

## Concept Note



Global  
Landscapes  
Forum



# GLF Africa 2026: Stewarding Our Rangelands

*In the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists,  
a global call to action for Africa's pastoralist regions*

6-7 May  
2026

CIFOR-ICRAF Campus,  
Nairobi, Kenya and online

[bit.ly/GLFAfrica2026](https://bit.ly/GLFAfrica2026)  
#GLFAfrica



## Why rangelands, why now? The 2026 imperative

Rangelands and pastoralists have been systematically undervalued and neglected. Half of the world's rangelands are now degraded, driven by inappropriate policies, fragmentation, unsustainable management, climate change and biodiversity loss.

Meanwhile, pastoralist communities, many of which are Indigenous stewards of their landscapes, are frequently marginalized. They are often excluded from decisions and opportunities, their traditional and local knowledge is undermined or eroded, and they face heightened conflict.

**The UN has dedicated 2026 as the International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP). This fresh focus is significant and timely.**

Despite the clear benefits from these pastoralist stewardship systems and landscapes, development models often frame them as unproductive barriers to economic growth. Policies promoting sedentarization, land fragmentation, exclusionary conservation models, mining, urbanization, cash-crop monoculture expansion and industrial-scale land uses undermine pastoral mobility and the connectivity of rangeland ecosystems. These systemic challenges not only erode the resilience of rangelands but also threaten peace, stability and livelihoods in some of the world's most fragile regions.

Despite these pressures, rangelands and pastoral systems present a unique opportunity for stewarding climate-smart, inclusive landscape-level solutions. The opportunity now is to revalue and invest in rangelands and pastoralism – and 2026 represents a critical window in which to do so.



### Rangelands

Cover **54%** of the Earth's land surface

Make up **43%** of Africa's land area

Support **60%** of global food production



### Pastoral systems

Maintain **2 billion** livelihoods worldwide

Sustain more than **100 million** people across Africa

Contribute nearly **40%** of African agricultural GDP



## Catalyzing action at GLF Africa 2026

The **GLF Africa 2026: Stewarding our Rangelands** hybrid conference will elevate sustainable rangeland management and pastoralists on the regional and global development agenda. Leveraging seven previous GLF Africa conferences – most notably [GLF Africa 2021: Restoring Africa's Drylands](#) – it will build on the many successful initiatives to date, while addressing the challenges inherent to multifunctional landscape approaches.

The event will bring together stakeholders and partners with a broad range of knowledge and experience to discuss how to restore and sustainably manage rangelands, secure the livelihoods and rights of pastoralist and agropastoralist communities, recognize pastoral systems as models of resilience, and build inclusive policies and investments that unlock the full ecological, sociocultural and economic potential of rangelands.

## Centering community leadership and stewardship

Alongside **GLF Africa 2026**, we will host the second edition of the **GLF Africa Community & Action Assembly** to convene stewards living in rangelands and pastoralist systems across Africa, including representatives from the GLFx chapter network Restoration Stewards program, Youth in Landscapes Initiative and other youth and grassroots constituencies from across the continent.

Participants in the week-long event will engage in interactive fora, storytelling labs and an Africa Landscape Dialogue, which will center the leadership, stories and experiences of pastoralists and other rangeland residents. The Assembly will also include wellbeing and creativity sessions and a field visit to nearby rangeland communities.

**“** Restoration is not only about transforming the land, it is about transforming relationships. Restoration is about being one with the land and with each other. To do this, we must rewrite the systems that have long excluded communities like ours from environmental decision-making.”



Sydner Kemunto  
2025 Drylands Restoration Steward

## Conference objectives

- Change the narrative on rangelands and amplify the voices of pastoralists as stewards in these landscapes – and in food security, livelihoods, biocultural diversity, climate action and development
- Confront challenges and showcase opportunities that enhance the resilience and sustainability of rangelands and pastoralists, from traditional ecological knowledge to science-based innovative practices
- Generate commitments and partnerships for action, including developing and adopting a conference declaration to serve stakeholder advocacy around IYRP and at the 17th session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP17)

## Themes and topics

The following list of conference themes and topics has been refined in collaboration with the GLF's partners, charter members and conference Knowledge Committee. Topics of discussion are listed under each theme to facilitate the preparation of sessions, but the list is not exhaustive. Cross-cutting priorities such as Indigenous knowledge, locally-led action, rights-based approaches and gender and social inclusion will be integrated across all conference sub-themes.

**Theory of change:** If pastoralist leadership, Indigenous knowledge, science-based monitoring, enabling policies and fit-for-purpose finance are aligned through inclusive platforms, then rangelands can transition from perceived marginal lands to productive, resilient and investable bioculturally diverse landscapes – delivering climate resilience, biodiversity recovery, food security and peace dividends.

### 1. Policy & governance: Designing for pastoral societies within rangeland contexts

For too long, policies and regimes governing rangelands and pastoralists have failed to take their particular contexts into account, resulting in degradation, conflict, cultural and biological erosion, land tenure insecurity and livelihood challenges that are exacerbated by the impacts of climate change. It's time for policies that elevate and leverage the

existing Indigenous knowledge and adaptive capacity of pastoralist systems. These policies should actively manage, respect and care for rangelands while mitigating risks and enhancing productivity under uncertain conditions. Given the specific challenges and conflicts that occur in these often transboundary and 'commons' landscapes, multi-level coordination, partnerships and institutions that foster cooperation are required.

- Transforming policies to facilitate, secure and protect pastoralist land tenure, mobility and resilience
- Assess the state of rangelands' (soil, water, biodiversity) health, function and productivity, and explore adaptive, integrated approaches for monitoring, managing and restoring them
- Leverage customary systems and Indigenous knowledge and practices for sustainable, climate-smart pastoralism and food systems and context-oriented policies.
- Characterize biodiversity and system-wide emission of pastoral systems to leverage carbon and biodiversity markets
- Examine resource rights and tenure security: Conflict, equitable access, benefit sharing and gender dynamics in rangeland and pastoralist systems

- Align policies, resources, incentives and information: Improve inter- and intra-sectoral cooperation including the One Health approach and leveraging existing opportunities such as agroecology and other effective area-based conservation measures (OECM).

## 2. Investing in a stewardship economy: From livelihoods to finance

It's time to rewrite the narrative on rangelands by recognizing pastoralists as investors and essential partners in climate resilience, biodiversity restoration and the transition to regenerative financial markets and sustainable value chain finance. This theme brings together financial experts and investment practitioners to advance sustainable rangeland management by demonstrating the tangible returns of restoration, strengthening the evidence base for combating desertification, and showcasing how nature-based practices can be incorporated into innovative sustainable finance products that enhance the economics of rangeland restoration.

This event will highlight new governance approaches that embed rights-based safeguards, robust impact metrics, and resilience-focused financial structures – elevating pastoralists' agency, especially that of women, as central to the next generation of regenerative climate and biodiversity finance.



- Build sustainable value chains and corresponding finance webs across rangelands and associated management approaches such as agroecology
- Discuss ecotourism, protected area management and biodiversity conservation
- Explore prospects for sustainable finance and impact investment
- Connect investors with funds and accelerate the financial readiness of rangeland restoration projects to attract and deploy capital at scale
- Integrate sustainable fiber production models and transition pathways for a sustainable fashion industry
- Value and render visible rangeland ecosystem goods and services
- Develop social and conflict protection and dedicated policy approaches for rangeland and pastoralist communities, who are at the forefront of global food production

### 3. Seizing innovative and transformative technologies: Integrating science, tech innovation and Indigenous knowledge

Rangelands and pastoralism are rich in Indigenous and traditional knowledge. New opportunities are also emerging to support better rangeland and pastoralism system management, particularly through artificial intelligence (AI) and scientific research, which has opened up vast new possibilities for climate action, monitoring systems, early warning and sustainable land use. This theme will explore collaboration between different forms of knowledge and showcase transformative technologies and innovations, along with policy support to inform development agendas and guide investments.

- Explore green AI, remote sensing, big data and other tech-based innovations and developments
- Consider climate-smart and regenerative technologies: AgTech, climate services and early warning systems
- Assess biotech and research in rangeland resource management
- Discuss Indigenous knowledge, pastoralism as a lifestyle, adaptive practices and technology integration
- Channel data and science into policy and management

## Potential outcomes

- A declaration/communiqué outlining urgent priorities for action on rangelands and pastoralists to be delivered to the global pastoral gathering and UNCCD COP17
- A knowledge synthesis repository on the state of and challenges facing rangelands and pastoralists, as well as opportunities and solutions
- Policy recommendations for governments, regional bodies and global institutions
- Strengthened alliances and partnerships across sectors and regions to support rangeland restoration and pastoral livelihoods
- A multi-stakeholder roadmap for investing in rangelands and pastoral systems as critical for climate resilience, biodiversity, and sustainable food systems
- Financial mechanisms for investing in long term strategies for rangeland restoration and pastoralist wellbeing
- Increased awareness on the IYRP
- New insights on the role of AI in rangeland monitoring and innovation

## What to expect

The two-day hybrid event will be packed with plenaries, interactive sessions, policy dialogues, pitching roundtables, structured networking, virtual tours, documentary screenings, press conferences, private breakout rooms and more. A dedicated media training session and social media bootcamp will be held to hone skills to maximize reach and impact.

**“The good news is that dryland degradation can be reversed, recreating more resilient and productive landscapes that will fix more carbon especially in the soil, restore ecosystem services, promote new viable enterprises and create employment, while reducing conflicts and migration.”**



**Ibrahim Thiaw**  
Former Executive Secretary of the  
United Nations Convention to Combat  
Desertification (UNCCD) (GLF Africa  
2022: Restoring Africa's Drylands)

## Beyond the bubble

We aim to break the bubble of traditional rangelands and conservation circles and reach new and unexpected audiences that are essential to shaping Africa's landscape future. This means building momentum through regional and global events, connecting diverse audiences across Africa and around the world: rangeland and pastoralist communities, women and youth, public and private sectors, academia and research, Indigenous Peoples and civil society.

Building on the past seven editions of GLF Africa, and kicking off in February 2026, the global campaign will bring together **8,000 online and onsite participants**, reaching **50 million people** and engaging more than **2 million** through media outreach, social media, influencer collaborations, live conversations and

**“**We should start from the people themselves. We must strengthen local institutions. There are traditional institutions and clans who own these lands. There is no land that is vacant”.



**Remigio Achia**

Member of Parliament, Pian Constituency (GLF Africa 2022: Restoring Africa's Drylands)

inspiring ThinkLandscape stories. Leveraging the collective power of the GLF and its partners, we will shift public perceptions and bring global attention to the **International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists**.

The conference will use **low-bandwidth digital conferencing technology** and a **purpose-built platform** to ensure broad and inclusive access, especially for remote participation via mobile devices. This blended format encourages connection, subgroup formation and local watch parties.

All content will be disseminated across Africa, Asia-Pacific, and Latin America and the Caribbean in **English, French, Kiswahili** and other languages to be determined.

**“**For us as Maasai, stewardship isn't about managing the land. It means nurturing the land so it thrives for future generations. It means preserving natural resources and protecting them from degradation. It means sustaining a harmonious balance between the people, livestock and wildlife.”



**Semerian Sankori**

Maasai Woman & Founder, Patinaai Osim (GLF Africa 2024: Greening the African Horizon)





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## Sponsor or partner with us

Over the past 12 years, the GLF has reached 4 billion people worldwide and become the world's largest forum on integrated and sustainable land use management, backed by 35 Charter Members, including leading development organizations such as the World Bank, World Wildlife Fund, World Resources Institute and the Rainforest Alliance.

To date, the GLF has engaged over 25,000 entities, from international organizations and governments to universities, corporations and community groups.

Its conferences have brought together 205,000 participants from 185 countries, and its youth program has engaged over 1.4 million people under the age of 35. We always welcome new partners and sponsors: platinum, gold, silver, and bronze sponsorship packages are available, alongside custom and exclusive options.

## Get in touch

### PROGRAM & CONTENT:

Host a session, engage with the Knowledge Committee or present your work.

### COMMUNICATIONS:

Join the GLF Rangelands Communications Committee. We're inviting all Knowledge Committee members, partners, Charter Members and Social Media Ambassadors to take part.

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## About Global Landscapes Forum

The Global Landscapes Forum (GLF) is the world's largest knowledge-led platform on integrated land use, dedicated to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Paris Climate Agreement and Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and committed to the landscape approach. The Forum takes a holistic approach to create sustainable landscapes that are productive, prosperous, equitable and resilient and considers five cohesive themes of food and livelihoods, landscape restoration, rights, finance and measuring progress. It is led by the Center for International Forestry Research and World Agroforestry (CIFOR-ICRAF), in collaboration with its co-founders UNEP and the World Bank and Charter Members.

Charter members: CIAT, CIFOR-ICRAF, CIRAD, Climate Focus, Conservation International, Crop Trust, Ecoagriculture Partners, The European Forest Institute, Evergreen Agriculture, FAO, FSC, GEF, GIZ, ICIMOD, IFOAM - Organics International, The International Livestock Research Institute, INBAR, IPMG, IPAM Amazonia, IUFRO, Rainforest Alliance, Rare, Rights and Resources Initiative, SAN, SouthSouthNorth, TMG-Think Tank for Sustainability, UNCCD, UNEP, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation part of Wageningen Research, World Farmer Organization, World Bank Group, World Resources Institute, WWF International, Youth in Landscapes Initiative (YIL)

### Funding partners



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