026 • Kathmandu, Nepal

Hosted by the [International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development \(ICIMOD\)](#) and jointly organised by the [IYRP Working Group on Pastoralism & Gender \(IYRP WGPG\)](#) and ICIMOD, in partnership with RECONCILE, Women in Ranching, Anthra, Mujeres Ganaderas de México (MUGAM) and others.



### **Background and rationale**

Rangelands cover *half of earth's land surface* and pastoralism is the world's most widespread land-use. *Pastoralist women and girls*, who make up *half of the world's pastoralist population*, make vital contributions to sustaining resilient rangelands, livestock care, food security, community resilience, innovation and entrepreneurship in food and materials processing, while also passing on pastoralist traditional knowledge and culture. Yet women pastoralists often have limited decision-making power and lack access to key resources. ***The Global Gathering of Pastoralist Women (Mera +16)*** will recognize and support their initiatives, strengthen solidarity across regions, and amplify their voices in international discussions about rangelands and pastoralism. The Gathering aims to ensure pastoralist women's voices and perspectives are included in all decisions that affect them, from the local to the global.

### **Why this gathering, now?**

In recognition of the importance of rangelands and pastoralists to humanity and the planet, the *United Nations* has declared 2026 [the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists \(IYRP\)](#) and of [the Woman Farmer](#). This Global Gathering, in Kathmandu in May 2026, will be a central contribution to these initiatives and a unique opportunity to centre gender in pastoralist systems and to elevate women's voices in decision making fora.

## **Goals and objectives of the Global Gathering of Pastoralist Women (MERA +16)**

A program committee led by pastoralist women from all regions, with support from the IYRP WGPG, will develop the agenda for the four-day gathering to ensure it is by and for pastoralist women. It is expected to include talks by pastoralist women champions, group dialogues, skills workshops, film screenings, exhibitions of women's arts and crafts, and agenda-setting for policy and practice. Further details can be found [here](#) in the **Global Gathering of Pastoralist Women Concept Note**.

Building on the first [Global Gathering of Women Pastoralists](#) in India in 2010 and its Global Action Plan, [the MERA Declaration](#), this **second Global Gathering (MERA +16)** will bring together **± 90 pastoralist women** (plus local support people and organisers) from diverse pastoralist communities around the world to:

- **Share their knowledge**, experiences, successes, and good practices to address common problems and build solidarity.
- **Identify priorities** and develop an action plan to strengthen global capacity in gender-responsive and transformative pastoralist interventions.
- **Strengthen networking** and if appropriate launch a global network of pastoralist women.
- **Influence policy and practice** by preparing women representatives to convey the key messages from Mera+16 to policymakers worldwide during 2026 and beyond, and through all the participants who will commit to taking their learning back to their home communities.

## **Why your support matters – expected outcomes**

By supporting the *Global Gathering of Pastoralist Women*, partners will help to:

- **Build a global network** of pastoralist women, to support ongoing knowledge sharing, mutual support and advocacy, and to ensure their voices are represented in decision-making at local, regional and global scales.
- **Shape global agendas** through an updated *MERA+16 Declaration* and advocacy strategy, reflecting women pastoralists' priorities for policy, practice, and research around the world.
- **Amplify women's voices** through a strategy to deliver the declaration/call for action at global venues during 2026 and onwards, including the UNCCD COP17 in Mongolia, UNFCCC COP31, and the UNCBD COP17.
- **Empower women leaders** - around 90 women pastoralists from every continent will return home with new knowledge, skills and connections that will directly benefit them, and their communities - advancing gender equality, sustainable pastoralism, and resilient rangelands.

## **Two pathways for sponsorship partners**

1. **Nominate participants** (for organisations working directly with pastoralist women). Nominating partners commit to supporting eligible participants from their networks.
2. **Contribute to a scholarship fund** (for partners without pastoralist women nominees). Funds will be pooled and allocated via an open call to eligible pastoralist women, or to candidates identified at the various regional preparatory gatherings that are planned for 2025/6.

## **Sponsorship options and budget (in-country gathering costs + variable international travel)**

1. **Pledge support for one or more participants:** Sponsors may choose to support pastoralist women from a specific country or region, or contribute without regional specification. The organising committee will ensure regional balance and inclusion.
2. **Budget per participant:** Partners are sought to cover the ***in-country gathering costs (US\$1400 per person)*** of 100 participants coming from all continents except Antarctica, ***and international travel costs (variable)***.
3. **Variable international travel costs:** Costs per participant will vary greatly depending on the location of origin. Sponsoring organisations can opt to arrange and fund travel independently (airfare, plus ground

transport to travel to local airports, visa fees, insurance), alternatively ICIMOD can coordinate travel logistics where needed.

4. **Family/care support:** should be offered to enable participation of mothers (e.g., childcare support).

#### **Participant eligibility criteria** (click [here](#) for full details)

1. **Identity and Pastoral Experience:** Must be a practicing woman pastoralist engaged in grazing-based livestock farming including agro-pastoralism, nomadic, transhumant, semi-nomadic, and territory-linked systems.
2. **Community Representation:** Ideally nominated by their community, women's group or organization working directly with pastoralists. Open to represent community ideas and share outcomes upon return.
3. **Advocacy and Indigenous Movements:** Experience with indigenous movements and/or pastoral advocacy is valued but not required; women without such access are equally encouraged.
4. **Communication and Language:** Must speak an official Gathering language or attend with a translator. English will be the primary language with simultaneous/sequential interpretation of major world languages as needed. Should be open to learning in a multicultural environment.
5. **Logistics:** Must have or be able to obtain travel documents (passport). Sponsoring organizations are encouraged to assist with logistics (visa and travel) and costs.
6. **Inclusion and Diversity:** We especially encourage women from indigenous and/or traditional communities. We aim for regional, cultural, and experiential diversity.

#### **Contacts**

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