

By Dr. Hasrat Arjjumend

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TGI – OUR STRENGTHS TO CONTRIBUTE TO WESTERN BALKANS



THEMATIC/TECHNICAL STRENGTHS

- Participatory Rangelands (Grasslands, Meadows, Pastures) Conservation & Management
- Transhumance, Pastoralism, and Shepherds-Owned Self-Governance
- Sustainable/Organic Agriculture Development; Climate Smart Agriculture
- Micro Watershed Management (Integrated) and Ecological Restoration
- Conservation of Biocultural Heritage, Biodiversity Heritage, CCA (community served area)
- Land Rights, Resource Rights and Multi-Stakeholder Advocacy

METHODOLOGICAL STRENGTHS

- Project Planning, Writing, Execution, Management & Monitoring {Organizing the Local People as Primary Stakeholders [project oriented]}
- Capacity Building and Training of Project Stakeholders [multiple skills & disciplines]
- Process Writing, Documentation and Communication
- Advocacy, Media Advocacy, Skill Training
- Participatory and Action Research
- Curriculum Design and Mainstreaming in School & Higher Education Institutions

WESTERN BALKAN REGIONAL GATHERING OF PASTORALISTS

To observe IYRP 2026, The Grassroots Institute facilitates the Regional Gathering and calls for Partners and Collaborators in all 6 countries of the Western Balkans region. We are in the process of constituting Organizing Committees at the national, zonal, local levels. Interested stakeholders, including shepherd groups/ associations, national or local NGOs, municipalities, government departments, regional authorities, academic institutions, animal products business federations, farmers' cooperatives, youth groups, colleges/schools, and others, are invited to contact us.



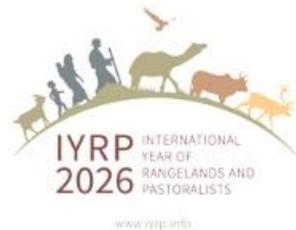
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Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Rangelands, Transhumance and Pastoralism

[Preparatory Workshop for Regional Gathering]



Podgorica, Montenegro

DR. HASRAT ARJJUMEND

Postdoc, PhD, MPhil, MSc, MA, PGDip Env Law, LLB, MBA

Emails: harjjumend@gmail.com;
president@grassrootsinstitute.net
editor@grassrootsjournals.org

Web: www.tgi.org.ua/governances/hasrat-arjjumend
www.grassrootsinstitute.net/hasrat_arjjumend.html

Lead Website: www.grassrootsinstitute.net

WhatsApp/Viber/Telegram: +91 9868993710

Phones: +380 955 843073 | +1 437 5355084

Facebook: www.facebook.com/harjjumend

LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/harjjumend

ORCID: 0000-0002-4419-2791

Google Scholar ID: 6D-2gdUAAAAJ

- *Global Coordinator, Grassroots Global Network*
www.grassrootsglobal.net | ggn@grassrootsglobal.net
- *President, The Grassroots Institute Canada*
www.grassrootsinstitute.ca | lead@grassrootsinstitute.ca
- *President, The Grassroots Institute Ukraine*
www.tgi.org.ua | mail@tgi.org.ua
- *President, The Grassroots Institute Western Balkans*
www.tgi-wb.eu | contact@tgi-wb.eu
- *Chief (Executive) Editor, Grassroots Journals*
www.grassrootsjournals.org | info@grassrootsjournals.org
- *Founder, TGI Varsity, Hungary/India*
www.tgiversity.org | mail@tgiversity.org
- *Co-Chair, RISG-Central Asia Mongolia, & Member, Global Coordination Group, RISG-Europe, International Year of Rangelands & Pastoralists 2026* | www.iyrp.info
- *International Coordinator, Mountain Alliance for Pastoralists & Minority People (MAP), Europe & Asia*
www.minoritymap.org



GENESIS OF MAJORITY OF PROBLEMS OF PASTORALISTS
begins with

Dilemma of Deep Ecologists Treating Grazing as
an Enemy of Natural Ecosystems

The Myth of the “Pristine Nature”

- Deep ecologists tend to romanticize wilderness as a state untouched by humans. But globally, *no landscape is truly pristine*. Pastoralists — from Mongolian herders to Sahelian Fulani and Albanian shepherds — have *co-created* ecosystems for millennia.
- The European Alps’ meadows (natural heritage) are in fact human-made through centuries of grazing. With abandoned grazing, flower-rich meadows turn into dark spruce forests — *biodiversity collapse*. In Balkan mountain pastures, biodiversity declined after grazing stopped.
- The “natural” state is often an *artifact of pastoral human history*. Removing herders in the name of wilderness restoration can *destroy* the ecological complexity that humans helped create.
- Grazing is not degradation — it’s the memory of ecological co-creation.



Deep Ecology's Colonial Blind Spot

- Deep ecology preaches “nature without local people”
- Indigenous and pastoral communities are displaced/ evicted for “fortress conservation” projects across Africa, Asia, other poor countries. Restrictions imposed on pastoralists in Albania and Balkans.
- Commodification of nature for consumer tourism.
- Guardian pastoralists are made trespassers and criminalized, dispossessed, alienated, repressed
- Deep ecology replicates a **colonial logic** — privileging elite, urban ecological purity over the ecological knowledge of local people.
- The real ecological violence often comes from removing those who sustained the landscape.



Grazers or Shepherds as Ecosystem Engineers



- Traditional transhumant grazing maintains soil fertility, prevents woody encroachment, and sustains pollinator diversity.
- Livestock act as “ecological movers”: distributing seeds, recycling nutrients, shaping habitat structure.
- Transhumant grazing prevents shrub invasion and maintains open habitats for birds and pollinators.
- The true ecological threat: industrial agriculture, feedlots, monocultures.
- Pastoralism, in its traditional form, represents *the antithesis of industrial agriculture*: decentralized, regenerative, adaptive, non-extractive.

Pastoralism





- ❖ Pastoralism as the coexistence of dependence on livestock with spatial mobility.
- ❖ Nomadic or mobile pastoralism a sustainable livelihood in a diverse range of countries
- ❖ Herders' ability to move manages risk in marginal landscapes where domesticated animals efficiently convert limited ecological productivity into sustenance.
- ❖ Extensive (not intensive) livestock grazing is an excellent example of managing biodiversity and soil fertility.
- ❖ Transport of seeds and insects by livestock, the migration of pastoralists and their flocks supports habitat connectivity and biodiversity

Productive lifestyles



- ◆ Pastoral production occurs in 25% of global land area from dry lands of Africa and the Arabian Peninsula to the highlands of Asia, Latin America and the Arctic parts of Fennoscandia and Russia ;
- ◆ In sub-Saharan Africa alone, > 50 million people live as nomadic pastoralists;
- ◆ Main livestock species kept by pastoralists are cattle, donkeys, goats, sheep, alpaca and llamas (in Andes), camels, horses, buffalo, reindeer and yak;

- ◆ Simel (2009) and Hesse (2009) have shown that pastoralism is more productive per hectare than commercial ranching or sedentary livestock keeping in similar environmental conditions.
- ◆ High productivity of livestock in pastoral systems not only supports millions of pastoralists but also contributes significantly to other sectors of national and regional economies



- ◇ 200 million pastoral households produce 10% of the world's meat
- ◇ Compared to settled farmers in Africa, pastoralists produce 50-70% of all the milk, beef and mutton
- ◇ In Iran, pastoralists keep 25% of the national herd. Economies of countries like Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan depend on livestock herders





Issues Challenging Pastoralists

- (1) subjugation of pastoralists by state policies,
 - (2) civilized ideology encourages the sedentarization,
 - (3) military pacification and political control, and
 - (4) recent phenomenon of globalization
- ◇ Borders closed for landscapes and grassland ecosystems
 - ◇ Hostile attitude of governments to pastoralism
 - ◇ Marginalization, Social Exclusion and Disenfranchisement
 - ◇ Non-Recognition of Customary Land Rights



- ◇ Fragmentation of Rangeland Habitats and Disturbed Migratory Routes
- ◇ Massive Conversion of Rangelands to Industrial/Urban Uses
- ◇ Enclosure of Common Lands, incl. forests, meadows, parks
- ◇ Encroachment of Pasturelands by powerful elites, mining, factories, government departments, politicians, etc.
- ◇ Breakdown of Traditional Village Institutions protecting the commons
- ◇ Atrocities, Exploitation, Prosecution of Nomads by Police



- ◇ Changing Weathers and Increasing Uncertainties
- ◇ Increased Veterinary Diseases and Lack of Animal Care
- ◇ Changing Occupations and Declining Population of Herders (Invisibility, Unrepresentation, Deliberate Exclusion)
- ◇ Mass (commercial) Tourism to destroy nature and culture

Sara Randall (2015). **Where have all the nomads gone? Fifty years of statistical and demographic invisibilities of African mobile pastoralists.** *Pastoralism* 5 (2015).

International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists – IYRP 2026



Western Balkans Regional Gathering of Pastoralists

25-26 April 2026 | Shkodër, Albania

Role of Veterinary Experts in Pastoralists' Livestock Health and Management

1. Disease Prevention and Control

- ❖ Support community-based animal health systems that combine formal veterinary science with traditional herders' disease recognition methods (e.g., local observation of animal behavior, coat, and appetite).
- ❖ Coordinate vaccination and deworming adapted to **transhumant mobility patterns** between high summer pastures (bjeshkët) and lowland wintering areas.
- ❖ Monitor endemic diseases such as foot-and-mouth disease, brucellosis, and parasitic infections, incorporating **shepherds' seasonal disease calendars** into surveillance systems.



Role of Veterinary Experts in Pastoralists' Livestock Health and Management

2. Breeding and Genetic Conservation

- ◆ Support the preservation and selective breeding of **native livestock breeds** like the Ruda sheep and Busha cattle, valued for their disease resistance and adaptation to alpine terrains. Documentation of traditional breeds of livestock.
- ◆ Combine veterinary genetic techniques with **herders' selection knowledge** based on behavior, stamina, and milk yield under natural conditions.
- ◆ Promote participatory breeding program involving both veterinarians and shepherd communities.



Role of Veterinary Experts in Pastoralists' Livestock Health and Management

3. Mobile & Community-Based Veterinary Services

- ❖ Establish **mobile veterinary units** to reach remote highland areas during transhumance seasons.
- ❖ Train **Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs)** or **Para-Vets** among youth herders, enabling first-response treatment and disease reporting. [TGI has conceptualized this project]
- ❖ Use mobile phones and digital tools to link pastoralists with veterinary centers in Kelmend, Tropojë, Puka, Elbasan, etc.



Role of Veterinary Experts in Pastoralists' Livestock Health and Management

4. Integration of Ethnoveterinary Knowledge

- ❖ Document and validate **traditional herbal remedies** (e.g., use of garlic, juniper berries, or mountain herbs for internal parasites and wounds).
- ❖ Encourage collaborative research between veterinarians and local elders to catalogue effective **folk veterinary practices**. (FRLH model)
- ❖ Incorporate **ethnoveterinary** approaches into national animal health extension materials and shepherd training programs.



Role of Veterinary Experts in Pastoralists' Livestock Health and Management

5. Capacity Building and Pastoral Training

- ❖ Train shepherds in improved animal health, hygiene, and nutrition management while valuing their indigenous expertise.
- ❖ Organize participatory workshops linking herders, veterinarians, and agricultural universities (e.g., Agricultural University of Tirana, Agri Colleges).
- ❖ Encourage intergenerational knowledge exchange on animal care, grazing routes, and environmental stewardship.



Role of Veterinary Experts in Pastoralists' Livestock Health and Management

6. Research, Innovation, and Resilience

- ❖ Conduct participatory field studies on disease ecology, nutrition, and climate resilience in mountain pastures.
- ❖ **Internships** to learn local wisdom of livestock management from shepherd families
- ❖ Explore the role of **traditional plant-based remedies** in veterinary pharmacology.
- ❖ Innovate in **climate-smart veterinary services**, blending indigenous and modern science for sustainable pastoral systems.



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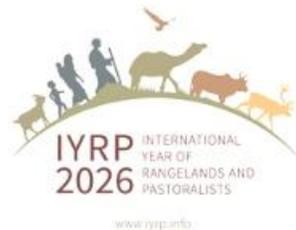
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Country Mobilization Team:

- 1- Mobilizing Shepherds (2-3)
- 2- Mobilizing NGO/CSO (1-2)
- 3- Mobilizing Academia and Research Institutions (1)
- 4- Mobilizing Trade Networks (1)
- 5- Mobilizing Media and PR (2-3)
- 6- Handling Social Media (3)
- 7- Solving Logistic Arrangements (1-2)
- 8- Mobilizing Volunteers (1-2)
- 9- Moderation with Government (1)
- 10- Main (Country) Coordinator (1)

What is expected from team members?

- a) Inspiration & motivation to contribute to shepherds;
- b) Ability to contribute time voluntarily to help the shepherds' movement;
- c) Competency and capacity to deliver the assigned function

How will you contribute?