



# Impact of the COVID -19 lockdown on pastoralists of Gujarat

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Centre for  
Pastoralism





## Centre for Pastoralism

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## List of Acronyms

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NDDB	National Dairy Development Board
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease or 2019-nCoV

# Impact of the lockdown on pastoralists of Gujarat

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Ovee Thorat <sup>1</sup> and Krutika Haraniya <sup>2</sup>

## Pastoralism in Gujarat

Archaeological studies have shown that pastoralism in Gujarat developed along with agriculture a few thousand years ago during the Harappan civilisation. Detailed archival and ethnographic studies show that the existence of routes through the Rann, going into the Sindh region, was heavily used for trade as well as for the pastures before the partition of India and Pakistan. The region also has a history of grasslands being managed for fodder and wildlife in reserves owned by local royal family members. Known as rakhaals, 48 of such grasslands were known to be present just in the district of Kachchh before India's independence. On the other hand, north Gujarat was an important region for the domestication of cattle as well as grasses such as millets. Saurashtra, a region along the southern coast of Gujarat, is also known for its sheep and goat. Gujarat is currently home to numerous pastoralist groups such as Rabaris, Maldharis, and Bharwad among others spread across Saurashtra, Kachchh, and North Gujarat with varying degrees of transhumance. They make up around 8-10% of the state population.

Saurashtra is comparatively hillier than other parts of Gujarat, with several scrublands used by Bharwad and Rabari pastoralists who mainly keep sheep and goats. Pastoralists here depend on reserve forests, cotton and other crop residues from agriculture, and some rakhaals or rangelands for grazing their animals. The forests are under the state forest department's control, while the rakhaals or rangelands are owned by powerful upper class and upper caste families. Access to fallows and farm residue is often acquired from farmers in exchange for manure. Access to rakhaals is allowed in return for cash payment which can at times be expensive for pastoralists. Apart from these forage sources, pastoralists who keep large livestock are also increasingly dependent on market-bought fodder and supplements, more so during summers and extended periods of drought.

Kachchh district in Gujarat is known for indigenous breeds of large livestock such as the Banni buffalo, Kankrej cattle, and Kharai camels that live among the coastal mangroves, the saline Rann, and large stretches of water-inundated grasslands. Being a drought-prone area, much of pastoralist migration is driven by seasonal changes in water and fodder availability. Many pastoralists travel hundreds of kilometres every year to access these resources and to maintain market linkages for selling milk, meat, and wool. Both shepherds and other pastoral communities

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that keep buffalo and cattle have developed years of relationship with the farming community, making the dairy and agricultural economy interdependent. Many pastoralists, especially the Rabaris who keep sheep, are mobile for most months, accessing agricultural residue and fodder in grazing commons and penning their animals on farmlands. Pastoralism in Gujarat is thus well-integrated with farming practices, rainfall patterns, and the social milieu of the landscape.

The migration pattern of pastoralists in Gujarat can be broadly classified into two kinds based on just the seasonal changes -- migration during and after the monsoon and migration during summer and droughts. During monsoon, pastoralists from low-lying areas of Kachchh migrate to higher grounds, often along the roads and village commons, to escape flooding and to access resources such as fodder and drinking water. These are mainly the Maldharis with large livestock breeds. Once monsoon sets in and fresh fodder grasses start growing, shepherds move into grasslands - including grazing commons and the fringes of protected grasslands. Migration during the dry season is mostly into agricultural fallows. Both small and large livestock depend on agricultural fallows and at times on protected grasslands managed by the forest department, and scrublands for fodder when the commons have comparatively less fodder. It is during these times that the relationships that have been built over years between pastoralists and farmers are crucial, especially for the large livestock that needs to stay in one place for a few months, often hundreds of kilometres from their homes awaiting the next cropping season. The most productive livestock is transported using trucks during this kind of migration and the rest of the herd is taken by foot. During droughts, many pastoralists in Gujarat depend on aid provided by NGOs and the state in forms of fodder and water supply, but there is also a history of change in form and amount of such aid depending on the changing priorities of the political party in power. Similarly, access to facilities such as health care and education is often compromised while on migration.

Pastoralists' access to fodder resources is becoming increasingly limited as most of these land categories have to compete with industrial expansion in the state that has been an integral part of the 'Gujarat model'. Studies have indicated for decades that the common property resources in Gujarat are undergoing degradation and need more inclusive management. Grazing commons face threats such as conversion into industrial areas, encroachment, diversion of land for green-energy projects, and afforestation projects that are premised on

the discourse that drylands are wastelands and open for development activities. This discourse has its roots in colonialism that even today adds to the marginalisation of both pastoral peoples and the dryland ecosystems they depend upon. For example, the large scale plantation of a South American species, *Prosopis juliflora*, undertaken by the Gujarat State Forest Department in the 1960s, aimed at stopping salinity ingress into the Banni grasslands. *Prosopis* has now taken over more than 40% of the Banni grassland. In other parts of Gujarat too, protected areas have led to top-down decisions without consideration of existing land uses. Grazing continues to be seen as a disturbance to the ecosystem despite numerous studies establishing positive and non-linear impacts of grazing, especially in grasslands used by migratory pastoralists where grazing pressure is distributed spatially and temporally.

The pastoralists in Gir in Junagadh district, though used as an example of coexistence of people and big carnivores like the Asiatic Lion, continue to have restricted access to pastures in protected areas and experience livestock depredation. These pastoralists have shown an ability to adapt to such changes and have constantly updated and built on their ecological knowledge and traditional practices, although there is rising insecurity over land tenure. The changes also seem to indicate that local institutions might not always be sufficient to provide security or have the authority and power to negotiate land use with other actors. Moreover, the complex ways in which pastoralists use land do not fit into clear categories of private, state, and common property. They instead form a hybrid and multi-layered system where access to resources is determined by shifts in power and the interactions between different actors. Therefore, what needs to be prioritised is an improvement of linkages of pastoralists with different groups and property systems, increasing the security of land tenure, and support during migration. For instance, restoring grazing commons in parts of the state through NGO-led community rights movements is one way this could be done. However, governance at a larger scale often ends up driving both positive and negative changes.

### **Gujarat's pastoralists and its dairy sector:**

India is the largest milk producer in the world in terms of volume, contributing close to 22% of global milk production. A large portion of this comes from dairy cooperatives that were established and developed as a result of the Operation Flood or the White revolution implemented in the 1970s which linked smallholders, agro-pastoralists, and nomadic pastoralists to the market. This was the world's largest dairy development project and was led by the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB). Over the years, the private dairy industry has also boomed. Although Gujarat is famous for the development of the dairy industry and establishment of dairy-cooperatives, there has been some criticism

of the way the programme was designed and implemented. Critics have pointed out that the programme failed to improve the incomes of participating people, led to a decline of existing informal production and marketing systems, and proved inadequate in empowering women. Studies show that the growing presence of large industrial houses with an interest in the Indian dairy sector might weaken previous programmes and potentially compromise existing practices, especially pastoral migration. Additionally, to meet the demands of the dairy industry in times of diminishing access to grazing lands, pastoralists increasingly depend on market-bought fodder. In some places such as Banni in Kachchh, pastoralists have started integrating rain-fed agriculture into pastoralism to be able to maintain access to land as well as support livestock in times of scarcity. While in Saurashtra, Bharwad and Sorathia Rabaris have shifted from managing goat and sheep to managing buffalo because of dairy intensification and the privilege of buffalo milk over goat milk.

## Survey Method

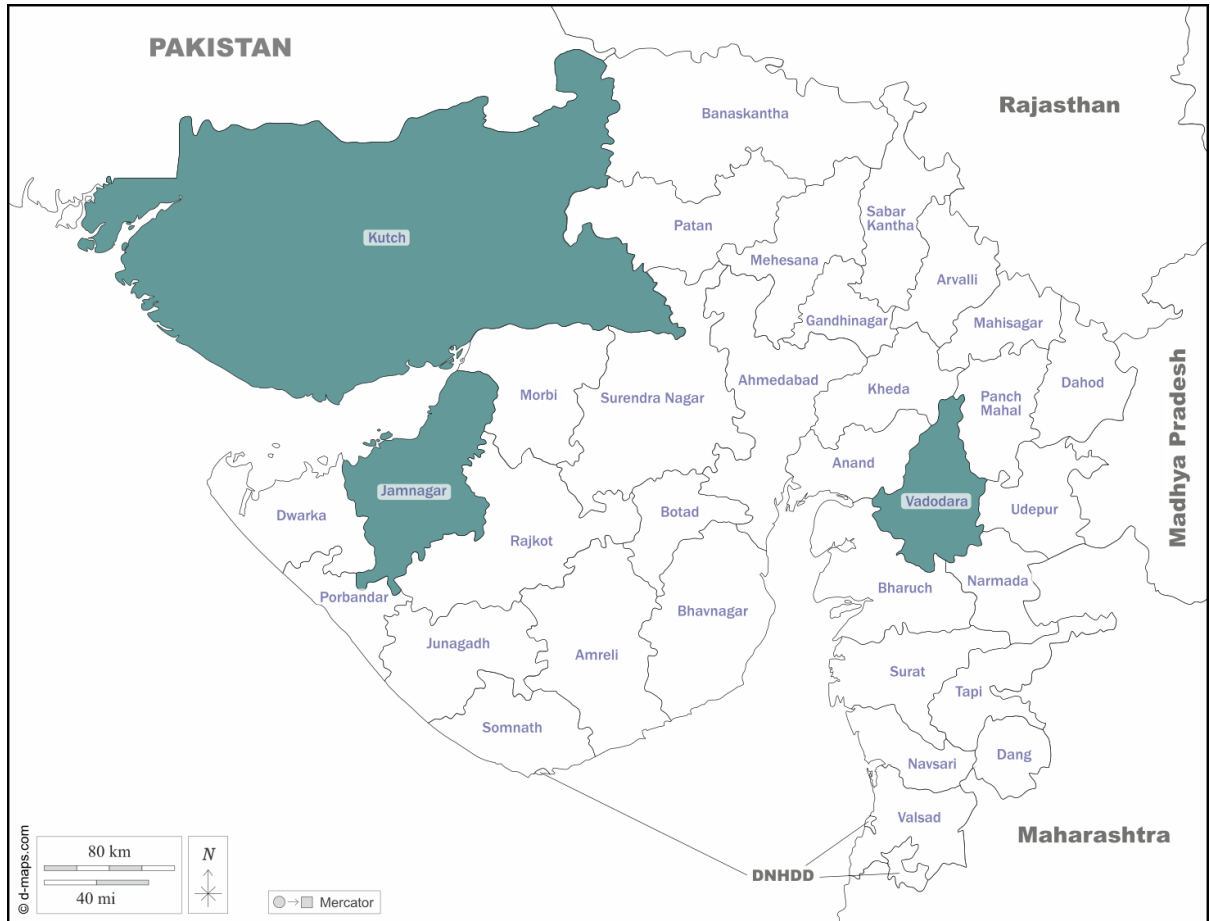
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Even as pastoralists continue to face many forms of difficulties in their work, 2020 brought a major challenge for them. The lockdown during the COVID-19 pandemic, though it affected several groups of people, posed significant challenges to pastoralists on account of curtailed movements and market closures. Both play an integral role in their sustenance. This study provides an analysis of the lockdown's impact on the pastoralists of Gujarat. The idea for conducting a detailed survey for this purpose emerged from an earlier pilot study conducted by the Centre for Pastoralism in April 2020. The findings of that study enabled us, a group of researchers, to identify the main issues that have been examined in this more detailed survey. These include impact of the lockdown on (i) movement of pastoralists, (ii) access to markets, (iii) changes in expenses and incomes (iv) situation of labour for herding (v) access to veterinary care services (vi) ration availability (vii) social stigma and (viii) perceptions about COVID-19's impact on livelihoods ( See Annexure II for questionnaire). This study therefore captures the multiple challenges faced by pastoralists of Gujarat during lockdown. It also shows how some pastoralists adapted to the changes and managed to continue to tide over this difficult period.

### **Outline of interviews**

We conducted 62 interviews; most respondents belonged to the Kachchh district, whereas two were from Jamnagar and two from Vadodara. The ethnic groups we could include in this study -- considering the limitations of access and existing networks -- were Rabari (also known as Raika), Fakirani Jatts, Bharwads, Bhopas, and the Maldharis of Banni. Of the 62 interviews, nine were conducted with Dhebaria Rabari, 20 with Waghadia Rabari, 20 with Fakirani Jatt, two with Bhopa Rabaris,

five with Bahrwads and six with the Banni Maldharis. Most interviews were conducted telephonically, only 16 were conducted in person. Seven respondents were women and the rest were men. All interviews were conducted from June-September 2020.



Map 1: District map of Gujarat. Highlighted districts indicate the study area. Map prepared using D-Maps.com, accessed via [https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num\\_car=8623&lang=en](https://d-maps.com/carte.php?num_car=8623&lang=en)



Image 1: Krutika Haraniya and Setu field staff interviewing Maldharis outside Kanthkot. Photograph by Khimji Kanthecha

# Findings

## Nature of livestock and migration in interviewed regions

### Herd type and size

Most Wagadia Rabaris keep goats and sheep while some keep camels. Amongst those interviewed, the average herd size was 259 goats/sheep or 60 camels. Two breeds of camels were maintained by the Rabaris - the Kharai and Kachchhi camels. Both are known for their ability to survive in harsh environments, but the Kharai camel is specifically known for its ability to live in waterlogged, marshy conditions. Fakirani Jatts too mainly keep camels with an average herd size of 52. The Dhebaria Rabaris, known for their high mobility, mainly keep sheep and goats with an average flock size of around 330 animals. The Maldharis from Banni mostly rear the Banni buffalo, known for its high productivity and hardiness, and the Kankrej cattle, also known for its hardiness and its ability to travel long distances. Only one Maldhari respondent kept sheep and goats. Those who kept Banni buffalo and Kankrej cattle had an average herd of 80 animals.

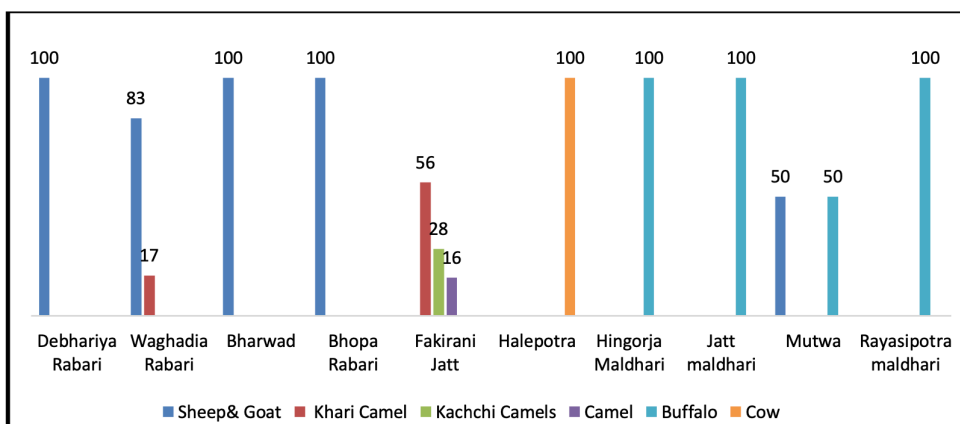


Figure 1: Livestock composition of respondents (percentage wise)



Image 2: A Kharai camel feeding on Suaeda shrubs in the Rann. Photograph by Ovee Thorat.



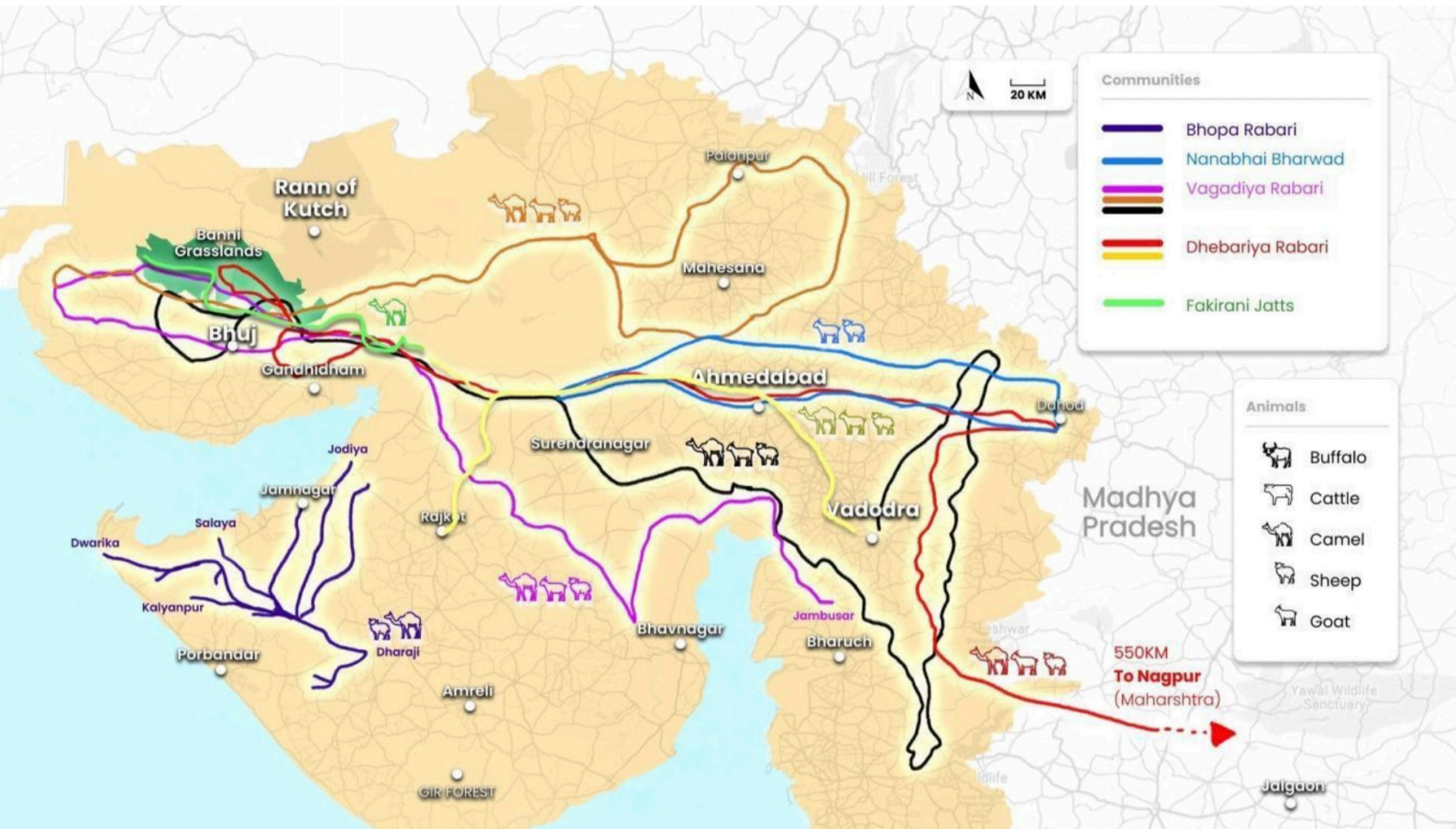
Image 3: A herd of buffalo and cows in Banni. Photograph by Ovee Thorat.

## Migratory routes

The Fakirani Jatts, Rabaris and Maldharis follow separate routes during their seasonal migration.

The Fakirani Jatts from Jangi spend two months of the monsoon in the mangroves. Post monsoon, they migrate to Banni for two months. Their route moves through the following places: Vond, Vendana, Kunariya, Kunjsar, Meghpur, Nani & Moti Bandhani, Ner, Lakhara, Dudhai, Dhamadaka. Morghar, Kothai, Drang, Sumrasar, Khadva road, Loriya, Juriya, Nirona, Sherwa, Bhagadia, Chachla, Haji Peer.<sup>3</sup> They return to Jangi following the same route. When there is a drought or drought-like situation these pastoralists do not go to Banni. The camels instead graze in and around the farmland in Jangi, Ambaliara, Chardoro, Bachchau, and Vend. Or they go into the sea. Some also migrate to Kataria, Vandiya, Shikarpur, and Suraj bari (See map 1).

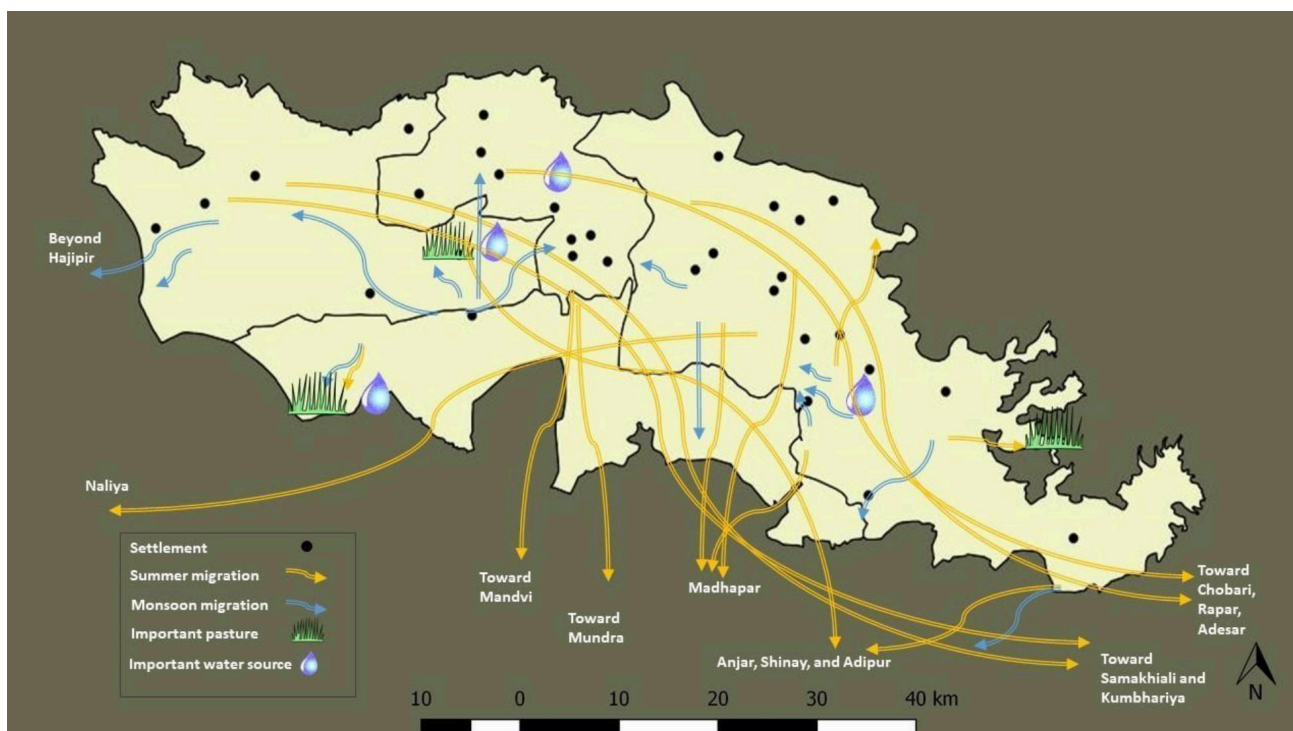
<sup>3</sup> The names have been written in the order of crossing.



Map 2: Migration routes used by pastoralists in Gujarat.

Vaghadia Rabaris start migrating out of Kachchh from their villages in Rapar and Bhachau areas to Madiya, Halvad, Suraj Bari (which is the exit point from Kachchh) and move either towards Ahmedabad, Vadodara or

they move to Kathiawad, Rajkot. Dhebariya Rabaris migrate along similar routes. Both communities begin moving from Kachchh after the Navratni festival and come back before the rains. Depending on the rains and grazing land available, the herders might not even migrate. The Maldharis of Banni travel within Banni for grazing. Migration outside Banni takes place only during droughts or harsh summers. Pastoralists from low-lying areas also move to higher places within Banni for a couple of months during the monsoon (See Map 2).



Map 3: Migration patterns in Banni.

### Impact on movement

Rabaris migrate out of Kachchh depending on the rains. Last year, because of adequate rains, fodder was readily available than in drier years, so some of them did not leave Kachchh. Herders who left Kachchh in 2020 faced interruption in their movement due to the presence of state officials who were stopping movement from one district to another. None of the Maldharis reported facing difficulties in moving around as most did not migrate.



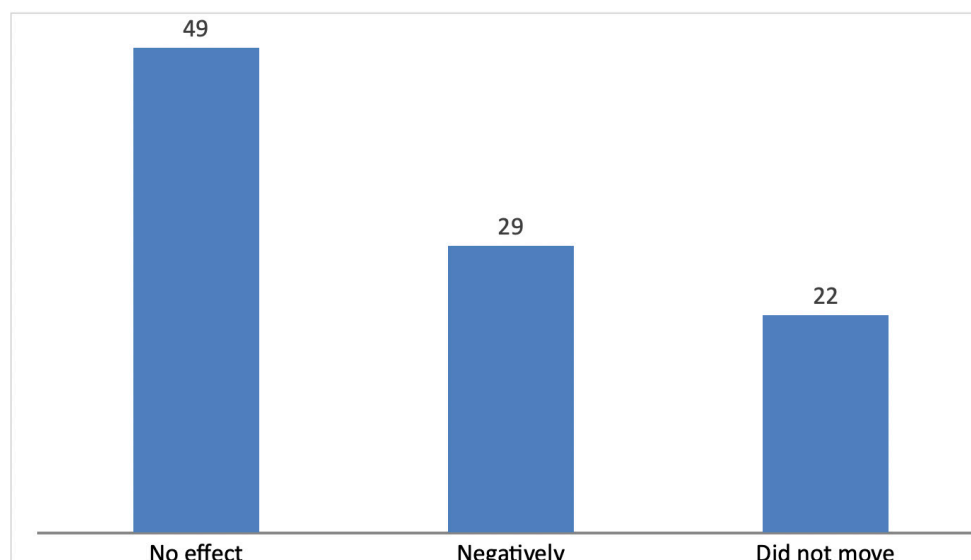


Figure 2: Impact of lockdown on movement of pastoralists (percentage-wise)

Around 29% of respondents mentioned that their movement was affected by the lockdown. The reasons for this ranged from movement restrictions to negative treatment from villagers who either asked the pastoralists to move away or not enter the village area. For example, a Dhebariya Rabari reported, “During lockdown, we were 15-20 kms away from Khara Pashvarya. When we wanted to go to other villages, they created problems. They said that we will bring Coronavirus and did not let us access drinking water for our animals. We decided to graze near our village in the seems (village commons and grazing lands), where villagers knew that we are from nearby villages and they let us stay.”

### Fodder and water availability

Most respondents reported that they do not purchase fodder normally but had to do so due to restrictions on movement. The Rabaris (both Waghadia and Dhebaria) reported they usually graze in the village commons, fallows, and forest lands, and do not purchase fodder. It is only when they leave Kachchh that they graze in the cotton, castor, and sugarcane fields of Kachchh. This year, however, they were forced to buy fodder. A total of 33% of Debhariya Rabaris and 11% of Waghadia Rabaris reported they had no choice but to buy fodder. The movement restrictions also forced them to return to Kachchh earlier than normal, at a time when there was insufficient fodder to graze, forcing them to purchase fodder. These words of a Dhebariya Rabari sums up the situation - “We don’t buy fodder every year, but we bought Rs. 20,000 worth of fodder this year when the lockdown happened. We have to feed the animals...we can’t starve them.” Pastoralists who bought fodder in normal years too reported that their purchase of fodder was affected during lockdown due to increased costs of transport and purchase.

Banni Maldharis reported they regularly purchase fodder and shared they faced difficulties in transporting their purchased fodder. The lack of



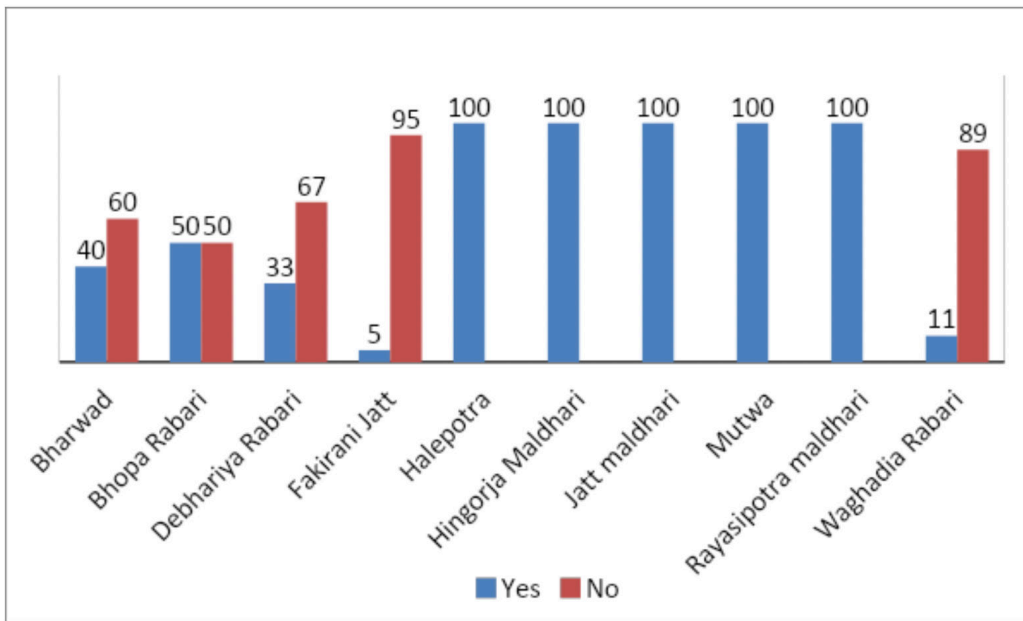


Figure 3: Herder responses w.r.t. purchasing fodder (percentage wise)

transport facilities resulted in a hike in fodder prices. A 50 kg bag of khod (oil seed cakes) was sold at Rs. 1800, and a similar bag of bhoosa (wheat husk) was priced at around Rs. 1200 for the initial few days. These prices were almost double the usual rates.

Camel herders usually do not purchase fodder as camels (Kharai) graze on the mangroves and are near the seacoast. Some of them also believe that it is kudrat (a word used to refer to nature as well as divine power) that gives and takes, that it was because of kudrat that the virus had spread and it was also kudrat that helped them survive during the lockdown. For example, a few of the Fakirani Jatt respondents had this to say about the pandemic: -

“When there will be paap (sins) in the world, Kudrat is going to do its work. When we burn dry grass, the green grass also burns with it. In the same way, the actions of some people are making this world suffer from the Coronavirus.”

“Corona we don’t know...we don’t understand, but we know that this is going on in the world. We are saved by our malik (God) (Amne malik ee bachavya che). This kudrat will save us further.”

Only one Fakirani Jatt respondent who owned camels and buffalos had to buy fodder worth around Rs. 35,000 to support his buffalos.

# Impact on revenue and expenditure

## Sale of milk, meat, and wool affected

As is clear from the graph below, most respondents with cattle reported facing difficulties while selling milk. This includes all Maldharis, Bhopa Rabaris, and Halepotras. Additionally, 20% of Bharwads, 22% of Debhariya Rabaris, 30% of Fakirani Jatts, and 32% of Waghadia Rabaris faced problems in selling milk during the lockdown. The milk cooperatives had stopped functioning for a couple of days and later were taking milk in small quantities and at low prices. Most goat/sheep herders do not sell their milk and use it for their own consumption. They make ghee from the milk and sometimes sell it or give it away as a gift. A litre of this ghee is sold for around Rs. 800. Only eight goat/sheep herders reported they sell milk in normal times to the village dairies but during lockdown these dairies were closed. As a result, they were unable to sell milk. The camel herders too faced problems in the transportation of milk even though the camel milk dairies were functioning. They had to take their own vehicle (motorcycles) to transport milk which increased their cost. Most of them had to travel 45-60 kms to supply milk to the dairies. Some herders stopped supplying milk as they were unable to fulfil the minimum requirements of milk supply needed by the dairy.

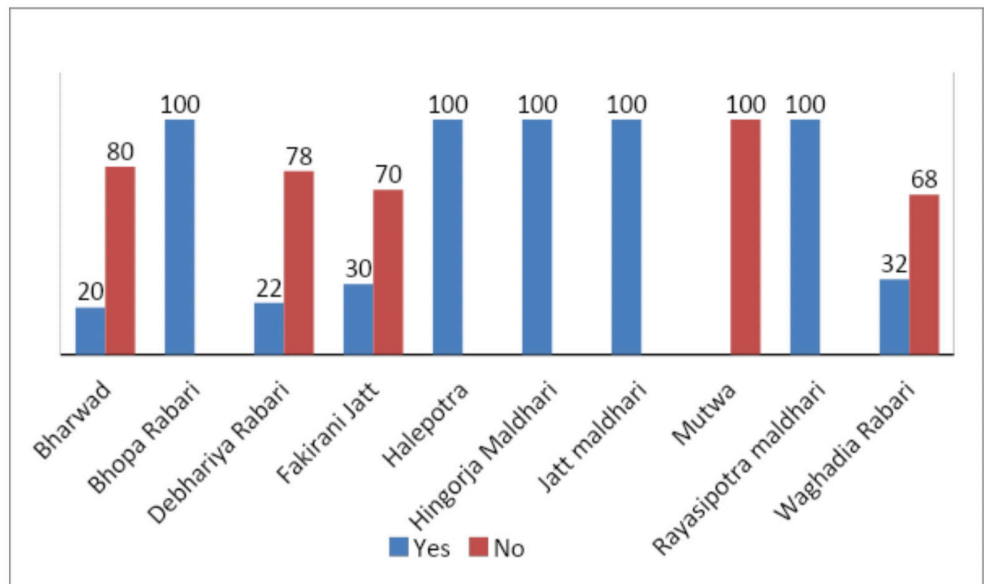


Figure 4: Herder responses w.r.t. difficulties faced in sale of milk (percentage wise)

The meat market was also affected by the lockdown. After 3-4 months, the Rabaris started selling animals to local dealers or to people from around the village but at significantly low prices; in some instances prices were half of what they used to be in pre-COVID-19 times. Some herders were forced to undertake distress sales to meet their subsistence requirements.

Two Rabaris said they started selling milk during lockdown, which they had never done earlier, to earn money for survival. Most respondents who kept goat and sheep reported that earlier they used to sell an animal for around Rs. 5,000. This year, the price had dropped by around 50% during the lockdown. Selling animals, either for meat, breeding, or for milking, became difficult and almost all communities faced problems, barring a few respondents.

Some pastoralists faced difficulties in getting their wool sheared during the lockdown as shearers who usually help them with shearing could not come due to the restrictions on movement. In the few instances when shearers did come, they charged money for shearing. A Rabari respondent said- "Shearers come from Deesha. They came this year as well but asked for money in return. We gave Rs. 10-15 per animal and threw away the wool. There is no demand for wool. We paid him (shearer) money and covered the expenses for his food and tea. Earlier Vyaparis (dealers/traders) used to come and take wool, at times along with the animals as well, or else we throw away the wool. There is no demand for it." A respondent also reported that there was a time when he used to get Rs.40-45 per kg of wool but now there is no demand at all. The decline in wool demand is part of a larger trend in the region, but there is no denying that this problem became even worse during the lockdown.

## **Veterinary care**

Another continuing issue that got exacerbated during the lockdown was access to veterinary care. A total of 62% respondents reported that they could not access any kind of veterinary care services in this period. Pastoralists who keep large livestock like buffalo, cattle and camels do not usually depend too much on regular veterinary care. They were thus not that affected by the lockdown. But those who keep small ruminants did face problems in accessing good veterinary doctors and medicines. Only 14% of respondents could access a doctor while 24% could access medicines. However, the condition of veterinary services in the region, even under normal circumstances, does not function properly. As one respondent mentioned, "A few years back my maal (referring to his animals) became lulla (paralysed/could not walk) and they were dying. Someone came and gave us medicines, but the medicines were khoti (substandard quality) and my maal continued to die. We do not take medicines now."

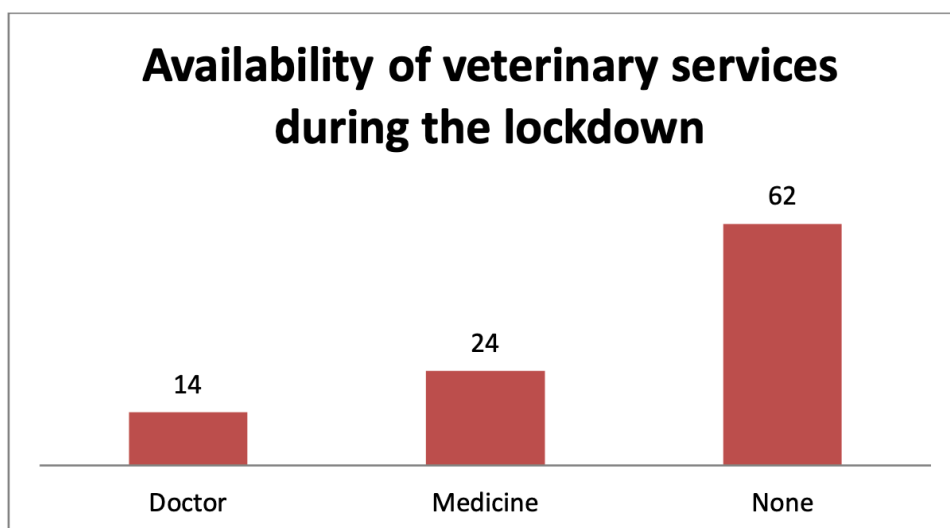


Figure 5: Herder responses w.r.t. availability of veterinary care during the lockdown (percentage wise)

### Social Stigma

Herders who left Kachchh faced social stigma and problems most acutely. Twelve out of 38 Rabaris reported facing social stigma. Though none of the Fakirani Jatts reported facing social stigma, they mentioned they faced difficulties staying at one place for a long time during their migration. The villagers were afraid of COVID-19 transmission by the pastoralists due to their mobile lifestyle and discriminated against them by treating them as pariahs. Most of them decided to return to Kachchh earlier than usual. The following table shows some of the reports of stigma or discrimination experienced by the respondents.

Table 1 Herder responses related to social stigma

Waghadia Rabari	"Sometimes people would not let us enter the villages to take ration. They feared that we will bring the disease to them since we go to many places."
Waghadia Rabari	"Nobody said no to us staying in the <i>vagada</i> (outside the village) but when we came into the village for ration some people created problems and did not let us in."
Dhebariya Rabari	"Yes, people were afraid that we would bring Coronavirus into their villages. They did not allow us in their villages to get ration, grind our flour or even fetch water for our animals. Eventually we decided to go to our village."

Fakirani Jatt	“When we were grazing our animals, 2-4 people from the village asked us not to graze there. Other Maldhari herding goats/sheep too would tell us not to graze there and ask us to return to our village but there is no <i>vagada</i> in our village. We asked them to let us stay for 15 days... however we were forced to keep moving and were able to stop at a single place for not more than two days to get by.”
Maldhari	“While travelling from Bhuj to Banni in buses, they didn’t allow us to travel in groups. They also made us deboard the bus halfway through the journey and didn’t cooperate with us at all. We also faced harassment from the police. The fine for not wearing masks was increased from Rs. 500 to 1,000. If one of us was not wearing a mask while we were with the herds, or going to buy groceries, the police officials used to harass us. They would impose fines and even imprison a few of us. We were more afraid of the police than of Coronavirus”.

### Comparison to others and quality of life

Pastoralists had varying responses when asked to compare their experience of COVID-19 and the lockdown with that of others. The “others” that they identified included shop-keepers, farmers, and city folk. We received mixed responses with some interviewees saying they were better off while another section felt that they were worse off than others. Respondents who thought they were better off argued that since they were able to live in open surroundings, and were not too dependent on the market system as their livestock could meet their sustenance requirements, they were in a better position. Another factor for this optimistic view was that they did not have any case of COVID-19 in their family. As opposed to the cities where the density of Coronavirus cases was higher. Those who thought they were worse off mainly felt so because of the way their sales were affected. Some also felt that everyone was equally affected by the pandemic.

Most Rabari respondents reported that they were worse off than others, whereas most Maldharis and Fakirani Jatts reported that they were better off. Rabaris felt the burden of not being able to provide for their families. Many respondents expressed that they faced higher expenses in general during the pandemic. People incurred a higher expenditure on food and medicine due to increased costs during lockdown. They also faced higher expenses for transport. Limited availability of public transport facilities translated into higher expenditure as people were forced to rely on private vehicles for this purpose.

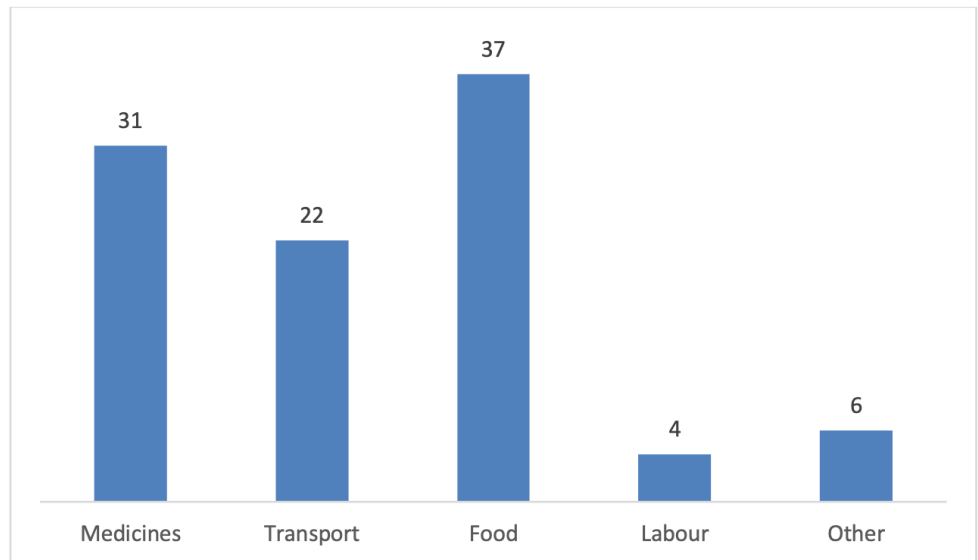


Figure 6: Herder responses w.r.t. experiencing higher expenditure during the lockdown (percentage wise)

## Conclusion

### Old and new challenges

One of the first impacts of the strict lockdown was the emergence of barriers in the movement of pastoralists and their livestock across district and state borders. This affected some pastoralists negatively. However, there were some associated impacts too. Most pastoralists that we interviewed did not receive help from the state government in rations and faced issues getting their dairy supplies due to lack of transport and curfews. Difficulty in selling milk was the second most important issue faced by pastoralists after the unavailability of rations. Other issues faced were related to the lack of medical facilities, fear of the future, and the sale of animals.

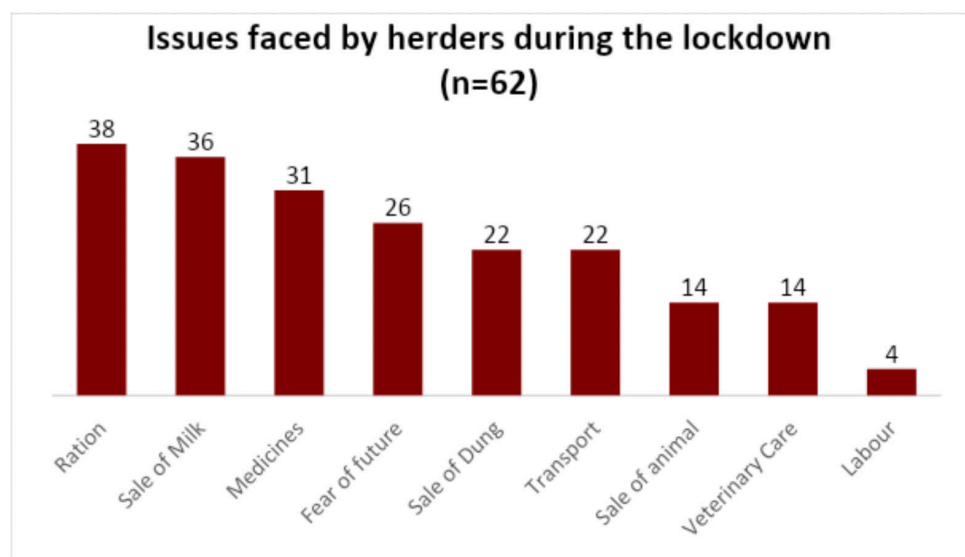


Figure 7: Issues reported by pastoralists in Gujarat during the pandemic (percentage-wise)

In addition, the first lockdown was in the summer when pastoralists in Gujarat, especially those in Kachchh, face water supply related issues. Not having enough water and fodder means loss of productivity in livestock. The buffalos produce less milk, which leads to lesser returns from the market. One Maldhari community leader said, "Access to water is the main issue. We depend on piped water for our buffalos. Currently, there's very little supply. We are not able to go to the police station or a political leader's office in Bhuj city (around 65 kms away) to complain or talk about it as we would have done earlier. Politicians can now be carefree."

Even though the state has a history of dairy development programmes, the pastoralists in Gujarat faced a reduction in the market price of milk even while supplying to cooperatives. Some shifted to supplying milk to private dairies that gave slightly better prices, some converted it into buttermilk and ghee (clarified butter) for consumption at home and better storage. Finding transport to supply their products to the markets was also a challenge when there was restriction on the use of vehicles during the lockdown. On the other hand, the issue of reducing wool demand and difficulties in getting shearing done are long-standing problems faced by communities. The wool-industry in this region must be revived with support from government, non-governmental, and private entities to ensure that their wool is valued again.

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed pastoralists' vulnerabilities driven by India's current economic and political approaches. The drop in milk and meat prices and inability of the market to function during the pandemic exhibit the risks that are borne by pastoralists - especially in the current scenario where pastoralism has undergone commodification. Pastoralists are at times portrayed as a community that can adapt to ecological, economic, and political fluctuations. This survey shows that although pastoralists find ways of persisting in a dynamic environment, they are also increasingly vulnerable due to limitations on their resource rights, which has varying impacts on their lives.

In India, pastoralists have been struggling for long due to limited access to pastures and political marginalisation - both of which were exacerbated by the lockdown and the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, they also have to bear the burdens of rapid state-led initiatives for the commodification of their livelihoods. The latest effort towards this is the Indian Government's plans to create an 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' or self-sufficient India. In this plan, the dairy sector is viewed as full of potential for further expansion to increase exports of milk and milk-products. The chief of Amul, the leading dairy cooperative in India that became a model for NDDB, declared in September 2020 that the dairy sector can produce 1.2 crore jobs in the next 10 years if it expands to supply milk to the world. However, the challenges faced by livestock-keepers who supply the chief raw material to this industry remain unaddressed. For instance, in Banni grasslands in Gujarat, transhumant pastoralists need to buy fodder and supplements from the market to maintain their animals' productivity levels so that

milk-supply to dairies remains intact. On the other hand, they still lack rights over land and access to resources. Given the nature of the landscape that they depend on and their way of life, pastoralists still lack the agency to demand rights of access to resources which fluctuate spatially and temporally. If the state continues to neglect their difficulties and lays emphasis only on the commodification of pastoral livelihoods, even during this pandemic, it will have serious impacts on this environmentally sustainable lifestyle.

## Annexure I

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### Summary of findings from a telephonic survey undertaken by CfP in April 2020

#### 1. Restrictions on movement

Pastoralist migrations were halted by state governments either temporarily or for the entire year, on the assumption that all movements held the potential for transmission of the virus, and hence represented a threat to communities that pastoralists interacted with. In some instances, pastoral communities were able to convince governments to permit them to continue with their migrations. Others, such as the Van Gujjars of Uttarakhand were banned from moving to their summer pastures for the entire year, and were forced to either stall feed their buffaloes or find alternative grazing arrangements within the lower altitudes. Either option resulted in higher costs but also significantly reduced animal productivity. The Himachal government was particularly proactive in supporting pastoralist movement, because for the most part herders travel alone and tend to spend time in relative isolation, reducing the likelihood of viral transmission.

#### b). Accessing markets:

Pastoralist communities across states spoke of the difficulties of accessing milk, meat and feed markets, all closed due to the national lockdown. Some surplus milk was being converted into ghee and buttermilk, but as the weather warmed, even these products needed to be disposed of to avoid spoilage. The closure of meat markets had implications for immediate cash flows but did not represent the loss of a crop, such as may have been experienced by milk-selling pastoralists or by farmers with perishable, fresh produce.

#### c) Shortage of Labour:

In some instances, herders had returned home in February to attend to family functions or to help with cultivation. Post the imposition of restrictions, these herders were unable to move to where their herds were, resulting in a significant shortage of labour in managing the herds. Many herders also reported instances of hired labour choosing to return



to home, owing to the limited information available on the pandemic and the associated desire to be close to home during this period of uncertainty

**d) Shearing sheep:**

Sheep need to be sheared just before the onset of summer, and this is generally undertaken by shearers not necessarily part of the herding community. When sheep are not shorn, ahead of the summer heat, there are heightened levels of sickness within the herd. Owing to the lockdown, shearers were simply unable to travel to where the sheep were located. While the Himachal government was ultimately able to facilitate shearer travel to the herds, in most States shearing operations were badly impacted. Many herders spoke of the likely impact of the lockdown and its aftermath on the import of wool and on the export of woollen carpets and durries.

**e) Obtaining ration**

Pastoralists on the move normally obtain ration from village kirana shops or from shops in small towns. Pastoralists across the country spoke of the fact that villagers, normally welcoming, were wary of potential transmission of COVID and were often unwilling to have transient pastoralists enter the village. In instances where the state was providing ration, pastoralists tended to miss out since they were on the outskirts of villages or were grazing their animals at some distance from human habitation.

**f) Social Stigma:**

Pastoralists from various parts of the country reported that they experienced a great deal of social stigma on account of their religion or their nomadic lifestyle. Gujjars in Chamba, Himachal Pradesh and from the Rishikesh/Haridwar areas in Uttarakhand faced ostracism as minorities and had difficulty in selling milk and in embarking on their annual migrations. In both instances, there were rumours to the effect that their milk carried the coronavirus and so customers should not buy their milk. Pastoralist mobility in itself has been causing social stigma for many decades and reports from across the country indicate this was accentuated throughout the lockdown.

**g) Pastoralism, Resilience and COVID-19:**

Several pastoralists mentioned that they may have experienced fewer negatives resulting from the lockdown than many other with rural livelihoods. This is likely linked to the fact that pastoral communities have historically needed to adapt to climatic, political and other changes. Pastoralist adaptability may have played a role in mitigating to some degree the various issues listed above.

## Annexure II

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### Questionnaire to understand how pastoralists have fared under COVID-19

Code (State letters, followed by 1st three letters of Community name, followed by serial number of interview, in two digits – e.g. GUJRAB01)

Interviewers name

Date

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- |                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| a. Name                      | b. M/F                                     |
| c. Community                 | d. Phone #                                 |
| 1. Home Location             | 2. Current Location                        |
| 3. Aadhaar Card Y/N          | 4. Bank account Y/N                        |
| 5. Migratory Y/N             | 6. Owner/helper?                           |
| 7. Are you with the herd Y/N | 8. What animals do you manage?             |
| 9. Herd size                 | 10. Were you on migration during LckDn Y/N |

On each of the following please describe your normal practice and how this is affected because of the COVID epidemic:

#### A. Obtaining forage/water

1. What is your normal pattern of migration at this time? Do you cross district or state boundaries?
2. Has your movement been interrupted this year? Positively/Negatively?
3. Where have you obtained forage and water this year (village commons, Forest Department land, Protected Area, cultivated land, purchased, others?)
4. Do you normally purchase fodder? Were you able to do so this year?

#### B. Revenues/Expenditures

1. During lockdown have you had difficulty in the following:
  - a) Sale of milk and milk products
  - b) Sale of animals
  - c) Sale of wool
    - i) Difficulties with shearing?
    - ii) Getting wool to markets?
  - d) Penning
2. Has COVID/lockdown caused a fluctuation in the rates you receive for produce?

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3. Where have these expenses changed (medicines, food, water, transport, alcohol, labour)?

4. Has COVID had an impact on your earnings?

A bit, Medium, A lot

#### **C. Labour**

1. What is the normal labour requirement? How much of this is hired labour?

2. What is the situation during lockdown? (could not come, had to leave, stranded?)

#### **D. Veterinary care**

1. What are the normal veterinary services that you access? Health camps, doctors, medicines, vaccinations?

2. Are these services available during lockdown?

#### **E. General Questions (Rations, health care, places to stay, social stigma)**

1. Where do you normally get your rations while on migration?

2. What difficulties have you encountered because of the lockdown?

3. What state or other support has been available to ensure you have adequate ration?

4. Were you required to carry a Coronavirus free certificate? Where were you required to show such a certificate? Did you need permission to move?

5. Have you experienced difficulties in finding places to camp during the lockdown?

6. Have you experienced social stigma? Please elaborate?

#### **F. Open-ended**

1. During COVID have you been better off or worse off than other rural communities (agriculture, settled livestock keepers)... Can you compare your situation with others from your community who have moved out of herding?

2. What are your hopes and fears with regard to the next 6-12 months?

3. Do you have anything to add?

#### **G. Additional Comments by interviewer**



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