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pastoralist's life in lockdown

A STUDY OF FIVE STATES DURING COVID-19

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ActionAid Association (India)

Pastoralist's Life in Lockdown

A study of five States
during COVID-19



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CONTENTS

<i>Foreword</i>	v
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	vii
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Understanding pastoralism and pastoral occupation	3
Pastoral communities in India	7
Chapter 2: Impact of COVID-19 on Pastoralists: An Overview	11
Methodology	14
Chapter 3: Study Findings	17
Challenges in moving with herd during lockdown	17
Changes in time of migration	19
Mobility of pastoral communities during lockdown	22
Change in Migration Route	24
Expenditure in livestock rearing during lockdown	26
Access and availability of grass, fodder and water for livestock	27
Access to health services for livestock during mobility	29
Difficulty of camping in nearby village during lockdown with livestock	30
Discrimination during travel at the hands of villagers, police, Government officials	32
Access to ration and food items	34
Access to basic needs - health services, water and food during migration	35
Any COVID-19 benefit from Government received	36
Safety and security of livestock and self during migration in lockdown	37
Income from livestock during lockdown	38
Chapter 4: Conclusion and Recommendations	43
References	45



FOREWORD

The COVID-19 pandemic has gone beyond the ambit of health to impact all areas of social relationship, community bonding, traditional practices, occupations and economy. The unprecedented nationwide lockdown has most affected communities that already had a precarious livelihood. Pastoral communities have suffered much during this lockdown. This prompted ActionAid Association to undertake a small study to find out how.

Pastoral people, whose livelihood depends on livestock, travel in search of pasture land. There are communities whose journeys start every year in April/June from Rajasthan, Gujarat and Maharashtra states and pass through traditional routes through different States. They stop at fixed places where people accept them and allow their herds to camp in their agriculture land for manure. In the hill regions of Jammu & Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, pastoral communities climb to the upper reaches for the summer to return to the lower areas during winter. They pass through the same route, stopping at traditional resting places. This is the pastoral life and occupation that has remained with little change for centuries.

The lockdown disturbed everything. Restrictions on movement made it difficult for these communities to manage their livestock, as it was only through their travel that they could access pastureland and feed. They had to divert their routes and spend more time and energy working out where they could move. Expenses went up, and income from livestock remained lower than in previous years. It was a challenge trying to meet day-to-day expenses and the added need for sanitation and other related requirements. Access to health services was a particular issue, both for themselves and for livestock. The Government support reached their families in the villages, but while on the move the pastoralists remained without aid.

The study was conducted after surmounting many challenges. It was difficult to contact respondents and speak with them with lockdown restrictions over movements for all. The only way of communication was on mobile phone with

Pastoralist's Life in Lockdown

A study of five States during COVID-19

the limitation of lack of signal in many areas through which pastoral people pass. It was difficult for the study team to contact women and get their opinion through mobile since many of them do not possess a phone or not use to phone.

It is in this context that this study has been completed with the aim of highlighting the specific impact and vulnerabilities faced by pastoral communities, such that it can be used to develop specific schemes and policies to address the plight of pastoral people in India.

I am grateful to all the colleagues, volunteers, associates, our partners and especially Maldhari Rural Action Group (MARAG) and South Asia Pastoral Alliance (SAPA), whose untiring efforts have seen this study reach its conclusion.

I welcome all comments, suggestions and support to advance the rights of pastoralists and for social and ecological justice.

In solidarity,

Sandeep Chachra

Executive Director

ActionAid Association

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AH	-	Animal Husbandry
BPL	-	Below Poverty Line
CSO	-	Civil Society Organization
COVID-19	-	Coronavirus Disease 19
DNT	-	De-notified Tribe
EG	-	Ethnic Group
FD	-	Forest Department
FRA	-	Forest Rights Act
GP	-	Gram Panchayat
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
MARAG	-	Maldhari Rural Action Group
MOEFCC	-	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
NT	-	Nomadic Tribes
OBC	-	Other Backward Classes
PC	-	Pastoral Community
PVTGS	-	Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups
SAPA	-	South Asia Pastoralist Alliance
SC	-	Scheduled Caste
SG	-	Social Groupq
ST	-	Schedule tribe
SHHWWCIS	-	Shikhar Handloom and Handicraft Weavers Welfare Cooperative Industrial Society



CHAPTER

1

Introduction

A nationwide lockdown to check and control the outbreak of novel Coronavirus was declared by the Prime Minister of India on 24th March 2020 and halted all economic activities except health and related emergency services. COVID-19 pandemic was primarily considered as a health emergency but turned into a severe crisis for the most vulnerable and marginal sections in the country. Pastoral communities in India who have been travelling across districts and states in search of grazing land faced significant challenges due to restrictions imposed to contain the COVID-19 infection. The coronavirus threat has halted the wheels of centuries-old tradition and made the lives of pastorals more vulnerable and complicated.

The time of declaration of shutdown coincided with the beginning of the seasonal migration of the pastoralists with their herds to different grassland and pasture destination points passing through districts and states. The lockdown entirely halted the mobility and hurt their economic activities badly. The condition of seasonal pastoralists in India and the loss they suffered due to the sudden imposition of lockdown need sober assessment.

Stringent travel restrictions put the income of millions of pastoralists at risk because their livelihoods depend on keeping their herds mobile. The impact on pastoralists and their livestock will continue to haunt them for years.

Pastoral communities and the peasants have traditionally maintained powerful interdependent economic relationships which got severely affected due to lockdown. Pastoralists and their livestock are invited by the peasants to their harvested farms for grazing. Farmers benefit as the fertility of their land is improved with urine and dung. In many parts of India, farmers allow herders to graze their animals on crop residue after the harvest is gathered by March. This involves pastoralists to travel

across district and state borders. The coronavirus shutdown deprived them of free grazing for their animals.

The pastoralists were also provided with food and other hospitality to halt for in the villages. In fact, they were welcomed by the peasants and landowners. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has created an environment that entirely reversed the relationship between peasants and pastorals. Fear of transmission of the virus has not just led to prohibiting the herds from grazing but has also seen harassment of the pastoralists

News that COVID-19 spread from animals to people led to rumours that pastoralists were also a risk due to their association with livestock. This stigma heightened the harassment and isolation faced by pastoralists in the villages on their routes. Villagers began to impose restrictions, barring pastorals from entering their farms and even harassing them if they were to get supplies from village shops. Pastoral communities already had come under growing stress in recent years as grazing access on village commons, grasslands and protected areas has been reduced.

The pastoralists move with large herds of livestock, traversing long-distance and passing through multiple states. They would use selected markets to sell livestock products and buy necessary items for self and livestock. The income depends upon the selling of milk, wool, leather, meat and other livestock products in the routes and those markets access. The trading of livestock, including sheep and goats, a primary source of income for the pastoralists was also affected after consumers became sceptical of eating meat after false rumours spread of the disease being contracted this way. The collapse of India's meat trade with many markets closed and travel difficulty also led to a loss of income for sheep and goat herders.

The lockdown also created severe fodder crisis for the pastoralists who were compelled to suspend their travel. Pastoralists belong to the most marginalised communities, with several families lacking the finances to purchase fodder from open markets.

The veterinary department was providing institutional health care in regular routine visits to the transhumance and seasonal pastoralists on their routes of mobility. However, due to lockdown access to veterinary and animal husbandry department to provide for health check-up was also disturbed. With restrictions on travel imposed, pastoralists were not able to avail the veterinary care services for their livestock either, as they were unable to travel to the nearest facility with their livestock and could not request healthcare workers to visit them.

Understanding pastoralism and pastoral occupation

Pastoralism in India is defined as “members of caste or ethnic groups with a strong traditional association with livestock keeping, where a substantial proportion of the group derives over 50 per cent of the household’s consumption from livestock products or their sale and where 90 per cent of the animal consumption is from natural pasture or browse and where households are responsible for the full cycle of livestock breeding”.¹

India has 34 million pastoralists managing a livestock population of more than 50 million.² Livestock rearing is one of the major occupations in India, making a significant contribution of about 8.5 to 9 per cent to the country’s GDP.³ It is also considered as the second largest occupation in India after agriculture. Particularly the contribution of the pastoralists’ communities is more significant. The sector assumes a higher significance as it forms the most critical means of supporting the earning capacity of landless pastoralists as well as marginal and small farmers, especially those living in drought-prone, hilly, and such other areas where crop production which is mainly dependent upon the vagaries of nature, is not certain.⁴

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1. Pastoralism in India: A scoping study, Indian Institute of Management (1994) V. P. Sharma, I. K. Rollefson, and John Morton Ahmedabad, p 8.
 2. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/indepth/pastoralists-at-the-crossroads-31823#:~:text=India%20has%2034%20million%20pastoralists,earns%20foreign%20exchange%20from%20exports>.
 3. Anon (2006) Report of the Task Force on Grasslands and Deserts, Planning Commission, Govt of India.
 4. Crisis of Commons, Actionaid (2014)

Pastoralism and pastoral system is not only an occupational pattern but also a way of life and an efficient economic system, often neglected to receive due importance in the process of development discourse and intervention planning considering larger economic development of the country. Livestock plays a vital role in the Indian economy. About 20.5 million people depend upon livestock for their livelihood. Livestock contributed 16% to the income of small farm households as against an average of 14% for all rural households. It provides livelihood to two-third of rural community and employment to about 8.8 % of the population in India. It contributes 25.6% of total agriculture GDP.⁵

Pastoralism contributes significantly to the livelihood and wealth in terms of milk, wool and meat with no market-based inputs. Available estimates suggest that pastoralists in Rajasthan rear 16.36% of India's sheep, 13.32% of India's goats 64.01% of India's camel population. The State's contribution to the national GDP from livestock economy is significantly high at 8%.⁶

Traditional pastoral institutions today are increasingly endangered with mass displacement due to intense competition from agriculture, population growth, herd dispossession and drought. Pastoralism, as a production system and way of life, appears to be fighting a losing battle. The anomaly of "pastoralists without legal access to grazing land" has become an everyday reality in many states. It continues to provide a valid livelihood for millions and has the potential to continue to do so. However, the future of pastoralism depends on the ecological restoration and sustainable utilisation of rangelands, the progress in livestock production and the resolution of resource conflicts facilitating the integration of pastoralism, agriculture and silviculture.⁷

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5. <https://vikaspedia.in/agriculture/livestock/role-of-livestock-in-indian-economy#:~:text=About%2020.5%20million%20people%20depend,14%25%20for%20all%20rural%20households.&text=India%20has%20vast%20livestock%20resources,25.6%25%20of%20total%20Agriculture%20GDP.>
 6. Evolving a policy on pastoralism in the semi-arid state of Rajasthan, and India by B. Mukherji, J. Rao, R. Chaturvedi, P. Priyadarshini, Working Paper 23, Foundation for Ecological Security.
 7. <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/content/16735/pastoralists-at-the-crossroads/>

There are three ways that pastoralists are practising their livelihood. There are pastoralists' who walk with their herds for grazing within limited mobility near to the villages keeping within the Tehsil locality, passing through the pasture land. There are other groups of "seasonal or transhumance pastoralists" moving through traditional routes chasing their livestock herd beyond districts and state's boundaries by passing through grazing points of traditional pastures and grasslands, then return. There is another category of pastoralists, who follow a completely nomadic lifestyle, moving around the year in their traditionally used routes of pastures. However, with the increase in means of transportation and communication, a new group has emerged (mainly few economically better of the pastoral family) who use vehicles in transporting their livestock to the targeted locations where large and rich pastures and grasslands for grazing is available. Sizeable numbers of such pastoral families in Rajasthan having large herds adopted this form of transportation. Besides, increasing barriers on the smooth passage of livestock due to infrastructural expansion and other restrictions and changes in the routes of traditional pasture landscapes to the destinations have made some pastoralists choose transportation of livestock through vehicles such as trucks and tractors till the targeted destination of better available grassland for livestock. Some financially better of pastoralists adopted pastoral occupation of livestock rearing, a better economic pursuit, who use transportation of livestock through vehicles. 'Transhumance', 'seasonal pastoralists' organised migration of livestock between mountainous pastures in warm seasons and lower altitudes in the rest of the year. A semi-nomadic pattern has a fixed abode for part of the year. However, its duration varies from one community to another.⁸ Another pastoral group move with their herds after the monsoon harvest and return to their respective villages just before the onset of rains remain eight to nine months out of their settlements, moving with their animals in search of pastures and grasslands.⁹

8. Report of National Commission For Denotified, Nomadic And Semi-Nomadic Tribes (Ministry Of Social Justice & Empowerment Government Of India) Report Volume – I 30th June 2008, page.14

9. Report of National Commission For Denotified, Nomadic And Semi-Nomadic Tribes Page.16

As mentioned earlier, there were synergistic relations between the pastoralists and peasants. After the harvest, the agricultural fields were free to accommodate the migrating flocks of animals, which ate away what all was left and deposited manure therein. The agriculturists, in fact, invited nomadic pastoralists to their fields on the promise of some payment so that they could receive manure.¹⁰ Among the nomadic groups, the pastoralists are primarily found in arid regions of the country.¹¹

All the pastoral communities in India are across social categories like Scheduled Tribes (ST), Scheduled Castes (SC), Other Backward Castes (OBC) and the general population, who traditionally adopted pastoral occupation as their primary source of livelihood, though varies from States. There are two types of nomadic tribes, notified and de-notified tribe, that traditionally keeps on mobility while practising various livelihood occupations-both pastoral and non-pastoral occupation. However, some nomadic tribal communities adopted the pastoral occupation of livestock rearing. The notified and de-notified nomadic tribes who practice livestock rearing (pastoral occupation) in India are most disadvantageous and vulnerable.

There are economically better of pastoral communities as well as poor, vulnerable pastoral communities who adopted pastoral occupation as their primary source of livelihood. However, their entire occupation and way of life are deeply connected to pasture and water commons for grazing of livestock. Most vulnerable groups among the pastoral communities belong to the nomadic and de-notified tribes of India, who maintain fully and semi-nomadic pattern of life moving with their herds over the year.

The de-notified and nomadic tribal communities pursue a wide variety of livelihoods, depending on the specific nature of the community in question. The pastoralists, based on the animals they tend, vary in their economic pursuits. Some pastoralists raise cattle, buffaloes, goats,

10. Ibid P.37

11. Ibid P.70

sheep, camels, pigs, geese, etc.¹² These pastoralists have a good source of milk, butter, meat, wool, organic manure, and other animal products. They traditionally have customary relations with the peasants in rural India. Some of these traditional economic relations are affected due to many changes that have taken place since colonial times.

The primary reasons for the decline of pastoral nomads and the livelihood crises of these communities in India are due to different policies which encouraged privatisation of commons belonging to nomadic and pastoral communities. The effect of privatisation is found to be more on pastoral nomads.¹³ The Corona pandemic has multiplied complications of the already struggling pastoral communities and their pastoral occupation.

Pastoral communities in India

There is no comprehensive database and information available or created for the Pastoral communities in India. However, we have a good database maintained on the livestock population and animal husbandry. Very few attempts made in community-specific study and documentation in India by research organisations, academic and civil society organisations working for the development of the pastoral community. This is the most urgent and felt need.

The Gaddis, Gujjars and Kinnaura are the major nomadic pastoralist communities of Himachal Pradesh. The Gaddis of **Himachal Pradesh** are traditional transhumance pastoralists, travelling with their herds between the upper reaches of Chamba and Lahaul valley in summer and areas of Kangra, Bilaspur, Mandi and Kullu districts in the winter. The population of Gaddi, as per 2011 Census, in Himachal Pradesh was 1, 78,130, mostly inhabited in Chamba and Kangra districts. Gujjars, who herd buffaloes start migrating towards the end of April. Later than shepherds, so their milk procurement has been impacted in Mandi. Their clientele includes hotels in Mandi districts, but the demand for milk has

12. Ibid, P.78

13. ibid, P. 89

diminished severely. For now, they are focusing on ghee preparation to cover the losses. Gujjars from Chamba district who base in Pathankot during winters and rely on fodder from the market have got passes for marketing milk and cottage cheese to households in Dalhousie.

Use of technology and social networking among the relatively young shepherds has helped in dissemination of information regarding the pandemic. Grazing away from cities and towns, the hoardings of government agencies do not reach them; neither did the Department of Animal Husbandry reach out to them regarding the medical precautions to be taken for livestock. One woman who was currently with their flock called to check what had to be done during lockdown since she heard disinfectants will be sprayed from helicopters to contain the infection, with information, there also is the risk of misinformation. The older shepherds are at a loss of updated information. However, one participant said he only trusts radio in the current situation.

In **Uttarakhand**, the Bhotia and Rangs of Pithoragarh district, the Tolchhas and Marchhas of Chamoli district and Jads of Uttarkashi districts are semi-nomadic pastoralists' communities. Bhotia and Van Gujjars are the major tribal pastoralists in Uttarakhand.

Pastoralists of Uttarakhand travel to two different regions – Upper Himalayan and Tarai during summer and winter. This helps in maintaining the local ecology for grazing of livestock while allowing regeneration of pasture land. At the same time, livestock gets to graze on different types of vegetation appropriate for the season. While travelling with sheep and goat, pastoralist sale various products like woollen items and livestock for table purpose to local communities and meet their needs. They travel with minimum required things and purchase or barter other items during travel. Every year they got inner line permit to travel to the areas in the upper Himalayan region while travelling from Munsiari and Dharchula on an annual routine to spend their summer in the upper Himalayan region. But this year no inner line permit was available as the file moved from tehsil to district and state level. Everyone was busy with COVID-19 programmes and had no time to attend this issue. In the process, people were stuck with their livestock on the way, which

resulted in a crisis of both fodder and water in many places. With increasing heat in places, sheep were falling ill as they were used to live in the upper Himalayan region during this period.

In **Punjab**, the traditional pastoral communities of the state are Jat Sikhs, Mahjbi Sikh, Ramdasi Sikhs, Parjapats, Mehra Sikhs, Muslims and others. Although Punjab has significant contribution and practice in pastoral occupation and livestock economy, the traditional nomadic pastoralist community has yet been identified who are culturally associated with the pastoral system. Punjab has been a destination point for pastoralists of Western Rajasthan to graze on the agricultural residue of wheat in turn the livestock enhance the fertility of land by resting there for over two months. This practice is more than three generations old and continues to date in many parts.

In **Rajasthan** the communities practising pastoral occupation, both traditional and non-traditional are many. However, the communities like Raikas, Rabaris and Bhils are traditionally nomadic pastoralists who depend on migratory grazing.

Seasonal migration from Western Rajasthan with livestock to neighbouring state is a generation old practice. After celebrating Holi (festival of colours) March, pastoralists start with their herd of sheep and goat in large numbers often in big empty trucks that pass through the area to Punjab. At times four to five trucks move together with livestock. During this time wheat gets harvested in Punjab, and the herds are allowed to graze in the harvested fields and sit there to fertile the land. People accompanying herds live in field shelters put up near the fields. The landlord takes care of their food and other petty expenses. Usually, they live there for three months till May end and return at the beginning of June in the same way, just before the onset of monsoon/ rainy season.

In **Gujarat**, the main nomadic pastoralists are Bharwad, Gavli, Mer, Rabari/ Raika, Charan and Jath. Pastoral migration in the State originates principally in the Saurashtra and Kutch regions support more than 7.4 million livestock. The Saurashtra region, consist of Jamnagar, Rajkot,

Surendranagar, Bhavnagar, Amreli and Junagadh districts, is semi-arid with modest sources of freshwater. The Banni is Gujarat's only semi-arid natural grassland and India's largest remnant grassland ecosystems covering about 2,500 sq km and settled by 46 villages. The pastoral communities like Maldharis, Rebari and Bharwad are the principal inhabitants of Banni grassland.

In Gujarat, Maldhari communities are known as "Ter Tansalia", meaning thirteen communities, including Rabari, Bharwad, Ahir, Charan, Gadhvi Mer, Chaudhari, Jat, Pal and Mutva. Maldhari community is a close-knit community, allowing only social participation in meals even among sub-groups. Marriage between sub-communities is not accepted. In literature, one can find mention of 133 sub-groups among Rabaris, six in Charan and two in Bharwads.

The Pastoralists are spread in all parts of Gujarat but are found in large numbers in Saurashtra, Kutch and North Gujarat. In these regions, Pastoralists form a healthy 20% of the population; in central Gujarat, it is around 5%, while in other areas, their population is lesser. Thus the heavy concentration of the Pastoralists communities are in Saurashtra, Kutch and North Gujarat region owing to vast spread grasslands in Panchal, Gir, Bardo, Alech, Gardo, Hingodkar, Wagad, Vadhiyar & Banni areas.

Impact of COVID-19 on Pastoralists: An Overview

While lockdowns have impacted people from all walks of life, the impact has also been differential. Pastoralists around the country have a hostile policing system to brave, including forest guards. Amidst the outbreak, the regulation and control over their movement have escalated during the most crucial time, i.e., their move towards the summer pastures. While some state governments exempted their movement like the transport of essential commodities, the shepherds who had gone to their farms were stuck and unable to join their flocks back. “We are unable to freely move with our herds for grazing since villagers are afraid that we are carriers of coronavirus,” said Sumer Singh Bhatti, who owns about 200 camels that feed in dry and desert areas of Rajasthan. “We were sometimes even prevented from going to the village shops to buy food rations. This coronavirus scare has broken the back of camel herders,” he said.¹

With summer heat pastoralists will miss opportunities to get green grass as fodder. Mool Singh, a pastoralist from Nakrasar village in Rajasthan’s Bikaner district, migrates in March every year with his herd to Punjab to graze on wheat waste. “I do not know what would happen if the lockdown is extended. I have fodder only for the next few days,” he said.²

Migration and seasonal access of pastoralists have been restricted due to the lockdown. Many pastoralist communities are reported to be stuck in other states/districts without access to rations and fodder for the livestock.³ Also, pastoral communities have been affected as the

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1. <https://www.kcet.org/coronavirus-worldwide/pandemic-lockdown-lands-new-blow-on-india-struggling-pastoralists> 3/4
 2. <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/economy/covid-19-makes-summer-2020-harsh-for-rajasthan-s-pastoralists-70931>
 3. <https://www.thestatesman.com/india/Covid-nomadic-gujjars-advised-suspend-massive-bi-annual-migration-exercise-1502874123.html>, <https://www.downtoearth.org.in/news/wildlife-biodiversity/covid-19-himachal-s-pastoral-community-in-the-shadow-of-lockdown-70359>, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/dehradun/nomadic-van-gujjar-tribe-caught-in-lockdown-with-nowhere-to-go/articleshow/74956429.cms>

milk economy faces severe crisis as procurement and sale has been disrupted during the lockdown.⁴ In Uttarakhand, the issues of Van Gujjars have been discussed in a meeting of Chief Secretary and concerned officials on 28th April 2020 where a decision has been taken to ensure supply of fodder to Van Gujjars and procurement of milk. Still, migration and movement of the community have been completely prohibited which can affect their rights and livelihoods CSOs working with pastoral communities have produced a separate report on the impact of the lockdown on pastoral and nomadic communities.⁵

This year, the nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of COVID-19 has disrupted the long spring migration of hundreds of thousands of Bakarwals and Gujjars, another nomadic pastoral tribe. Tanveer Ahmad, a resident of Udhampur who took his herd of 400 sheep, reported from Rajouri that he was getting distress calls from community members who had run out of provisions and medical supplies. "There is no shop that is open-we are managing with what we took from home, and we are afraid to enter localities for fear of the virus," he said. "The government has failed to set up medical facilities and hasn't even deputed enough officials to provide ration and food packets."⁶

An advisory issued by the MoEFCC on 6th April 2020, instructs all states and union territories to ensure a reduction in human-wildlife interface through restriction of movement of people to National Parks/Sanctuaries/Tiger Reserves. This advisory immediately impacted about 3 to 4 million people living in and around protected areas, mostly tribal communities including PVTGs, tribal, nomadic and pastoralist communities.

News on Rajaji National Park reported that a critical zone has been declared, surrounding 30 km of the park and there is a complete restriction of movement of the local Van Gujjars to access the park due to this advisory. Furthermore, several quintals of milk that the

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4. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/dehradun/in-haridwars-sealed-village-thousands-of-litres-of-milk-being-dumped-in-drains-every-day/articleshow/75072991.cms>
 5. <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Ln5ZSQkhj8JfA0On3CIM74T5-sJA2Q6K/view>
 6. <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/covid-19-lockdown-delayed-spring-migration-will-cost-nomadic-pastoral-tribes-of-jammu-and-kashmir>

Van Gujjars sell in diaries in Haridwar was overturned and destroyed by the forest department in a bid to prevent the Van Gujjars from reaching the cities.⁷ “The Van Gujjars living in and around the Rajaji National Park faced major problems,” said Tarun Joshi of Van Panchayat Sangharsh Morcha, an association of pastoral communities in the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand. “Police prevented them during the day to go to nearby towns, and they could not sell milk in the evening due to the night curfew.”⁸

Forest rights activists, in a letter dated 17th April 2020⁹ wrote to the Union Minister Prakash Javadekar highlighting that this advisory may be misused to restrict the access of tribal and nomadic communities to the forests and natural resources.¹⁰ The letter urged the ministry to reissue the advisory with clarifications that it should not be implemented to restrict customary and legal rights of use and access of the local communities living in and around protected areas.¹¹

Majority of pastoralist women are illiterate, but have considerable experience and knowledge about livestock, their management, production characteristics and feeding behaviour and accordingly, they make feed mixtures, choose fodder, gather or store bush and tree products for feeding livestock. The women of nomadic pastoralists are exposed to more severe hardships and vulnerability than men.¹²

While migration some of children stayed at home for study or taking care of grandparents, because of lockdown they are not able to see

7. Reported in Amar Ujala on 8th April 2020.

8. <https://www.kcet.org/coronavirus-worldwide/pandemic-lockdown-lands-new-blow-on-indias-struggling-pastoralists> 3/4

9. https://twitter.com/meenal_tatpati/status/1250970645338308608/photo/1

10. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/centres-advisory-to-prevent-covid-19-human-animal-transmission-can-be-misused-forest-activists-2213737>

11. <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/centres-advisory-to-prevent-covid-19-human-animal-transmission-can-be-misused-forest-activists-2213737>

12. Sangeeta Rangnekar (1994) “Women Pastoralists, Indigenous Knowledge & Livestock Production in Northern Gujarat Pastoralism in Rajasthan and Gujarat” in Journal June 1994 Pastoralism in *Rajasthan and Gujarat*, edited Ilse Iler-Rollefson, Paul Robbins, D.V. Rangnekar, Sangeeta Rangnekar, Richard Cincotta and Ganesh Pangare and Arun Agrawal, <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/5405.pdf>

their children for long time. During lockdown, the Central government as well as state government have announced schemes to support various groups; however, there was nothing in favour of Maldharis and their women.¹³

Methodology

Objective of the study

- » To find out challenges faced by pastoralist during COVID-19 lockdown
- » To assess the impact of lockdown on pastoralists and their livestock
- » To find out the impact of lockdown on pastoral income and expenditure on livestock
- » To study the impact of lockdown on regular travel of pastoral people

Sample:

The study covers random samples from five states (Gujarat, Rajasthan, Himachal Pradesh, Panjab and Uttarakhand) and 20 districts. People belong to pasture community either start from or pass through these states with their livestock. The number of samples covered from each state is 100. Hence a total of 500 samples have been taken up for this study. Across the states, 20 pastoral communities were covered.

A simple questionnaire to collect information either over the phone or through WhatsApp was developed and shared with volunteers and pastoralist who collect primary data from the field. The quantitative data and statistics were processed and analysed in MS Excel. Case studies were shared by the volunteers.

During the study, both pastoralists on travel and sedentarised were covered. Because the lockdown was announced at a time around end-March when the migration with livestock had not started in full swing. Migration season starts around the completion of Holi.

13. MARAG and Pastoral Women Alliance, Issue 3 (June 1-15 2020) COVID 19 and Forest Rights – the impact of Covid 19 and lockdown on Adivasi and forest dwelling community

Limitations:

Reaching out to pastoralists was a big challenge. It was difficult for our volunteers to physical visit and contact people for information due to nationwide lockdown. The only way of collecting information was through mobile phone to those, whose number was available and accessible during the time of this study. Since many of them travel through inaccessible areas, there was difficulty to get information from them where the network fails and voice breaks in between. Contact with women was challenging. They do not possess a separate mobile phone and in many cases, and it is difficult to get their number even if they have one. Hence women respondents are relatively less.



Study Findings

The COVID-19 lockdown has impacted free movements of the pastoralists and their herds to get access to the pastureland and grassland. Movement restriction, tracking and chasing on the roadside by police and villagers, not getting access to the markets for buying essential goods and selling of livestock products, non-availability of minimum health care facilities are other challenges the pastoral communities have been confronted while they were moving with their livestock. Nationwide lockdown also created serious troubles in getting travel permission, moving on the roads at various check gates and police check points during travelling with livestock.

Women are engaged in livestock rearing in every state though in different ways. In Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, women are involved in collection of fodder, wool processing, extracting milk, preparing ghee and others products, stall feeding and domestic care of livestock besides support in grazing activity. In Gujarat, the contribution of women in livestock breeding, stall feeding and other cares is much higher than men besides doing everyday household jobs. In Rajasthan, except in the nomadic tribe Raika, due to socio-cultural barriers, women are not traditionally allowed to go for livestock grazing outside. It is believed that large size livestock may be difficult for women to manage hence do not engage women to go for outside grazing but prefer to involve local grazing.

Challenges in moving with herd during lockdown

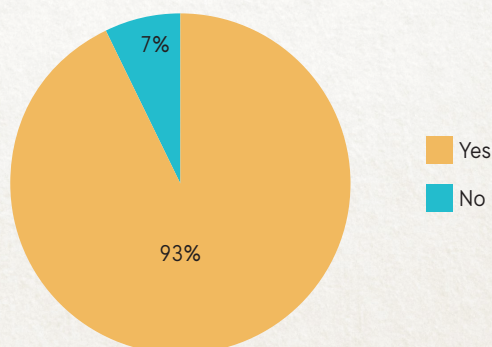
Every year pastoralists having resources to afford used to carry their herds in local transport to their place of contact and use the farm land from owner for one year. Also many are constrained to migrate on foot due to various projects. But this year they were compelled to go by roads and cover the distance by walking. The challenges involve non availability

of vehicle or increasing cost of vehicle charges to carry herds when necessary in states like Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and Punjab. People of all sectors, all professions and all occupations have faced serious setback due to covid-19 nationwide lockdown. It has burdened different impact on different people. But people who move from place to place and depend on livestock and pasture have experienced several challenges during lockdown period.

This study finding indicates that 93% of the total respondents said they have faced multiple challenges during lockdown while only 7% people said no to this response. The challenges for movements with their herds increased manifold due to pandemic lockdown.

The pandemic lockdown has created access to transportation of livestock a serious challenge for the pastoralist. In normal conditions some pastoralists were moving with their herds and belongings on their own vehicle while going and resting from place to place. They enjoyed freedom of movement from state to state and found no difficulties to pass through their journey every year. The study has tried to understand the access to transportation of livestock through personal or other private vehicle hiring to avoid long distance and harassment by many human settlements in the mobile routes. People in Gujarat experienced difficulties due to change of routes because of lockdown and shutdown. They have faced problems in going beyond their usual path and known contacts because of police fear, road containment, and diversion of

Figure 1: Challenges in moving with herd during lockdown



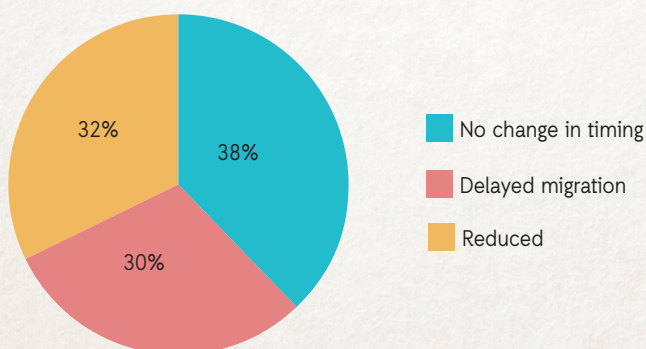
routes among others. However, the recent lockdown put lots of pressure on their transportation. The study reveals that they neither moved in their own vehicle nor hire public vehicle for transportation. During the pandemic access to use this mode of transportation of livestock to the selected pasture locations has drastically reduced. People could not travel to outside with their herds either through personal vehicle or through hiring of private transport. The first phase lockdown has laid to delayed migration to summer pasture. Moreover, people who are nomadic by every day practice and requirement, feel uncomfortable with no access to transportation or restriction in their movement.

Changes in timing of migration

The pastoralists have their own seasonality of travel to different pastures every year. This includes summer and winter pastures and also linked with grazing on agricultural waste available during that period. Such variety grazing provides livestock required nutrients for producing good quality product in every form like milk, wool and meat.

This year, migration of pastoralists from one place to other places with the livestock was seriously reduced due to obstructions caused in the routes due to various reasons. The time of lockdown was actually coinciding with the season of migration of pastoralist to start moving with their animals towards summer pasture. The sudden lockdown declared since 24th March is the main cause for delayed migration.

Figure 2: Changes in timing of migration



The study reveals that 32% of pastoralists reduced their migration, while 30 % of pastoralists delayed their migration. After first phase relaxation in the conditions of lockdown, some of the pastoralists proceeded for summer grazing. Rest 38 % people did not change their usual timing of travel and started on their usual route. However, they faced a lot of problem when lock down was imposed at different places.

For 62% of the pastorals, either the delay or reduction, it has a huge impact on their economic status. Since, the migrating families annual sustenance is dependent on the migration and this is on a rotational basis, a setback for one complete year means that the flow is disturbed for a couple of years in future. This is impacted in indebtedness, sell of the livestock, etc.

Large sections of pastoral families migrated for the livestock grazing moving and shifting pasture points within the Tehsils and district boundaries. Most often they seem to be in groups who carry small size of herds travelling in limited area and period of migration.

The issue of women pastoralists is of importance but neglected concern. Her contribution to pastoral production process is significant but long unrecognized. During mobility she faces more challenges than men. She is more vulnerable than men when exposed to so many difficulties of carrying their belongings, fetching water and fuel wood for cooking in difficult weather conditions, health related problems, attending natures' call and shelter for rest. These among other things have always kept the women pastoralists over burden. The government is not sympathetic towards such nomadic women and does not pay adequate attention to the difficulties they face. The drudgery of women of the families who were stranded outside of the villages multiplied, because they have to walk far off for fetching water, arranging for the ration and for selling the milk.

Maheswari Devi a woman pastoralist aged 47, shared her plight in delayed migration and the trouble she faced for her livestock along with other seasonal pastoralists suffered due to sudden declaration of lockdown in Uttarakhand. She is resident of Dhansantula village of

Chamoli district; Uttarakhand belongs to a pastoral family of 5 members. She said that four member of family with children migrated and one aged woman member stayed at home. She had total number of 80 animals including goat, sheep and cattle. This exercise starts by early March and about two-three families together with their livestock migrated from one tehsil to other tehsil of Chamoli district, Uttarakhand. Before lockdown process start life was smoothly moving. They were preparing for their own stay, transporting and carrying their own food materials, drinking water and other necessity. Since the declaration of sudden lockdown imposed from 24th March 2020 for Covid-19 pandemic lots of problem started and their seasonal mobility with livestock at the proper time got delayed and detained. However, waiting indefinitely for situation to be normal has forced the shepherds to move to nearby pasture. Before lockdown they were easily getting permit pass from forest department to pass through the protected/ forest areas and hilly areas with their livestock's and found sufficient grazing land and easy access to the nearest market for buying fodder for animals from market by selling of meat, milk or wool. The real problem started with delayed migration of pastoralists and closing of office of the forest department from where they could not get their grazing and entry permit pass.

The animal husbandry department organised health camps and arranged routine visits of veterinary doctors and experts during summer to provide medical services for the livestock. But during the lockdown periods these camps remained closed. Then restrictions imposed on movement from one place to another place by the government. We are seriously concerned and thinking about our livestock, without food they can't survive. Before we started our movement for grazing the lockdown was imposed. We could not go from one place to another, on time, when we normally move out with our herds. The movement of train, bus and four wheelers were also shutdown. Due to the lockdown; we were not able to bring fodder for sheep, goats and cattle from local market. The market also remained closed and we could not sell livestock and their products like milk, ghee this year. Our income has seriously gone down this season. Access to the daily market upon which the economy of the pastoralists depends were restricted hence seriously affected the livelihood income of the family. These are major problem

during lockdown period. Free ration and allowance was provided by Government to each ration card holder for 3 months with rice, Dal and wheat.

She urged both the Uttarakhand and Central government to make early solution for these problems and at least open of the market to sell livestock products, access medical care for the livestock and to make our mobility easier to recuperate from our already made loss of survival.

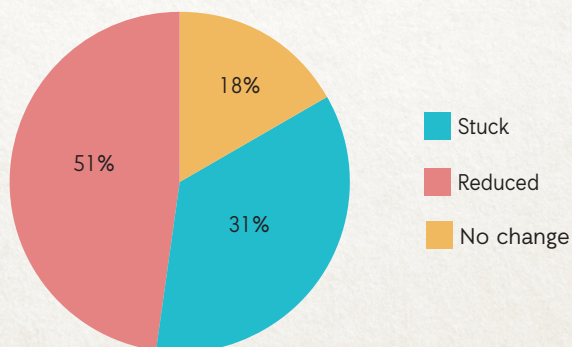
Mobility of pastoral communities during lockdown

Pastoral community travels from one state to other state every year through pasture land to graze their livestock. They camp in different places, sale their livestock products as their livelihood. That is their way of life. But this year lockdown has changed everything. The study tried to collect their interstate routes of travel during lockdown.

It was found that 31% migrants were trapped in one place instead of moving, 51% people expressed that their interstate movement decreased while 18% said there was no change in their regular movement.

However, the lockdown has brought changes in their movement which ultimately affects their way of life and income. Many of them said any

Figure 3: Mobility of pastoral communities during lockdown



lockdown in future should not have any restriction on their travel and access to pasture since livestock depend on grazing. Getting stuck in one place creates problem for livestock as well as their owners.

Gova bhai Rabari, from Rapar, Kutch District, and Gujarat moved with four families to Balod district in Chhattisgarh with around 500 small ruminants. When they crossed the boundary of the state, the lockdown was declared. Suddenly, life changed for them, people stopped welcoming them and not allowing entry to the villages, officers stopped them to move from the places they were patrolling. Due to stigma related to Corona, they were not allowed to move freely, they were facing issues of ration, water for livestock and the place to stay with their livestock. This didn't happen only with Gova bhai but to around 400 families of pastorals from Gujarat migrated to 8 districts in the state of Chhattisgarh.

From the districts of Western Rajasthan Jodhpur and Bikaner travel to Punjab with their herd in large number. Rama Bhil and others from Sekhasar village of Jodhpur were regularly going to Punjab with the herd of their village every year. As usual this year they prepared themselves in the second week of March to start their journey after finishing their winter agricultural work. They purchased and kept minimum household requirements for two to three months. This is for women and children who stay back in their house while male members travel with their herds. With minimum required items of bedding and some utensils they were prepared and waiting for the vacant truck to come and pick them up. Due to lockdown, they had to cancel all their arrangements because the lorry could not arrive due to lockdown. They stayed back and manage their herd in local area.

One of the innate characteristic of pastorals is making unique handicraft items. So while keeping an eye on the grazing sheep, they make utility items made of goat hair. Goat hair rope is used for knitting of cots, small stools and chairs. Also they do some repairing work, carpentry and all kinds of small work. This gives them some income and also sale some sheep and goat locally. While returning they come with sacks of wheat and some cash amount. In some cases these are regular annual

practice and mutually benefiting dealings. Such practice provided people with food grain for some months and saves the local pasture to be consumed during rainy season.

These are fixed for every year and their destination is also decided in Punjab. But everything changed with the declaration of nationwide lockdown. They had to cancel all their arrangements because the lorry could not arrive due to lockdown. They stayed back and manage their herd in local area.

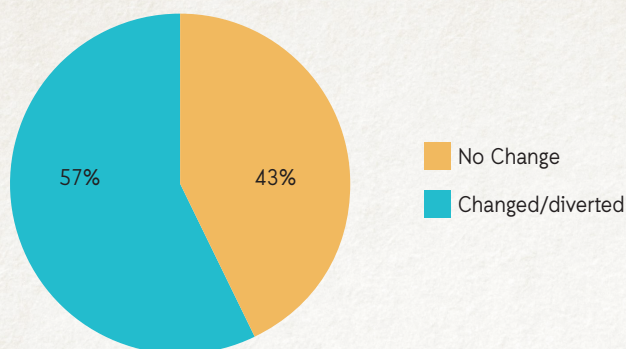
Such practice provided people with food grain for some months and saves the local pasture to be consumed during rainy season. Many like Rama Bhil, suffered a big loss related to food security and small earning. They could not migrate to their usual destination. This year either people could not start from their villages due to lock down and where they were on transit faced a lot of problem. Those who stayed in the village have exhausted the scanty pasture commons and lack resources to stall feed big livestock. With scanty rain in Jodhpur and Jaisalmer district pasture commons also deteriorates

Change in Migration Route

As regards to their travel through regular route and contacts, during lockdown there has been a change in their schedule time and places due to restrictions. 57% said that the route was diverted and 43% expressed no change in the route.

When people travel on a known route every year they develop their own social network and safety system. This also becomes an interdependent annual exercise. People with small number of livestock followed their short and regular travel path.

The lockdown has impacted their regular schedule route and created problem for the people as well as for the livestock. In Uttarakhand people said there is change in their travel path this year than previous years. Similar experiences have been confronted in Himachal and Punjab also.

Figure 4: Change In Migration Route

However, diversion in the routes adopted by pastoralist to deal with the situation created other problems. Like in the familiar route they could easily get fodder and medicine for livestock. Also for the people it was easy to either sale or barter livestock products and purchase food item. In the changed route hardly there were any human habitation and they could not get food items easily. Now carrying mobile phone has become common to keep in contact with other group members and family as they could recharge in shops on the way and got network connectivity. With changed route through the forest, there were no shops opened for mobile recharge and there was no network available for days. So it was a big challenge for the pastoralists who travelled on unknown route to deal with such hardship on the way.

Unfortunately, there was an increased number of thefts and robberies of the livestock when pastorals were on strange routes, especially when myth around connect between livestock and corona got demystified. Kutch pastorals traditionally used to migrate to North Gujarat in larger groups but due to scarcity of pastures, they divide themselves into smaller numbers, making them more vulnerable to such incidents.

This year, when Naagji bhai from Kutch was migrating to Mehsana district, with his family, around 30-40 sheep were stolen in the night. The families reported the case, but no one was caught till now. After moving from pillar to post, they found no hope and stopped following

up the case. They say “we have been migrating all our lives but we haven’t experienced anything like this”.

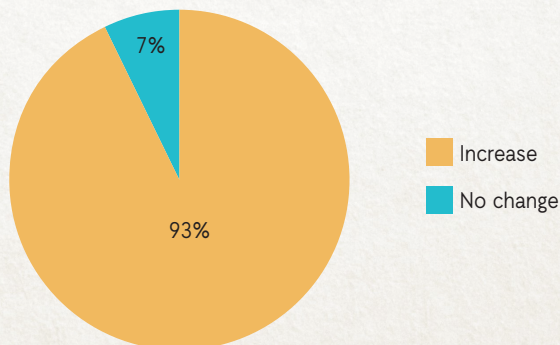
Pastorals have to do policing for their livestock day and night. The night watch keeping they are adapting in the new places, which many a times, is not required in older routes. Thus, the social capital like trust, safety and belongingness generated amongst the farmer/other communities and pastoralists in the known route helps them to thwart such situations.

Expenditure in livestock rearing during lockdown

Livestock rearing involve lot of investment in terms of money, labour and contacts to purchase medicine and fodder. The study tried to capture their problem in getting these for their livestock and found that that 93 % respond increase in expenditure cost of livestock while only 7% experience no change in the cost of livestock rearing.

But the fact is people have encountered difficulties in meeting daily need of livestock rearing with reduced income and from unknown contacts due to change in root and place of travel. In many places, especially where people walked with livestock in different route, there was less pasture available and no contact with local people. Increased heat of summer added to their plight. Since the movement of livestock

Figure 5: Change In Expenditure in livestock rearing during lockdown



was restricted and open grazing option was very limited the family has to buy the fodder for livestock with high price as supply was less and demand more.

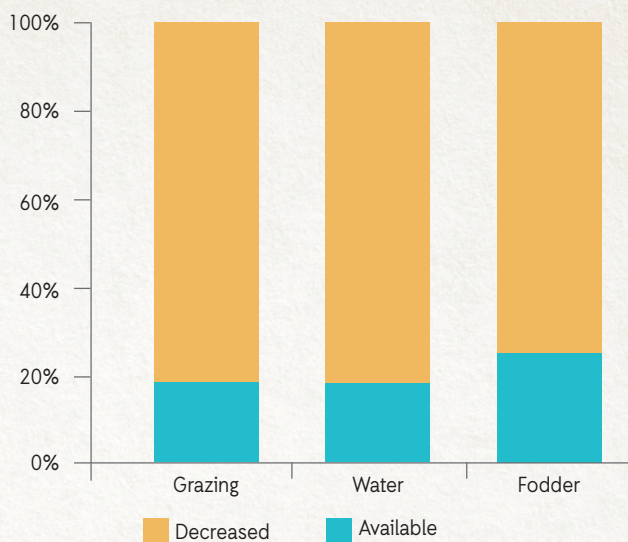
Pastoralists reported that feeding cost of livestock increased 4 to 5 times. The grasses and water had to be purchased, with increased costs due to summer. The rates of cattle feed went high, and on top of it, the increase in diseases in livestock complicated the situation. Altogether, this escalates the input cost of livestock rearing. At the same time, there was a steep decrease in output cost. The cost of milk and other dairy products sharply decreased.

Usually pastoralists don't carry cash and while travelling, purchase required things from different places and spend money which they get by selling products like milk, meat, wool or woolen products in mountains. This year due to lockdown and restricted movement, people have less income and it is difficult to meet needs of the livestock. Availability of fodder and veterinary medicine was limited due to restricted movement of vehicle and whatever was available was too high priced. Many of them said Government should provide support for livestock like they give ration support to human being. Livestock needs and requirements must be given in case of lockdown if it continues in future. It will reduce financial burden on the owner and problem in getting fodder. Many of them said Government should provide fodder support for livestock till the period of lockdown ends the way food ration is provided to the people.

Access and availability of grass, fodder and water for livestock

Pastoralist and their livestock have faced several challenges in getting access to grazing land, water sources and even fodder while moving during lockdown period. Only 10% people felt, that grazing and water sources were available and accessible to them and in case of fodder it is 20%. About 90% of the respondents expressed decrease in accessibility of grazing and water for livestock during lockdown while 80 % feel decrease in access to fodder.

Figure 6: Access and availability of grass, fodder and water for livestock



With the very minimal access to grass and fodder at the same time increasing costs of buying them from market for cattle feed, which had no cost to pay by us, would multiply extra burden on the struggling pastoral families. This would have serious consequences on the livelihood and occupation of pastoralists, if such situations continue for longer period. These are essential commodities for the livestock to survive and there should not be any restrictions under any circumstances on these, people feel strongly about this.

Bharat Gokul Bharwad of village Manwarpur, Sankheshwar Block of Patan district, Gujarat narrated the problems of access to market and fodder for cattle as a serious crisis faced by the pastoralists due to lockdown. Every year Bharat along with members of other pastoral family use to migrate to North Gujarat with their herds of their livestock in search of grasses and water. However, due to COVID-19 lockdown, the police personnel didn't allow them and the livestock to move. Therefore, they couldn't do any mobility but had to stay back at their own village.

Bharat states that "In order to enable our livestock to survive, we had to buy cattle feed and grasses, which was otherwise not required to buy.

Due to lockdown we spend money paying high cost. We bear the loss in purchase of fodder. Even after paying money, we were not getting cattle feed, due to scarcity. When we ventured to collect grasses from nearby grassland our vehicles were restricted by police, due to mobility restrictions. Moreover, the price of cattle feed upsurge from ₹1000/- to ₹1600/-". Bharat bhai said that they will have to bear the brunt of this loss for the coming years. This situation is not just of Bharat bhai, but most of the migrating pastorals in Gujarat.

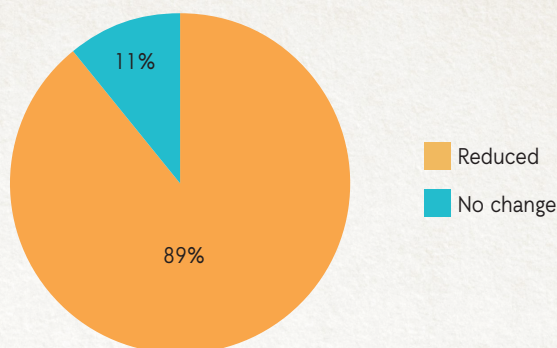
Salim Sama, from Khawda, a pastoral from Kutch, Gujarat says, in this tough time, on one hand where these livestock are our savior as our food requirements are fulfilled from them. But on the other hand, as the lockdown has entered in its fourth week, the problems are on upsurge. The prices of cattle feed and grasses are soaring. With the escalating prices and plunging incomes, the purchasing power is dwindling, as a result of which, it is becoming difficult for them to purchase these. Consequently, sustaining the livestock is becoming increasingly difficult.

Access to health services for livestock during mobility

Access to basic health services for the livestock got affected due to lockdown everywhere. Around 89% people have experienced this as a big challenge during lockdown period. Only 11% people experienced no change in access to medical care for their livestock.

This is a serious concern to be addressed on priority like other health problem of human being. There must be government supported health camps or active veterinary officials to deal with any kind of health problems for the livestock. The study team found cases where people have left their sick goat on the way because of non-availability of health services. In one incident in State of Himachal Pradesh at Bagan near district Una the shepherd left his sick goat with someone on the way because they could not bring back home and give veterinary care. So, lack of veterinary care with lockdown situation has amplified the loss in certain situations.

Figure 7: Impact on access to health services for livestock during mobility

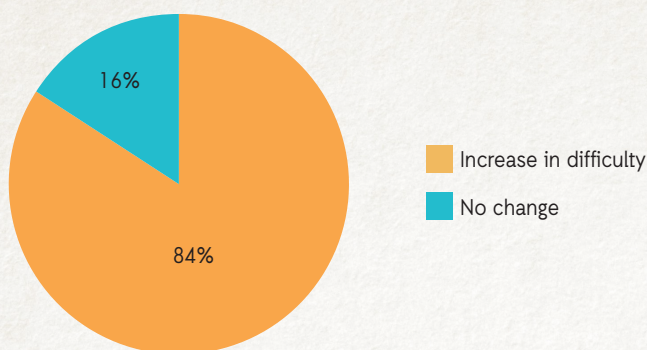


The pastoral communities carry a significant knowledge of medicine and health care of the livestock and humans. Such knowledge and therapeutic practices were effective while the availability of modern health care facilities were not developed or sufficiently accessible. During the pandemic and lockdown, before exploring the veterinary services, the traditional pastoralists also took help of the traditional medicine available in the same pastoral ecosystem flora and fauna, which they are well acquainted with. In some cases, Uttarakhand Bhotias use traditional therapeutic methods and medicines to take care of their sheep and goats. Maldharis of Banni grassland, Van Gujjars of Himachal Pradesh also depend on such practices. For people travelling on a change route and where livestock felt ill, it was difficult to get access to indigenous medicine.

Difficulty of camping in nearby village during lockdown with livestock

Spread of the coronavirus has created a lot of discriminations among people. Social distancing, avoiding gatherings, has become a regular practice, and people always avoid talking and mixing with strangers. Any stranger is not allowed to enter into the village due to fear of the coronavirus. This practice creates more problems for the pastoralists who travel from place to place. They face more problems to get in contact with local people wherever they go for their requirements.

Figure 8: Impact on finding camping sites in nearby village during lockdown with livestock



The present study tried to report those and found that 84 % people have confronted increased in difficulties and 16 % people have experienced that they do not experience much difficulties in camping with livestock from nearby villages. This has been a common phenomenon everywhere and people who do not travel can manage this. But it was difficult to manage by the pastoralist who travel every day and become a stranger to every place.

It revealed that in previous years the pastoralists were welcomed by the farmers and villagers and invited to camp on and graze the livestock on the post-harvest residue. However, this year due to Corona virus pandemic the villagers were scared of and did not allow migrant pastoralists to camp in nearby villages.

Similarly in Punjab, people have experienced difficulties while grazing their livestock on roadside pasture, near canals and ponds because Government put restrictions on these areas for people and livestock to move. While collecting information from people, they shared these experiences and difficulties they faced.

Although the difficulties faced by the pastoralist camping in nearby villages were higher, they gradually diverted the routes and chose to camp in more distance places from the villages to avoid harassment. However, some of them have reduced the harassment due to their personal contact with the farmers developed because of their regular

seasonal contact. The pastoralist of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Rajasthan who were on movement had adopted such methods in the subsequent lockdown relaxation.

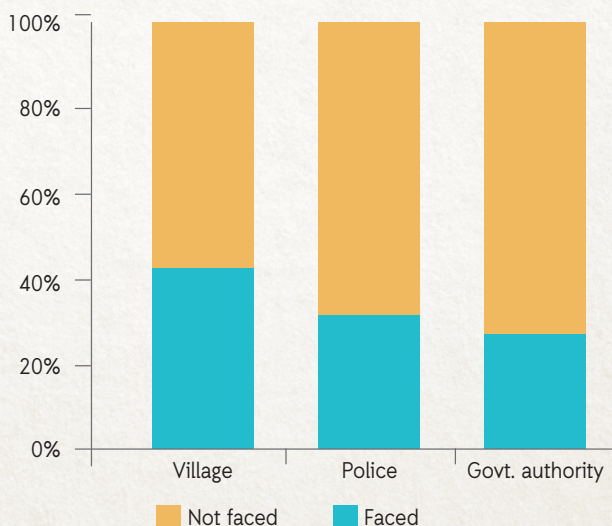
They said government should provide them their regular daily requirements on regular interval so that they don't need to depend on local people and encounter discrimination.

Discrimination during travel at the hands of villagers, police, Government officials

Discrimination to strangers or any outsiders is not just limited to villagers, it happens by the local police, Government officials and even people of same communities. In fear of getting affected or infected by corona virus, people do not accept outsiders into their village or house, even if they know each other.

It was found from the study that more than 30% people experienced increase in discrimination by local police and government authority. It

Figure 9: Discrimination faced during travel at the hands of villagers, police or Government officials



is around 50% in case of villages. This happens sometimes because of their personal contact or known to each other. Some cases the pastoralists also avoided to pass closely through the populated village periphery to escape harassment. Nearly half of the opinion (50%) came in favour of facing no discrimination from the villagers and more than around 70 % felt that they did not face discrimination from police and Government authority.

Jaga Vashraam Rabari is a native of Vrajvani village in Rapar Block of Kutch district, Gujarat narrated the sudden changes and his personal experience as a pastoralists traditionally moving on the same routes and interacting with the same villages. He says “livestock rearing is my main occupation from which I derived my sole livelihood. Due to scanty rains this year in the regions the village pasture and grass lands got depleted soon. The feeding of livestock was insufficient and challenging for us. I migrated with sheep and goat along with other pastoral families of the village proceeded towards Patan district for grazing.”

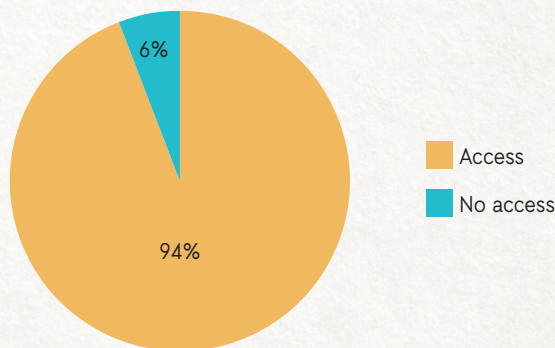
He also states that “Every year we migrated with our herds to Borsanda village of Patan district for 8 months, which is more than 300 kilometres distance from my native village. This year we reached at Borsanda. During lockdown due to COVID 19, we were at the periphery of the Borsanda village. While in normal times, the villagers used to invite and welcome the pastoralists including us. But this time, we were not allowed to enter into the village. The presence of police personnel also scared of us and our mobility was seriously restricted”.

Vashraam Rabari further narrated the story of the sufferings of migrant pastoralists and serious fear psychosis created due to corona. He says “Normally we used to be welcomed and stay at the outskirts of the village fetch water, buy our ration and other necessities and sold milk in the locality and market without any hindrances. However, the Corona pandemic has made everything reverse created troubles for mobility, camping and access to local shops for food, water and other necessities. We had to walk for few kilometres at night to a distant farm to fetch drinking water and buy the ration from nearby market place.”

Access to ration and food items

The unprecedented lockdown without any preparedness creates problem for everyone including pastoral community in getting essential items for food. Because of shut down, it was not possible to purchase goods even if they had money in their hand. Ration support from government has reached to almost all marginalized BPL families. In Uttarakhand Government provided free ration and allowance to each ration card holder for 3 months with rice, Dal and wheat. But people who travel do not get access to these government supply rations and it was expressed by 94% people as per the study findings. Only 6% said they did not face any problem in getting food and ration items while on move. Many of them expressed that government must provide at least ration to these people on their way through 'one country one ration card' or universal ration card system. This is an urgent appeal from the pastoral people from all states.

Figure 10: Access to ration and food items



Access to basic needs - health services, water and food during migration

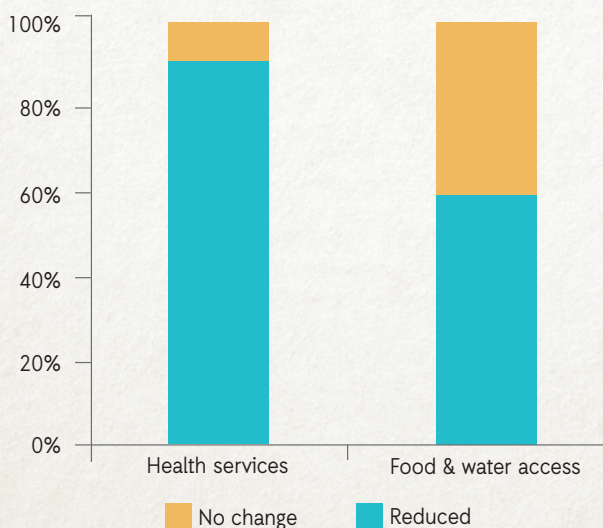
Migrant pastoralist faced problems of health services, food and drinking water for livestock and self, while moving with their herds due to COVID-19 lockdown pandemic situation. Almost more than 80 % pastoralists said there was reduced access in getting basic health services during migration only 20 % saw no change in access to health

services. Nearly 60% felt difficulty of getting access to food and water from outside while the rest 40 % faced no change in getting access to food and water.

Procurement of food supplies like for rest of population has been an issue since the stocks they keep last them maximum for a period of one week. Different state government had different time slots for procurement of ration items and most often in the morning hour, which was a challenge for the pastoral community to reach the shop. In Himachal Pradesh government notified 8 to 11 am for the stores selling essential commodities to be opened, which was inaccessible for the shepherds already struggling with labour shortage. Simultaneously, looking after the herd and getting provisions from nearby market was a big challenge.

When the markets were closed and the sale and purchase business of the pastoralist got closed there was every possibility of pastoralists facing difficulties in arranging their food and buying their rations. With that conditions there was demands from the pastoralist association

Figure 11: Access to basic needs - health services, water and food during migration



of Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Rajasthan and others before the Government (interstate) to provide food and ration to the migrant pastoralists on their moving routes (specific points) to protect them from hunger. Besides they demand fodder and medical relief for the livestock.

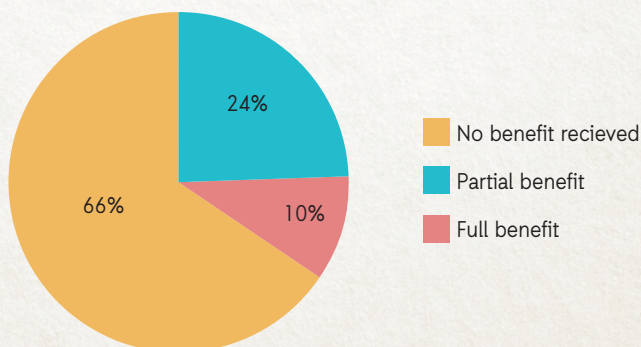
Any COVID-19 benefit from Government received

Government in all states has extended support in terms of ration and cash to poor and marginalized community to overcome the scarcity during lockdown. But people moving with herd are deprived of these benefits. The study found that 66 % respondents said they have not received any government supported benefit but 10 % agreed to have received needed support and rest 24 % expressed that they have received partial support in terms of food grains.

When maintaining life and livelihood for general people during lockdown was challenging, it was even worse for pastoralist having livestock dependent on them for their food, fodder and medicine. They have to arrange everything with double burden. This community needs support for both livestock and self-sustenance.

In Punjab the exception to find that **Mrs. Parmjeet Kaur** (Female) aged 42 years, a resident of Khiva khurd alleged that there are mismanagement

Figure 12: COVID-19 benefit from Government received

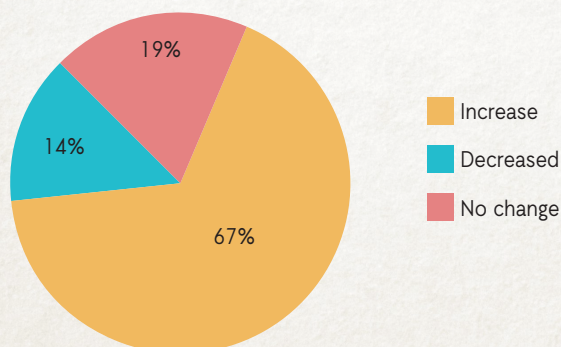


is providing ration to all the needy families. She said although the State Government is giving allowance to each ration card holder but her family and few of her neighbors are denied. She demands support for the livestock, which is needed the most. While there were some schemes announced for migrating labours, agriculture sector. There is no relief or rehabilitation scheme targeting the livestock keepers, except loan for the cattle. Nomadic people in general do not receive any support from government during crisis or in general circumstances. They proposed to have special provision with universal ration card through which they can access ration from any state while travelling. Provision of ration availability must be ensured

Safety and security of livestock and self during migration in lockdown

Theft of livestock, personal belongings including money on their way is a regular phenomenon pastoral people encountered. But one good thing that has evolved during this lockdown that there has been decrease in theft on the way as experienced by 67 % of people, 14 % said there was increase of theft and for rest of 19 % there was no change in the security of livestock and self during travel. The reason assigned to increase security means that due to lockdown and restrictions people are scared of coming out, fear of police and chances of getting infected with corona virus not venturing out of home.

Figure 13: Safety and security of livestock and self during migration in lockdown



Pastoralist experienced different effects during lockdown and unlock. In the first phase of lockdown due to heavy restriction on people's movement and intense fear of corona and livestock being carrier of corona, there was no chance of any theft. They were all in secured condition. With process of unlock and reduced restrictions followed differently in different states, many groups experienced theft after unlock. The fear of livestock being carrier of Corona virus, people started moving in vehicle and theft of livestock occurred.

In Himachal Pradesh the positive side of this lockdown was that not a single case of sheep and goat theft happened in the past 2-3 weeks of April. One shepherd admitted that thinking of one's blessing amidst this difficult time doesn't seem appropriate but yes the incidents of theft have faded. So, enhanced police scrutiny with curbs on movement, physical as well as motor, helped this menace to halt, albeit for numbered days.

However, many of them strongly expressed that there should be adequate arrangements for the safety and security of people and families who are travelling with herds during and after the lockdown. Police must cooperate them and take their case whenever arises. Special case has to be given to women pastoralist with strict penal provision for the violators so that it discourages others to take any action against women

Income from livestock during lockdown

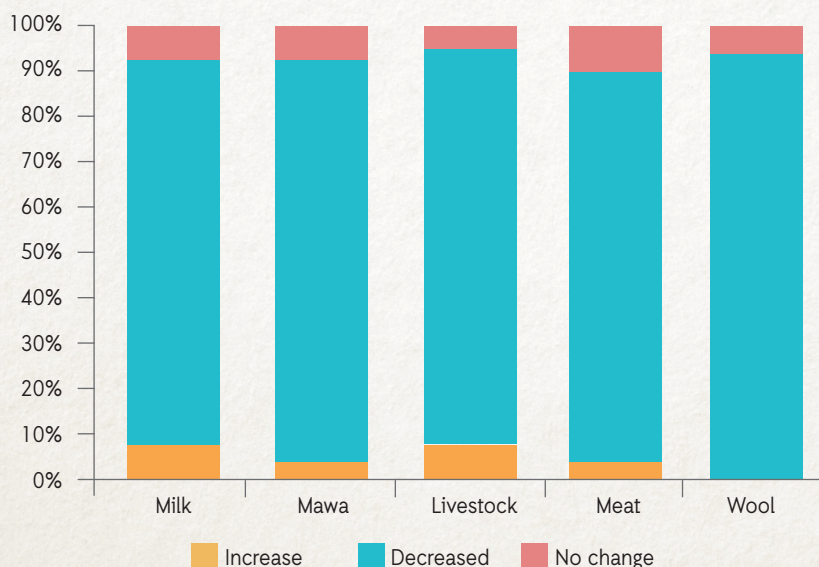
Major source of income for the pastoral people is sale of livestock products like milk, mayo, livestock and meat. They collect those from their livestock and sale in the local market and sometimes to villagers where they camp on their way. Covid-19 lockdown has disrupted all these and seriously impacted to their income.

The graph on income shows that income from all products has drastically reduced putting them in trouble. Only around 10% people expressed no change and less than 5% say increase in the income of all livestock products, except no sale in wool. However, rest of 80%

face the crunch of income in all products. The mawa/ khoya (all milk products) and meat have the lowest sale of whatever the meagre sale may they have done. This trend comes from all most all states. More than 10% people found no change in sale of the animal products except little more i.e., 20% people see no change in the meat sale as usual. About 90% of the pastoral respondent said the decrease in income or almost no sale of the wool, which was adding a major part of the income whereas only 10% felt no change in their income from wool. The major wool producing pastoralists States in India are Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand and Gujarat. Thus, the overall income level of the pastoralists has drastically reduced.

During the national lockdown all markets and shops were closed, no public gathering and organizing of festivals, feasts and weddings were allowed. Everywhere hotels were closed. This had direct impact on milk, milk products and meat. As the demand crashed people had no opportunity to sale these products during a crucial season of the year. Also livestock markets in May from where people purchase bullock

Figure 14: Impact on income from livestock during lockdown



for agriculture purpose was shut; hence there was crisis on that front too. Hence this year, pastoralists had the double burden of declined income and increase expenditure on livestock. In many instances people were forced to abandon big livestock like cow and bullock as they had no resource to stall feed. It was found that in Saurashtra, Gujarat pastorals and other livestock keepers are entirely dependent on market to earn their livelihood. They sale mawa (a milk product) used to make sweets. Since, dairy cooperatives are in a shutting phase, there is no procurement of milk from milkmen or pastorals. Moreover, reduced consumption of milk and closed sweet industry and the dairy cooperatives are adding woes to their worries. In other words future seems to be gloomy.

A woman pastoralist of Uttarakhand (Chamoli dist) **Mrs. Maheswari Devi** shared that “due to the lockdown; we were not able to bring fodder for sheep, goats and cattle from local market. The market also remain closed due to lockdown we could not sell livestock products like milk, ghee, khoya this year. Our income has seriously gone down this season.” Access to the daily market on which the economy of the pastoralists largely dependent was restricted hence seriously affected the livelihood of the family. These are major problem during lockdown period.

Mrs. Parmjeet Kaur (Female) aged 42 years, a resident of Khiva khurd village of Mansa Tehsil, Mansa district, Punjab State belong to pastoral Mujahabi community (SC) lives with 4 members family with two school going children. Narrating her experience during COVID-19 pandemic says “before lockdown we were moving freely from one place to another with grazing of our livestock. Even to distant places like from one Tehsil to another and district border for gazing of livestock. With insufficient grass available in nearest places, we were moving up to more than 40 kms and chasing beyond. However, during lockdown situation we faced restrictions and harassment from police to venture outside. Heavy fine was charged by police from our people”.

Due to closure of transportation facility, availability of fodder in the local market has become scarce and wherever was available was too

expensive for us to stall feed the livestock. Without any work outside and lowered income, it has become difficult to arrange food for the family. Purchasing fodder for livestock was not affordable. Due to insufficient fodder two of our goats got sick, and we could not purchase medicine, which later died. In the normal time milk business was giving some income but that was also stopped. No one wants to purchase due to fear of suspected Covid 19 infection and local market was also closed". Other day she sold five kilograms of wool stored for only 100 rupees.

In some cases, the herders got exemptions in their movements with phases of unlock; but the allied activities suffered a setback. Sheep 'dipping and shearing' has been delayed due to curb on movement for sheep-shearing which was established by H.P. State Cooperative Wool Procurement and Marketing Federation Ltd. on commission basis. Shikhar Handloom and Handicraft Weavers Welfare Cooperative Industrial Society that has got organic certification done for sheep wool in Himachal Pradesh has improved prices for wool in Himachal but the wool procurement also had to be disbanded in between. For shepherds, shearing their sheep has presented another problem. "If the sheep are not sheared on time, it could potentially lead to parasite infections in the rainy season," Pawna Kumari from Himachal Pradesh shared. Wool marketing also suffered a major setback. In Rajasthan similar situation was faced by pastoralist. In past few years people got used to mechanise shearing process carried out by a small team of people. But this year no one came to the village due to lockdown. So pastoralists had to do it themselves with their own scissors. Young boys like Nakta Ram from Akhadana and Mage Bhil from Raneri village of Jodhpur shared that they had to shear wool using scissors like their grandfathers and fathers did and it was really difficult. Since 'we are not skilled in this so a lot of wool was wasted and our scissors were not sharp enough and we did it for the first time'. Since the markets are closed, all that wool remained unsold and lost most important part of our income. Maximum people reported problem in sale of wool and major loss of income.

Parmjeet Kaur and her family made a very humble request to the Government of Punjab and Central Government that they should solve all these difficulties as soon as possible, so that animal husbandry business is back on track.

People urged government to make early solution for these problems and at least open the market to sell livestock products, access medical care for the livestock and to make mobility easier to recuperate from the already lost income.

In response to this crisis, people felt, there should be relaxation and scope for collection and sale of their products without any restriction during any such lockdown. Government procurement may be arranged if there is no facility for local sale. This will help people to protect their income.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The period of lockdown has been a crisis situation for pastoral people who were not prepared to cope with unprecedented incidence. As a result, they faced a lot of challenges during this period. People have shared their suggestions and recommendations to address their problems through this study.

1. Government provisions for meeting minimum requirements of food, fodder, medicine and water for the livestock during travel in lockdown period.
2. The grasses, cattle feed, water be arranged near the vicinity of their stay and the cost of grasses and cattle feed to be regulated and subsidized by the governments
3. Universal ration card needs to be given to nomadic people to access ration from any state they pass through. The rations, medicines and other necessary items are made available to maldharis, at the place where they are stuck, irrespective of possession of ration cards.
4. Govt. needs to provide nutrition packs to Maldhari women, pregnant and with small children on migration to enhance their immunity.
5. Provisions for safety, health care and security of people, their livestock and women and small children travelling with them need to be taken care during lockdown.
6. Administration must pay attention to Maldhari community, so that they survive COVID 19, especially being away from their families and villages/states. The increasing conflict with the locals calls for the safety provisions, necessary steps to be taken in this regard.
7. Health insurance must for all people and their livestock with government support

8. Need to facilitate 'dipping and shearing' of sheep on time during any kind of lockdown. So that the quality of wool is ensured and sold at good price in market while the sheep remains healthy.
9. Special relief provision for pastoralists is most required during such emergency situation to protect their income.
10. Marketing facilities should be provided to the pastoralist to sale the products. Provision for credit support for the people to meet their requirements during lockdown need to be made by the Government.
11. Minimum support price and provision for government procurement for all livestock products need to be in place to protect income of people and create opportunity for sale of their products on time.
12. No harassment but cooperation needed from local police, government officials and veterinary office for the people and their livestock during lockdown period.
13. Government needs to have temporary shelter provisions for pastoralists on travel during any kind of lockdown so that they do not face any discrimination from other people and villagers.
14. All forms of commons, grassland, wetland and pasture needs to be protected from any kind of encroachment and diversion during lockdown to facilitate reach out of livestock & pastoralists.
15. There should be no restrictions in movement of pastoralists whether by vehicle or on foot and their herd during lockdown but with basic guidelines. They must be allowed to move through their traditional route even though protected areas and reserved forests.

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