



Impact of the COVID -19 lockdown on pastoralists of Ladakh

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Study design: Dr. Anita Sharma, Dr. Ashwini Kulkarni,
Dr. Ovee Thorat, and Dr. Vasant Saberwal

Author: Stanzin Namgail

Data entry, calculations and graphs: Ashish Gutthe

Map 2 by Janastu

Compiled by: Dr. Radhika Chatterjee

Designed by: Shruti Jain

Copy edited by: Chhani Bungsut

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Centre for Pastoralism

155 Shah Pur Jat Village

3rd Floor

New Delhi 110049

www.centreforpastoralism.org



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List of Acronyms

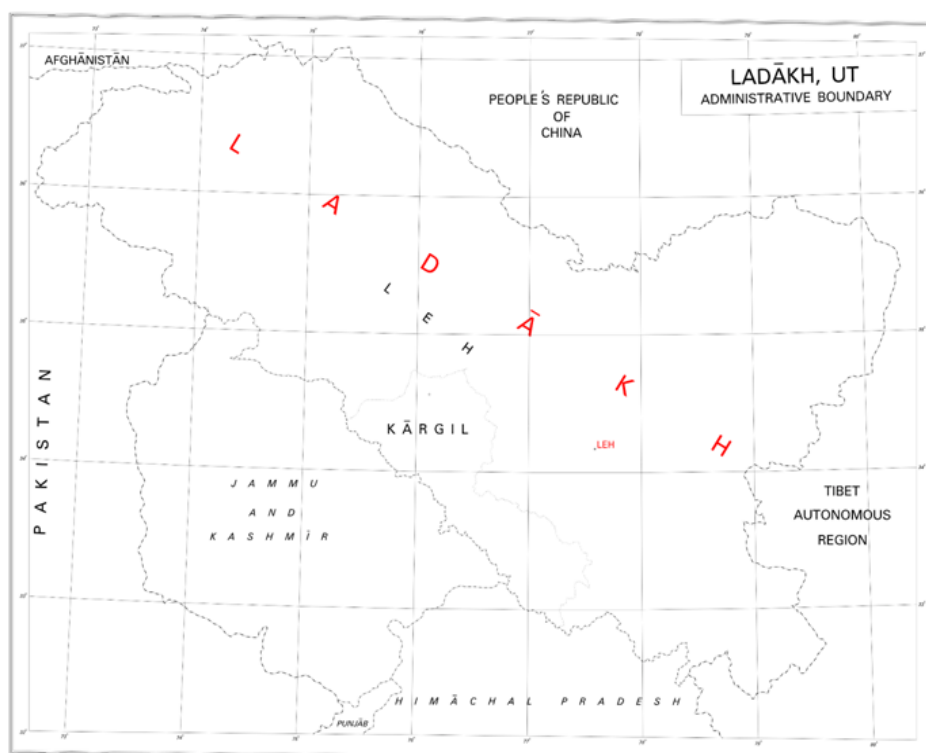
UT	Union Territory
LAHDC	Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
SDM	Sub-Divisional Magistrate
ACGPMS	All Changthang Pashmina Grower Marketing Society
BPL	Below Poverty Line
AAY	Antyodaya Anna Yojana
PDS	Public Distribution System
PHC	Public Health Centre
ITBP	Indo-Tibetan Border Police
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
GRAF	General Reserve Engineer Force
BRO	Border Roads Organisation
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease or 2019-nCoV

Impact of the lockdown on Changthang, Ladakh

Stanzin Namgail ¹

Ladakh is a Union Territory (UT) located in the northernmost part of the country. It was formerly a part of the Jammu & Kashmir state until 2019. Ladakh has been referred to as Maryul (red land) and Kha-chan-pa (snow land), terms that are rooted in the region's unique ecology. The region is also known as the 'broken moon land', the 'land of endless discovery', the 'western Tibet', the 'land of passes', and the 'land of lamas'. This area has been mentioned as Kia-chha and Ma-lo-pho by Fa-Hien and Hiuen Tsang respectively (Maan 1986).

Ladakh has two districts — Kargil in the west and Leh in the east. Between the two, Kargil is less important from a pastoral perspective. Spreading 45,110 sq. km, Leh constitutes a major part of Ladakh. Besides being the second largest district in the country, it is amongst the coldest and highest inhabited regions of the world. It has 112 inhabited villages, and the altitude ranges from 2,900 to 5,900 meters (LAHDC 2011). Leh is bordered by Chinese Sinkiang in the north, Tibet in the east and Lahaul and Spiti districts in Himachal Pradesh, to the south. The entire district is mountainous with three parallel Himalayan ranges — Karakoram, Ladakh and Zaskar. Between these ranges run the Shayok, Indus and Zaskar rivers respectively. Most of Leh's population lives in the valleys formed by these rivers.



¹ Assistant Professor, GDC Nubra, University of Ladakh.

Email: stanzinstakpa@gmail.com

Map 1: Map of Ladakh. Map prepared by Survey General of India, accessed via <https://static.pib.gov.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/UT%20Ladakh.pdf>

Changthang

The Changthang Plateau borders China and occupies a strategic position from a military standpoint. It is part of the Indian Trans-Himalaya and forms the western extension of the Tibetan Plateau, which is an important highland grazing system. Changthang occupies the upper reaches of the Indus (Nyoma) and Shayok (Durbuk) rivers and their tributaries. Besides the plateau, it comprises mountains separating the main drainage courses. This region is a cold desert, with a short summer and Arctic-like winter. These extended winters result in the Changthang Plateau having an extremely short growing season, remaining covered under a blanket of ice and snow for six months in a year. It is known for its sparse vegetation with a biotope containing wetlands, grasslands, and marshes that host indigenous and migratory birds and an assemblage of large mammals that is unique within the Indian Himalayas. For this reason it is also one of India's listed "biodiversity" regions. Low productivity in Changthang has resulted in a low density of human populations, however there is a stiff competition for forage resources between wildlife and domesticated animals (Rajashekariah 2013). Administratively Changthang is divided into two sub-divisions, Nyoma and Durbuk, considered to be among the more economically and educationally backward regions in Leh .

Table 1: Administrative Units in Changthang

5 Councillors	Constituencies: 1. Nyoma 2. Korzok 3. Kungyam 4. Tangtse 5. Chushul The 5 councillors of the entire Changthang region comprising 20 % of the total councillors at the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council, Leh.
2 Sub Divisions	1. Nyoma 2. Durbuk
2 Tehsils	1. Nyoma 2. Durbuk
4 Community Development Blocks	1. Durbuk 2. Nyoma 3. Rong-Chumathang 4. Rupsho – Puga
32 Revenue Nambardars	Consisting of more than hundred hamlets
4 NABARD	1. Anley 2. Chumathang 3. Nyoma 4. Durbuk
24 Revenue Villages	As listed in the District Statistical Handbook 2018-19
20 Panchayat Halqas	As listed in the District Statistical Handbook 2018-19
6 Patwari Halqas	As listed in the District Statistical Handbook 2018-19

Pastoralism in Ladakh

Nomadic pastoralism has been a way of life in this harsh terrain for at least the past couple of centuries, if not longer. Ladakhi Changthang, an area of approximately 21,000 square kilometres (Jina 1995, 1999; Bhasin 1996) is situated at an average altitude of 4,000 meters above sea level. All inhabitants of Changthang are designated as a part of the Changpa tribe, some of whom continue a nomadic way of life, particularly in the Rupshu and Kharnak areas of Changthang. In recent times a large number of Changthang's inhabitants have adopted semi-nomadism as a new strategy of livelihood.

In the present context, many have settled in particular villages like Kargyam, Phobrang, Tsaga, and Chushul, built concrete houses, and own private property including land. Others still move with herds for fodder in the upper valleys, coordinating their movements according to the Tibetan calendar. Herds are also moved according to the seasons and the availability of forage. In the summer, they travel to high ground where rainfall is heavier and grasses are more luxuriant; in the harsh winter, when temperatures drop to -30°C, they retreat to their villages

In this study, we will discuss the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown on pastoralism and pastoral communities of this region. Further, we discuss the ecological management, land use patterns and types of livestock in the area. The land-use pattern becomes important in the context of herder movements during the lockdown and the changing demographic profile and evolving lifestyle from pastoralism to sedentarisation. Pastoral grazing takes place across several land categories—including common rangelands, village rangelands, private pasturelands and protected rangelands. We also discuss access to resources (fuel and fodder), the calendar of camp rotation every year among pastoral communities, and veterinary care services in the region.

The Changpas are semi-nomadic pastoralists and have been economically dependent on livestock (though rarely subsistent for their own food) for several generations. The degree of dependence may vary seasonally, annually and by the community. Agro-pastoralists have a lower absolute dependence on pastoralism per se. Pastoral nomads, on the other hand, are focussed more or less exclusively on managing herds to meet their livelihood requirements. They move their herds between different pastures, depending on the season, rather than looking to feed their livestock on harvested or bought fodder (Hudson and Hudson 1980). Sedentarisation among the Changpa tribe is increasing due to the availability of new economic avenues in the region.

On one hand, tourism is growing with every passing year, while on the other employment opportunities in restaurants, trekking and tour operations are rising. In addition, the growing conflict between the Indian and Chinese armies has led to a higher presence of both the Indian Armed Forces and the Border Road Organisation in the area. Both have led to an increasing demand for labour to serve as porters.

Table 2: Demographic status

Source: The District Statistical Handbook 2018-19

Blocks	Population (As per the 2001 Census)	Population (As per the 2011 Census)	Projected Population 2018
Nyoma	4,129	4,043	3,984
Durbuk	4,675	4,911	5,087
Rong	2,579	2,546	2,523
Rupsho	2,061	1,846	1,715
TOTAL	13,444	13,346	13,309

Livestock

The pastoral nomads of Changthang have domesticated yaks, sheep, goats and horses over many decades as these have proven to be resilient species that have adapted to the extreme climatic conditions of the region.

Table 3: Comparative Livestock Population (Changthang vs. rest of Leh) 2018-2019

Source: The District Statistical Handbook 2018-19

Block	Dzo/Dzomo-Yak/Demo	Horses	Goat	Sheep
<i>Changthang</i>	13,375	3,257	18,1980	82,491
Rest of Leh District	55,02	2,277	40,004 (Comprising <i>Pashmina</i> and Non- <i>Pashmina</i> goats)	38,146

Sheep (Chang-Luk) and Goats (Chang-ra)

Until recently sheep were the most abundant domesticated animal in Changthang. Sheep were particularly valued for their wool and as pack animals that transported salt and other materials as part of trade with Tibet, Zanskar, Lahaul and Spiti. Many factors have worked to change this situation, including the closure of Tibet to Ladakhi herders and the ready availability of things like salt, which was formerly a part of intra-Himalaya trade. Over the past two decades the easy availability of clothes made from cotton and synthetic fibres has led to a sharp reduction in demand for sheep wool. At the same time, with the closure of trading routes in and out of Tibet, the Kashmiri shawl industry is increasingly sourcing

its Pashmina from Ladakh (Ahmead, 2004, Dollfus 2013). Pashmina is the fine hair that goats produce during the extreme cold, and sells for close to 20 times the price of sheep wool. Thus, even while producing much lower quantities of such hair than sheep wool, it is far more lucrative for herders to manage goats rather than sheep.

The proportion of goats to sheep has also changed dramatically in Changpa herds — if there were two sheep to every goat in the 1960s, there is now one sheep to every 10-12 goats. During 2005 to 2008, goat numbers increased from 184,824 to 208,878 and those of sheep declined from 76,443 to 60,721 (Dollfus, 2013).

The Chang-ra (Changthang goat), produces the world's finest Pashmina wool. Raw materials used to make the famous cashmere shawl and other products in international markets are extracted from these goats. They are also raised for meat, milk, and skin. The plains of Changthang has around 1,81,980 goats as per the 2018-19 report of the Sheep Husbandry Department, Government of Jammu and Kashmir (Table. 3).



Image 1: Goats at Kargyam. Photograph by Stanzin Namgail

Sheep are primarily used for supplying wool (bal) used in the carpet trade, but also for their milk, skin, and meat. Among nomads, sheep meat is preferred the most. Especially pregnant women and ailing people consume sheep meat (lug-sha) as they believe that it is more nutritious than other meat. It is also more expensive than goat meat.

The wool from Changthang sheep ranks among the best carpet wools in the world. It is highly prized for its great elasticity, deep lustre, and outstanding tensile strength. The fibres of Changthang sheep wool have an exceptionally smooth surface that reflects extra light, making

them more lustrous than wool from other breeds. These factors help give Tibetan and Ladakhi carpets their unique characteristics like the subtle, supple resiliency and potentially radiant patina.

Horse (rTa)

The status of pastoral nomads has always been closely tied to the horses they owned. A good horse is identified by its gait, and nomads say that horses with yorga (smooth gait) would earn pride for the owner. Shepherds use horses to manage their herds and, along with yaks, in moving camps. Horses also play an important role in various traditional festivals, including Dhrim, Gyatsa, Lhabsol, and Dachang. If any Rinpoches (high lama) visit the area, they are received by the horse. Horses are also used in traditional marriage ceremonies to transport the bride and groom.

Meme Chotak's statement clearly indicates how horses have been an important part in marriage ceremonies: "It takes 5-6 days to get the bride back to Sato from Chushul that is around 55 Km away. There were no vehicles at that time and we used to take horses to bring the bride. It used to be a group of 20-25 members in the marriage party. As the horse is the pride of the family for Changpas, we decorated the horse no less than the bride. But now all these marriage customs have declined, there is no value for the horse as it is replaced by motorcars. I really feel for the horses when I see them fully naked. During our days, they hardly remained naked. They were always fully decorated and we took great care of them. At present, there is no use of horses during marriage ceremonies but back then, one could not think of marriage without a horse."

Yak

Yak is the signature animal of Changthang as well as Tibet and there are around 13,375 yaks in Changthang. The animal is well adapted to high altitudes and to the cold environment of the Tibetan Plateau and Changthang. The pastoral nomads place much value on the yak because it provides milk, meat, wool and hides. Its wool is primarily used for weaving tents (rebo), mats (taan), shoes (pabu), blankets (chali) and robes (thag-pa). The yak makes life possible for the nomads. It is also used as a pack animal, particularly while shifting camps. Dried yak dung is an important source of fuel in an environment where firewood is not available. Another important product of yak is butter and cheese. Though yak gives little milk, it contains a high quantity of butter and is considered a healthier product than commercially available butter. Yak cheese is in high demand in the present tourism market.



Image 2: Yaks at Kargyam valley. Photograph by Stanzin Namgail

Dog (Chang-rKhe)

While approaching a pastoral nomadic tent (rebo) as well as in the house, one may encounter the barking of rGo Khe (house dog). The owner comes out upon hearing the alarm raised by the dog. Even within the rebo and a house, when the dog starts barking, a family member swiftly checks on the cause of its excitement. The Changpas traditionally reared Tibetan mastiffs but they are increasingly mixed with other breeds. The dog plays an important role in the everyday life of the nomads. It always moves with the shepherds and herds to guard the animal against wild predators. The dog is one among the twelve symbolic animals of the Tibetan calendar years as Khe-lo (dog year).

Pastoral nomads of Changthang domesticate all these different animal species according to the environmental conditions. For centuries, they have been carefully grazing these animals primarily to maintain a balanced relationship with the fragile ecology of Changthang. They use this mix of species as a strategy that serves to mitigate risk while taking advantage of complementary feeding habits of different livestock. Each species grazes different plants or parts of plants, thus more efficiently using the assemblage of pasture species. Maintaining not only abundance but the diversity of the overall composition of livestock also minimises risk of loss from disease or extreme weather events and overgrazing.

Survey Method

Data collection for this study took place in different parts of Changthang by travelling into the field and speaking with herders in July 2020. The questionnaire for this study was prepared by a group of researchers based on the findings of a pilot study undertaken by CfP in April 2020 (See Annexure I). The questionnaire was designed to examine the impact of the lockdown with reference to following issues: (i) movement (ii) access to markets (iii) expenses and incomes (iv) labour for herding (v) veterinary care (vi) ration availability (vii) social stigma and (viii) perceptions about COVID-19's impact on livelihoods (See Annexure II).

As most of the areas in Changthang are not connected to any communication network, phone-based interviews were not possible. Interviews were conducted with herd owners actively involved in herding during the lockdown. Due to prior research engagement in the region, finding camp areas was not a problem. For the interviews, 20 respondents were chosen through random sampling from the villages of Phobrang, Kargyam and Rupshu. Two households were selected from Gya valley, even though technically this is not a part of Changthang. Socially and culturally Gya has close proximity with the Changpa community and its herding patterns are similar to those observed in Changthang.



Image 3: Collecting data at Depring.
Photograph by Stanzin Namgail

Table 4: Total Number of Selected Respondents and villages

Sample Villages	Respondents
<i>Phobrang</i>	03
<i>Kargyam</i>	06
<i>Rupshu</i>	09
<i>Gya</i>	02
Total	20



Map 2: Herder migratory routes in Ladakh



Image 3: Tsering Phunchok Rupshu herder (Nambardar) at Zara valley. Photograph by Stanzin Namgail

As mentioned before, the herders interviewed for this study belonged to Phobrang, Kargyam, Rupshu and Gya valley. These herders usually migrate in localised areas. The pastoralists of Phobrang spend June and July in their home villages. They move to Dhata during July and August, following which they stay in Ko Valley till September. They return back to Dhata in October and stay in their home villages till November. They spend the winters, November-March in Chersay and stay in Shelung and Phugrong Teu from March to June.

The herders of Kargyam valley stay in their home villages from May-June. They move to Parma during June and August and spend September in Balmik. Following which they return to their home villages, where they stay till December. The time from December to March is spent in Lhalung, after which they stay in Balmik from March to May.

In Rupshu, pastoralists spend May to June in Rokchen and move to Rina in July. After staying there till August, they move to Nurchung, where they stay from August till September. The time from September till October is spent in Depring. Following which they stay in Zara till November. They move next to Ponkanau, where they stay till December. They stay in Thukje during December and January. From January to March they stay in Tasaphuk and Ganjunrak. Subsequently, they stay in Chagre from March till April and stay in Thakje during April and May.

In Gya valley, herders spend May till July in their home villages, following which they move to Yar-ri in July to November. Returning to their home villages, they stay there till December. The time from December to February is spent in Kyamar, while the next few months from February to May are spent in Kyam valley.

Findings

All respondents have Aadhaar cards and bank accounts. The average herd size of Changpas ranges from 160-650 (sheep, goats, and yak). All respondents had migrated to their traditional grazing grounds despite the lockdown.

Table 5: Profile of respondents

Community/Group	Aadhar card holders	Bank account holders	Herd size	Presence of sheep and goat	Travel beyond 10 kms from their native village in summers
Changpa	19/20	20/20	120-680	20/20	20/20

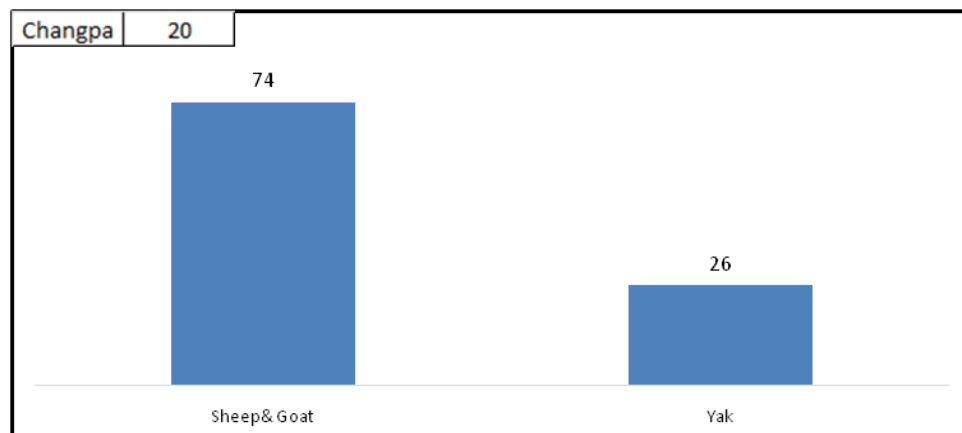


Figure 1: Livestock composition of pastoralists (percentage wise)

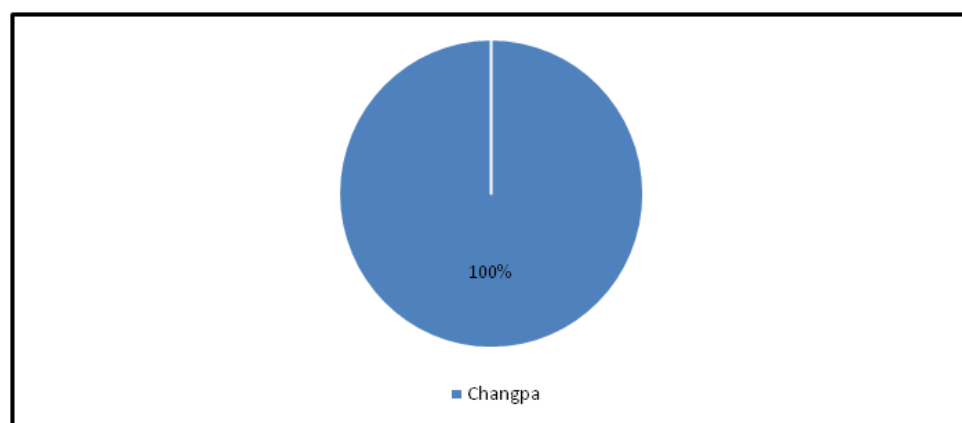


Figure 2: Community wise representation of respondents

Impact on mobility

In some parts of the Changthang region like Kharnak, Rupshu, Kargyam, and Phobrang, pastoralists do not cross any district or state boundary. Rather they have fixed campsites within the region and they follow their annual movement according to the Tibetan calendar and availability of forage.

During the lockdown, 60% of respondents did not face any challenges for their movement to the campsites. But they required obtaining special permission from the concerned office of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) for travelling to Leh town for purchasing essential commodities. Adding to the difficulties in reaching Leh was the limited availability of public transport.

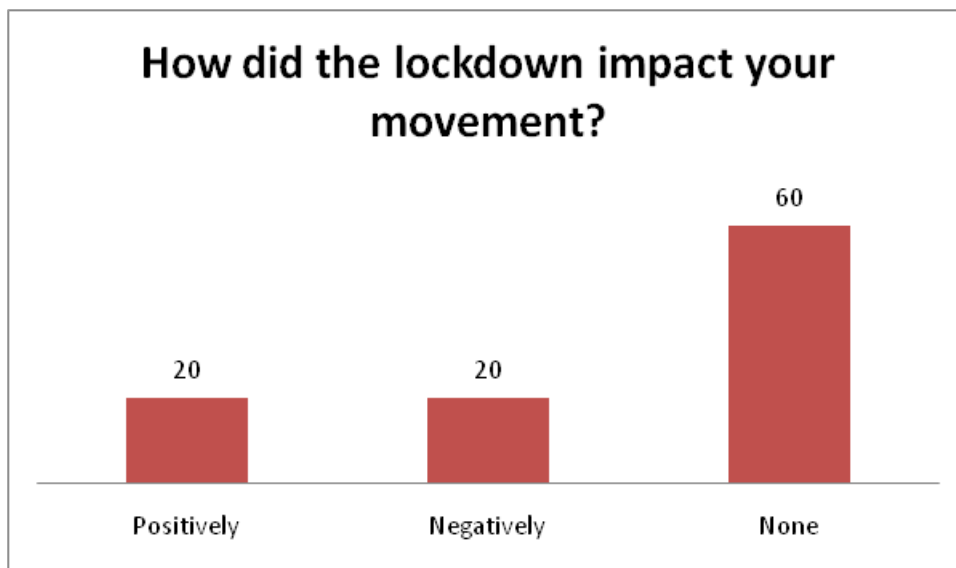


Figure 3: Herder responses w.r.t. impact on their mobility (percentage wise)

Obtaining forage and water

The Changthang pastoralists procure fodder from village/community lands, protected lands (Changthang cold desert sanctuary and wetland areas) and private lands. They also purchase fodder like alfalfa and barley grain for the winter from the Rong valley (lower Changthang, where people are mostly dependent on agricultural activities). Sixty percent respondents reported they obtain forage and water from village lands, 2% from forest department lands, 6% from protected areas, 2% from cultivated land and 30% from purchasing fodder. Tashi Namgail (Yourgo) says about his usual forage requirements, "Particularly in the winter we purchase fodder like grain from the lower areas (Rong Valley) of Changthang for the livestock. Apart from that, we are also able to buy fodder from the Animal and Sheep Department."

During the lockdown, 95% respondents could easily procure fodder. However, unlike in Phobrang and Kargyam, pastoralists of Rupshu and Kharnak have been facing a water crisis at many of their campsites since much before the lockdown was imposed. In some areas like Depring and Zara, the government has dugout hand-pumps but they too are insufficient for the livestock. In this context, Tsering Lanzom (Rupshu)

says, “Generally, we face a lot of problems regarding water as there are many such valleys where we move our camps and herds. Therefore, in some places we are dependent on hand-pumps and twice in a week we have to cover a long distance to provide water to the herds.”

Revenues/Expenditures

The main occupation of Changpas residing in the upper belts of Changthang is livestock rearing as agriculture is not viable in these belts. They regard the breeding of yaks, sheep and goats as a far more noble occupation than agriculture. These people breed cattle for their own consumption and for sale. The greatest profits are derived from the sale of these animals for meat, wool, skin and pashmina. Other benefits derive from the consumption and sale of dairy products such as butter and dry cheese.

Ninety-nine percent of respondents said they did not face any difficulties in selling milk and other dairy related products during the lockdown. Tashi Namgail (Yourgo) narrated that, “Usually we do not sell milk but we do sell dairy products such as dry cheese and butter. So far we are not facing any challenges due to COVID-19 but we do not have a proper marketing system.”

They even had positive expectations for the rates that they might receive this year for the raw pashmina. Tashi Paljor (TR) of Regul Chorgok narrated that, “This year we had a very good harvest and good quality of pashmina. Given the closure of the border with China and the difficulty of importing pashmina from Tibet, we expect that the demand for our pashmina will go up and we might get a good price for it.” Nawang Tharchin of Rupshu also chimed in, “Some middlemen have already approached us and are ready to offer good prices as well.”

Similarly, 70% reported they were not facing difficulty in selling animals. Tsering Dorjay (Phobrang) says, “We sell it in the autumn, so as of now we are not facing difficulty.” Usually, they sell it in October and November to butchers who come from Leh. They also sell animals to the labourers of the Border Roads Organisation, Tibetan butchers and the Indian Army.

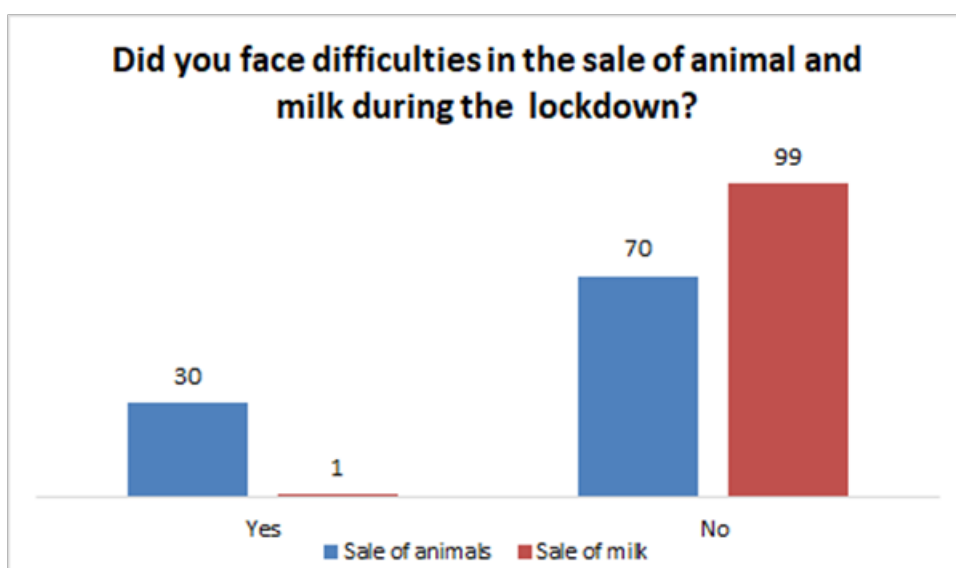


Figure 4: Herder responses w.r.t. difficulties faced in selling animals and milk (percentage wise)

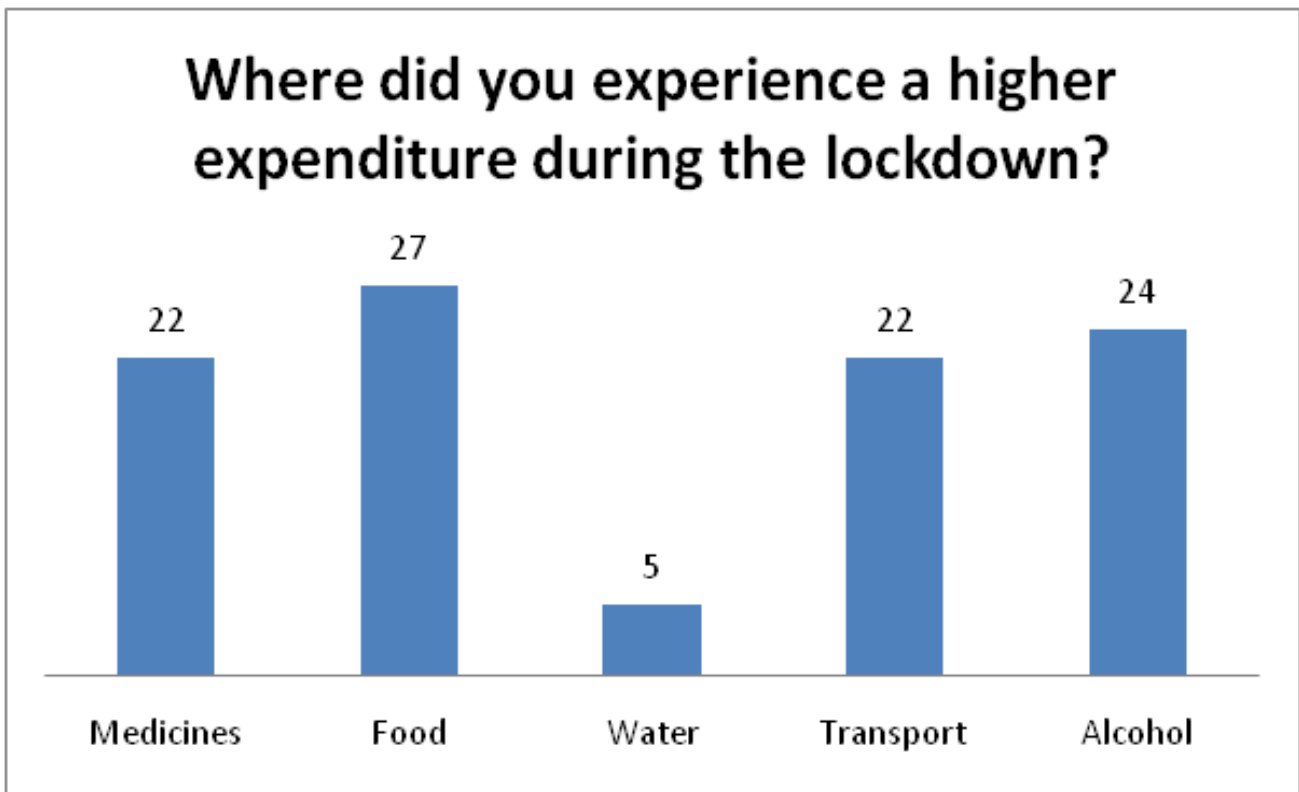


Figure 5: Herder responses w.r.t increased expenditure (percentage wise)

All respondents claimed they did not face any challenges for the shearing of wool and pashmina. And 81% reported they faced no difficulties in the marketing of raw wool and pashmina since all sales of raw pashmina wool have been coordinated by the All Changthang Pashmina Grower Marketing Society (ACGPMS) for many decades.

Of the total respondents, 70% felt the lockdown has had a medium impact on their income, while 30% felt the impact was fairly minimal. In terms of increased expenditure, 27% spent higher amounts on procuring food supplies, 24% on alcohol, and 22% on medicines and transport respectively. Despite the increased expenditure, most respondents indicated they were feeling well-off compared to their fellow Changpas who are dependent on agriculture, tourism, and daily-wage labour.

Labour

A pastoralist in Changthang owns an average of 200-300 sheep and goats, 20-50 Yaks and 2-3 horses. This amount of livestock requires 2-3 hired help (labour). In most cases, family members manage and look after the herd. "It requires around two labourers, all are family members and this time all our children are back at home so they will share the responsibilities," reported Tsering Tobdan of Kargyam. Eighty five percent of respondents were able to manage their herd on their own with the help of their family members. In the Rupshu areas some herders hire Tibetan refugees as labour for around Rs. 15,000 to Rs. 20,000 per month. Tashi Paljor (TR), who owns 550 animals (200 sheep and 350 goats) said that, "All five members of our family are engaged in it and we also hired one labourer for Rs. 16,000 per month."

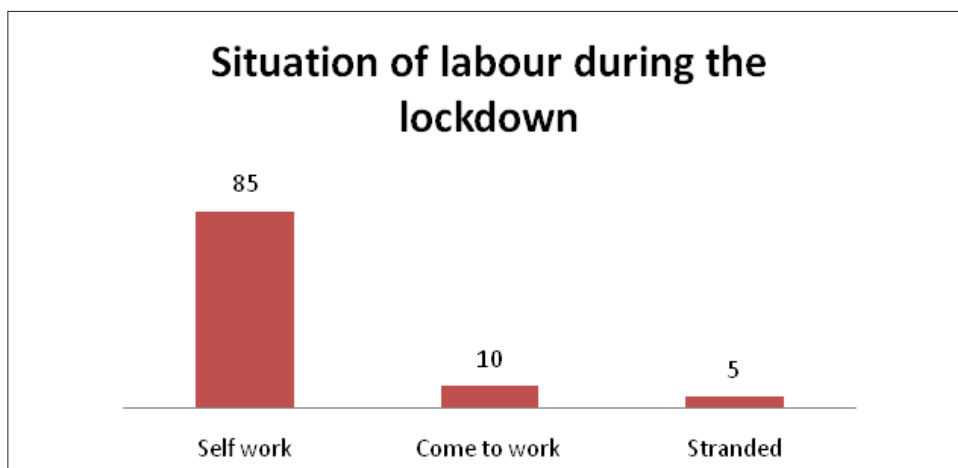


Figure 6: Herder responses w.r.t. availability of labour during the lockdown (percentage wise)

Veterinary care

Herders usually self-administer basic medication and vaccinations to their animals, though they do have access to veterinarians and veterinary centres. During the lockdown, visits by veterinary doctors were less frequent than usual, but 70% respondents received medicines from medical personnel at village veterinary centres. However, only 8% received vaccinations during the same period, while 22% could access services of a doctor. Konchok Tsultim (Kargyam) stated: “It was normal as last year, we got medicines and vaccinations. But there were no health camps and visits of veterinary doctors to the area this time.” There is a lack of infrastructure and inadequate medical attendants in Changthang as it has only three sheep first aid centres (out of 13 first aid centres), even though the sheep population of Changthang comprises 62% of total sheep population of Leh district. Also, the number of animals vaccinated against FMD, ARV and CD in Changthang is only 7,786 out of 54,943 sheep, which amounts to only 14 % of the total population. This imbalance shows the huge negligence Changthang has been facing and the great gap between the needs of the region and policies formulated at higher levels.

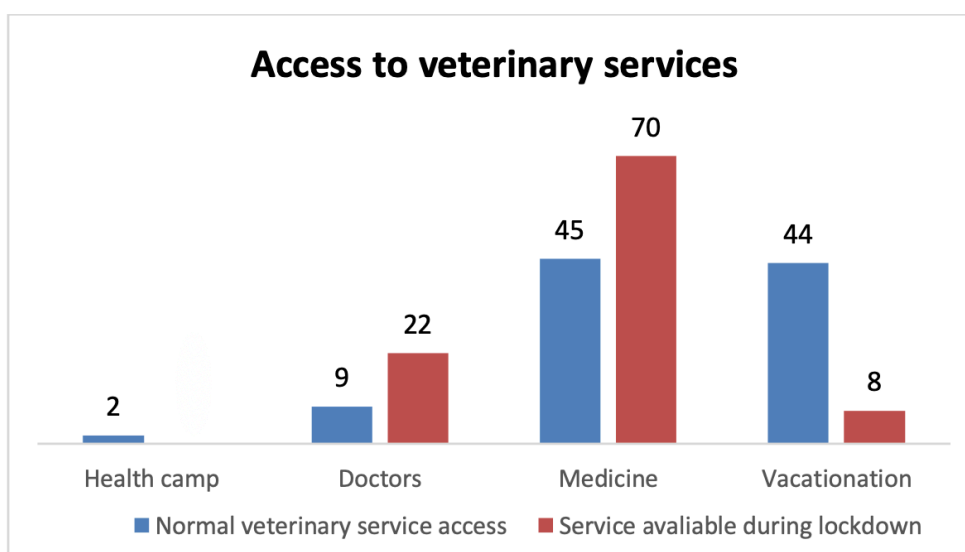


Figure 7: Herder responses w.r.t. access to veterinary services (percentage wise)

Procurement of rations and essential commodities

There is a store of food and supply department in Thukje (Rupshu), Yurgo (Phobrang), Sato (Kargyam) and Gya (Gya valley), where the government provides basic subsidised rations, including rice, atta and sugar distributed to ration card holders. During the lockdown, ration card holders of BPL and AAY were given free rations for three months. Lundup Gyatso (Depring), "For the BPL card holders we get free rice and atta for a few months. The cooperatives also provided a few essential commodities such as milk, two packets of Dhara oil, 2 packets of butter, and 1kg vegetable. All of these items were provided at a minimum price." Seventy percent of respondents reported they got additional rations and better public distribution services (PDS) during the lockdown. Ten percent purchased ration from local shops, 5% from nearby villages, and 5% visited their homes every week to procure rations. The remaining 10% procured ration through other means.

Apart from that, purchasing other essential commodities was not easy. Under usual circumstances, herders depend on the small grocery shops around the village and sometimes they also travel to Leh to procure essential commodities. While on migration with the herds, a family member gets all the essential and basic commodities once in a fortnight to the campsite. Tsering Dorjay (Phobrang) shared, "We get rations (rice and atta) from the PDS centers and others from the nearby shops. While we are in the valleys we procure our rations from the villages and we get it within 15 days." But during the lockdown it was difficult to travel, as they needed to get special permission from the concerned office of the sub-divisional magistrate and public transport was badly affected.

Health Care

As per the District Statistical Handbook (2018-19), Changthang has only three primary health centres (PHC) with six doctors and eight nurses for a population of 15,539 (including 2,230 Tibetan Refugees). In areas like Rupshu and Kharnak people lack access to the most basic health infrastructure. Even today people rely on the traditional Amchi and every village or a cluster of hamlets has its own Amchi. With regard to the COVID-19 situation, the herders of Rupshu expressed concern over the lack of such facilities in their areas but fortunately till July there was not a single case of COVID-19 reported in the Changthang region. However, they believe that people have become more health and hygiene conscious due to the pandemic.

Conclusion

While carrying out this field research (in the first week of July 2020), not even a single case of COVID-19 was reported in the Changthang area. Therefore, pastoralists were able to move and migrate to the different valleys as per their usual patterns. There was no restriction on movement of herds to the summer valleys as they do not cross any state or district boundaries. Rather, they move within their own territory and most of the valleys are uninhabited and located in the high altitude areas. However, they did require special permissions from the concerned office of the Sub-Divisional Magistrate to move to Leh and other surrounding villages. On the other hand, herders in Phobrang areas faced security-related restrictions from the ITBP/Indian Army while moving to the camps in Hot Spring, Kukrang and Gokra posts, for which they had to seek special permission. The need for obtaining such permission is, however, normal, and not related to the lockdown.

Herders faced a major difficulty in accessing basic commodities as markets were shut and transport facilities were limited in availability. They had to take special permissions from the SDM's office before they could travel to Leh which made things tougher. Had the field interviews been conducted a few months after July, we may have received more information on the impact of the lockdown vis-a-vis other issues like the sale of animals and the prices of wool received by herders, as both these activities occur later in the year.

At the time these interviews were conducted, it was however clear that the pandemic had a considerable impact on the education of youth belonging to herders' families. Once the lockdown came into effect, schools switched to online instruction. Within herder villages, internet access is intermittent and of poor quality. Only some villages have an internet (VSAT) facility in the panchayat ghar. But in these places too the network is weak. This clearly had a negative impact on the education services of the area.

In August there were around 15 COVID-19 positive cases in the Kargyam valley. All affected people were working as daily wage workers in the GREF camp and it was believed to be transmitted from fellow labourers of the plain areas. Herders of Rupshu expressed worries of COVID-19 spreading in the area as it is located on the Leh-Manali highway. They were also concerned about the lack of availability of basic medical facilities in the area. Even the nearest the medical sub-centres are located at a distance of around 6-15 Km from their campsites.

However, overall, this pandemic situation seems to have made the herders realise how important it is to practice their traditional lifestyle. They believe that their pastoral mode of life ensured they did not have to face the kinds of difficulties that many other communities experienced.

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Annexure I

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

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

- | | |
|------------------------------|--|
| 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?

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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