



**drynet**

www.dry-net.org

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January 2009

# News from Drynet

*A global initiative giving future to drylands*

Drynet is a project of 14 organisations from all over the world. They work together to combat land degradation

## GLOBAL NEWS

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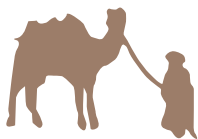
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### PUBLISHED BY



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## Drynet Update

Welcome to the fourth issue of "News from Drynet", a newsletter from the Drynet project on local concerns and views on drylands. This issue focuses on the importance of international events like the CRIC (see box) and national programs like the NAPs for reaching sustainability in drylands. The question is which role can and should civil society play in these processes?

The seventh session of the CRIC took place in Istanbul, Turkey from November 3rd to 14th 2008, simultaneously with the first special session of the Committee on Science and Technology (CST). Members of the Drynet network were present and engaged through the Drynet information stand and two side events on the following topics: "The Myth of the Wastelands: Mobile Pastoralism in Dryland Areas Can biofuel production offer new opportunities for pastoral peoples' livelihood?" and "Strengthening civil society partnerships for promoting sustainable land management and monitoring progress in overcoming land degradation".

Besides this they also provided new publications for practical use as well as discussion such as a Drynet and Global Mechanism coproduction "Civil Society Organisations in Drylands Practical guide

for mapping, profiling and analysing community and policy level engagement", and a Drynet position paper "The Biofuel Boom and its Consequences for Drylands". All of these are now available on our website.

While civil society organisations can participate openly in these events the question remains how much influence they really have on the decision making processes. This newsletter will provide some views on this issue, trying to shed some more light on what the individual organisations feel their position is both at the national and international levels.

Furthermore there will be some discussion on the way in which the NAPs have been successfully incorporated in the member countries.

**By Drynet partner: Both ENDS, the Netherlands - [drynet@bothends.org](mailto:drynet@bothends.org)**



*Drynet members during Side Event on "Pastoralism in Dryland Areas"*

## GLOBAL NEWS

**The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) has different structures of governance and decision making. We will run past the most important here:**

**COPs** The Conference of the Parties (COP) was established by the Convention as the supreme decision-making body; it comprises ratifying governments and regional economic integration organizations, such as the European Union. One of the main functions of the COP is to review reports submitted by the Parties detailing how they are carrying out their commitments; the COP makes recommendations on the basis of these reports. It also has the power to make amendments to the Convention or to adopt new annexes, such as additional regional implementation annexes. In this way, the COP can guide the Convention as global circumstances and national needs change.

To assist the COP, the Convention provides for subsidiary bodies and allows the COP to establish additional ones if necessary.

**CRICs** The Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention (CRIC) assists the COP in regularly reviewing the implementation of the Convention. The review process leading to the CRIC, which includes input at sub-regional and regional levels, will allow it to draw conclusions and to propose to the COP concrete recommendations on further steps in the implementation of the Convention. The review is to be conducted along thematic lines decided by the COP, with due regard to geographic dimensions.

**NAPs** The UNCCD Parties develop their own National Action Programmes (NAP) which are one of the key instruments in the implementation of the Convention. National Action Programmes should be developed in the framework of a participative approach involving the local communities and they spell out the practical steps and measures to be taken to combat desertification in specific ecosystems.

**CST** The Committee on Science and Technology (CST) is a subsidiary body of the COP; it provides the COP with information and advice on scientific and technological matters relating to combating desertification and mitigating the effects of drought using the most up-to-date scientific knowledge. It is multi-disciplinary, open to the participation of the Parties and composed of government representatives with relevant expertise.

Source: [www.unccd.int](http://www.unccd.int)

## Interview with Mark Winslow

**COORDINATOR OF THE DRYLAND SCIENCE FOR DEVELOPMENT CONSORTIUM (DSD) BY SILKE BREHM ON FRIDAY 7TH OF NOVEMBER 2008**

Mark Winslow works for ICRISAT (International Crop Research Institute for the Semi-arid tropics), a nonprofit agricultural research centre which tries to improve sustainable land management in the tropical dryland areas of Africa and Asia. I met Mark on Friday afternoon in the quiet CST meeting room of Cevahir conference hotel during the last week of CRIC7 in Istanbul. Outside in the corridors there was the buzzing of informal talks and the echo of ongoing official sessions.

The CST (Committee of Science and Technology) was closing their session and giving their conclusions to the UNCCD, including their decision to charge the Dryland Science for Development (DSD) Consortium with the mandate for assistance in organizing the COP9. This refers to Decision 13 of the 8th Session of the UNCCD Conference of Parties (COP) towards fulfilling the 10 year Strategic Plan, where the Committee on Science and Technology (CST) is recommended to conduct future sessions in a predominantly scientific and technical conference style format.

**SB:** Why was there a need felt for change in first place on the CST level? **MW:** The CST was asked by the convention to increase the flow of science into useful forms in the convention, because the convention is made up of what is called the 'Conference of Parties'

## GLOBAL NEWS

which are representatives in the political administration of almost all countries in the world. These political representatives want to use science to make better policies to reduce the suffering, the reduction of the productivity and the high risk of using dryland areas.

So they asked us to help organize a conference that can summarize the available knowledge on drylands for policy in simple forms which can be used to make better policies. Just as the Climate Change Convention has found the measurement of carbon a very simple way to express policies, the goal of this conference is to have some simple measures for combating dryland degradation.

**SB:** The Consortium has a clear mandate to involve the CSO/NGOs especially in the development of a set of indicators of desertification. How will this be ensured and how do you see Drynet or other CSO initiatives to get involved in the process?

**MW:** What makes the UNCCD quite unique is that it recognizes the importance of local knowledge in solving this problem, because it is a problem of land use. The land-users have experience for generations in ways they use the land. Scientists who are educated in a more classical way very often are not land-users in a traditional type of setting, so they can look at things in a certain way and miss other aspects of the environment that are important. We will look to CSO/NGOs to

help us to add that additional viewpoint and perspective and help us understand how to put it in a scientific framework.

To help the scientists identify the knowledge gaps, the different priorities of land users and to identify case studies and socio-economic surveys and bring that knowledge on the table and into the deliberations of the conference and the DSD activities.

**For more information on DSD, please visit the website**

[www.drylandscience.org](http://www.drylandscience.org) or contact the DSD coordinator, Dr. Mark Winslow at [m.winslow@cgiar.org](mailto:m.winslow@cgiar.org)

Listen to the entire interview under [multimedia on our website](#) [www.dry-net.org](http://www.dry-net.org)

**By Drynet partner: Silke Brehm of LPP, Germany – [Silke.Brehm@gmx.de](mailto:Silke.Brehm@gmx.de)**



*Visit of the Indian Focal Point to the Drynet info stand at the CRIC7.*

## International Agenda 2009

**12 - 16 January 2009** - 5th EGU Alexander von Humboldt International Conference to be held in Cape Town, South Africa. Iphakade Climate Changes and African Earth Systems Past, Present and Future.

[www.humboldt5.uct.ac.za/](http://www.humboldt5.uct.ac.za/)

**21 - 23 January 2009** - WAFLA International Conference Improving Tools against Desertification and Drought Enhanced Integrated Agroforestry and Water Management Systems for Arid and Semi-Arid Areas in Latin America. To be held at the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) headquarter in Santiago, Chile.

[www.wafla.com;](http://www.wafla.com;)

[www.accionporlatierra.cl/conferencia](http://www.accionporlatierra.cl/conferencia)

**10 - 12 March 2009** - Climate Change: Global Risks, Challenges and Decisions UNFCCC COP-15 Lead in Congress in Copenhagen, Denmark.

<http://climatecongress.ku.dk>

**13 - 17 April 2009** - International Conference On Water, Environment And Health Sciences: The Challenges Of The Climate Change (ICWEHS) held in Cholula, Mexico. This conference will provide a forum for the interdisciplinary exchange of issues, views, experiences and needs for research in the areas of water, environment and health sciences under the influence of climate change.

<http://www.udlap.mx/ICWEHS/>

## GLOBAL NEWS

### **Joint Drynet / DESIRE / enid paper: "Is the UNCCD stuck in a knowledge traffic jam?"**

The paper focuses on how the UNCCD can more effectively build on a combination of the most recent, cutting edge research, and the wealth of evolving local knowledge from affected communities and CSOs. Two short excerpts as indication of the content: "To improve the effectiveness of the UNCCD for dryland communities, the government representatives responsible for implementing the convention and its NAPs must base their interventions on relevant and up-to-date information. This includes knowledge from local communities and land users themselves (often channelled via NGOs and CSOs) on the current state of land degradation and desertification, traditional practices, local successes and obstacles. At the same time, knowledge needs to come from researchers, providing in depth analyses of desertification processes and impacts, as well as assessments of the technical and financial feasibility of suggested solutions.

It is also important to develop ways of monitoring and assessing desertification, as well as determining the impact of the UNCCD in addressing it. This requires the integration of different types of knowledge and for appropriate pathways to be developed to allow this knowledge to flow to those charged with policy and decision-making." " ... there is no formal

mechanism that ensures local and traditional knowledge is taken into account in UNCCD processes and negotiations. In some ways, this knowledge flow is complicated because it has a longer, more arduous journey to make, all the way from the local level via its intermediaries to the national and international levels. ... For local knowledge to be used effectively, the national roots of the international UNCCD process are therefore crucial."

For our suggestions for improvement, please read the full paper on [www.dry-net.org](http://www.dry-net.org)

### **Excerpt from the Closing Statement by Civil Society Organisations participating in the CRIC7:**

"We appreciate the new format of the Committee on Science and Technology, which will engage entities and representatives of the scientific community and renew its membership so as to include more scientific and technical expertise. In this regard, we note that some civil society organizations have a scientific and technical orientation.

The Consortium recently selected for the organization of the Scientific Conference must include within its group of scientific experts those of civil society who have expertise in this area. In relation to the biophysical and socioeconomic indicators, we emphasize that work has already been undertaken in the various

regions, which must be considered and adopted in the short term. We also believe that indicators of participation are needed to monitor the inclusion of CSOs in the implementation of the Convention, and that these should be reflected in national reports.

In the same vein, we request that the Committee on Science and Technology should take into account the work done by civil society on issues concerning the knowledge, technology and practices in the fight against desertification and drought. Furthermore, noting the poor performance of the Thematic Program Networks (TPNs), we call upon the Parties and the Secretariat to support the revitalisation of the TPNs."

For full statement please see our [website www.dry-net.org](http://www.dry-net.org)

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If you like to receive this newsletter electronically or for more details on the articles published, contact us at

[drynet@bothends.org](mailto:drynet@bothends.org) or check our [website www.dry-net.org](http://www.dry-net.org)

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## REGIONAL SECTION

# Obliterated African animal cultures leave behind genetic treasures

By Ilse Köhler-Rollefson\*

**Ilse Köhler-Rollefson visited South Africa in December 2008, and learned that indigenous livestock breeds have been given a new lease of life by commercial breeders.**

Southern Africa is livestock country and white settlers imported an endless series of European livestock breeds to make best use of vast expanses of rangeland, such as the Karoo. But now the indigenous breeds developed by African animal cultures are experiencing a major revival.

The Damara sheep was discovered only in the 20th century in an area called Kaokoland in Northern Namibia. It was bred by the Himba pastoralists who had arrived in the area in the 15th century after a long and perilous migration through almost the entire length of Africa.

It is this intensive pressure by natural selection that commercial breeders such as Dawie du Toit ascribe many of the desirable qualities of the breed: ability to survive under poor nutritional conditions and a high survival rate of lambs even in the presence of predators. Damara sheep basically move around in close clusters - reminiscent of a school of fish- that give jackals practically no chance to separate out victims. In case an attack does occur, ewes fearlessly defend their lambs.

On top of these adaptive traits, the meat quality of Damara sheep is excellent.



Ilse Köhler-Rollefson

### Damara sheep and their herders

This breed thus forms an excellent basis for ecological animal production without any inputs and entirely in tune with nature. Dawie du Toit likens the Damara sheep to a gazelle and indeed on his farm, the sheep freely mingle with wildlife.

The Nguni cattle breed is an indigenous cattle breed once intimately

essential component of their social relations and played an important role in marriage arrangements. White animal breeders initially scorned the breed because it did not

\*The author works for League for Pastoral and Endogenous Livestock Development (LPP), Germany, one of the member organisations of the DRYNET initiative.



**The Nguni cattle breed was once intimately associated with the Zulu culture, and scorned by white animal breeders. Now, efforts are underway to reintroduce the Nguni to emergent black farmers.**



Ilse Köhler-Rollefson

### Damara sheep

come in a uniform colour pattern and thus did not correspond to European concepts of a breed standard. The breed was crossed and replaced with a range of imported breeds. Only towards the end of the 20th century was the value of the Nguni as a means of ecological, input free

cattle production discovered. Not only is the meat of excellent quality, but the skins with their varied patterns also fetch premiums. By that time, hardly any pure animals existed.

The few individuals left were quickly bought up by white ranchers who are now

the ones that have pure herds, whereas in the communal areas of black farmers only mixed breeds exist. Since the Nguni have proven their commercial potential, there are now efforts to reintroduce the Nguni to emergent black farmers.

While the Nguni breed survives, the underlying indigenous knowledge systems of the Zulu people that created it in the first place, seem to have all been obliterated. Fortunately, a recent book describing the various colour patterns and their traditional naming system provides a glimpse into the once incredibly elaborate Zulu cattle culture.

### Nguni cattle



Ilse Köhler-Rollefson

#### More information

Du Toit D.( 2007). The Damara Sheep of Southern Africa. Prieska.

Poland E, D Hammond-Tooke and L Voigt.(2003). The Abundant Herds. A celebration of the Sanga-Nguni cattle of the Zulu people. Fernwood Press, Cape Town.

[www.damarasheep.co.za](http://www.damarasheep.co.za)

## Livestock Keepers' Rights and Niche Marketing Workshops in Cape Town, South Africa

Two workshops whose outcomes are to improve policies and project designs for marginal livestock keepers, including those in drylands, were organised at Cape Town, South Africa, from 30 November to 7 December 2008 by the League for Pastoral Peoples and Endogenous Livestock Development (LPP) with logistic cooperation from the Environmental Monitoring Group (EMG) and financial support from HIVOS, Misereor, Swedbio and the World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism.

Co-organized with the Foundation For Environment And Development, the first workshop focused on Livestock Keepers' Rights.

This is a concept developed by pastoralists and other livestock keeping communities as well as Civil Society to articulate international obligations towards biodiversity conserving livestock keepers under international agreements such as the UN Convention on Biological Diversity, the Global Plan of Action on Animal Genetic Resources and the International Covenant On Economic, Social And Cultural Rights.

Drawing on the expertise of five African lawyers and eight participants from non-government and international organizations, the goal of the workshop was to phrase a Draft Declaration on

Livestock Keepers' Rights for which endorsement will be sought from livestock keepers associations as well as other like-minded organisations worldwide before seeking international recognition by governments.

The second event was a write-shop co-organized with the World Initiative for Sustainable Pastoralism. The outcome

will be a book analysing experiences with niche-marketing of livestock products from local breeds. Some 19 participants from 14 countries in four continents discussed marketing of cashmere fibre from goats, different types of sheep wool, goat meat and leather products and camel milk and wool. The book is expected to be released in 2009.



**Top left: Ilse Kohler-Rollefson of LPP Germany making a point during the workshop on Livestock Keepers' Rights. Top right: Julieta van Thuengen, INTA, Argentina, and Mpho Mazubane, SCIENTIFIC ROETS, South Africa, at the write-shop on niche marketing. Bottom left: Stephen Law of EMG, South Africa, giving his views during the workshop on Livestock Keepers' Rights. Bottom right: Abdul Raziq, SAVE, Pakistan and Maryam Mohamed Lemine, TIVISKI, Mauritania at the write-shop on niche marketing.**

## REGIONAL NEWS

### LPPS launches an innovative product : paper from camel dung

For Lokhit Pashu-Palak Sansthan (LPPS), after the camel milk ice-cream that has featured at the annual Pushkar Fair in Rajasthan over the past two years, the fair was the site of the launch of another unique product. Handmade paper produced from the dung of camels!

A variety of paper products like notebooks, diaries and greeting cards made from this paper were up for sale at the fair, and were bought eagerly by the visitors to the fair. First reactions varied from amazement to amusement, naturally. Paper from dung....unbelievable, but true! Camel dung contains some undigested fibre which can be converted into paper which is both ecologically friendly and a novelty for the public. The waste product from the process is also a good fertilizer for agricultural fields.

According to the Director of LPPS, Hanwant Singh Rathore, this new product illustrates the myriad ways in which the



**LPPS Director Hanwant Singh Rathore talks about the paper made from camel dung at the Pushkar Fair in Rajasthan.**

camel-keeping can benefit the ecosystem, and also opens up another option for increasing the income of camel

LPPS has teamed up with Mahima Mehra of Haathi Chaap for the production of this hand-made paper from camel dung.

#### Curious onlookers and buyers through the LPPS stall at the Pushkar Fair



pastoralists like the Raika who have been associated with camel rearing in Rajasthan for centuries.

This also falls in line with the LPPS mission of encouraging sustainable livelihoods for pastoralists in order to continue with their profession of camel rearing, despite difficult circumstances.

Having been involved in the production of paper from the dung of elephants from Amber Fort in Jaipur for the past five years, Ms. Mehra was gung-ho about turning her attention to an animal species that is synonymous with Rajasthan, a state which also has a history of hand-made paper making.

**-Namitha Dipak, LPPS**

For more details on the product and other information, contact the Director of LPPS at [lpss@sify.com](mailto:lpss@sify.com)

## Local perceptions of grassland change and priorities for conservation of natural vegetation in Banni, Gujarat

By Pankaj N. Joshi\*

**Pankaj Joshi discusses a study of local inhabitants including pastoralists in 31 villages of the Banni grasslands in Gujarat state of India. The study reveals their perceptions of the environmental changes, and their priorities for conservation of the natural vegetation in the region. Involvement of communities will help to formulate focused development plans that have more likelihood of success.**

As part of the Banni grassland development program, a study was conducted by a GUIDE team in the Banni region of Gujarat State located in the westernmost end of India in the period May-December 2008.

Its main objective was to examine the local perceptions of grassland change, regeneration potentiality, socio-economic status, and factors that cause degradation of the vegetation resources in the Banni. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) was employed to generate the socio-economic profile of interviewed villages or hamlets.

Information on vegetation deterioration and changes in species composition significant to the sustainable management of grassland was obtained through interviews with 52 elderly maldharies (pastoralists) and local inhabitants living in 31 villages in Banni. Local people had observed a change in the surrounding habitat from grassland to woodland (mainly dominated by *Prosopis juliflora*, locally called Gando Bavar) during their lifetime and considered it primarily a result of frequent intensive drought, dams constructed on flooding rivers in Banni and due to declining rainfall. From discussion



Photos courtesy author

### Interviews with the local stakeholders in the Banni grasslands

with local inhabitants it emerged that the Banni communities are highly dependent on the natural grassland for various purposes.

In particular, nine woody species were useful for construction of traditional houses called Bhunga, four for medicine and 22 for livestock fodder. Highly preferred and declining species were characteristically large wild thorny trees with edible fruits viz.

*Acacia nilotica subsp. indica* (Bavar), *Prosopis cineraria* (Kandho), and *Salvadora persica* (Kharijar).

Some of the local highly preferred grass species were also considered to be declining in the local environs; they included *Dichanthium annulatum* (Jinjvo), *Cenchrus ciliaris* (Dhaman), *Sporobolus fertilis* (Khevai), and *Chloris barbata* (Siyarpuchha).

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E-mail: joshi\_pn@yahoo.com

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The study furthermore identified a close coincidence between the interest in

## What are the Banni grasslands?

Banni refers to an arid region in the western state of Gujarat in India that is covered with coarse and low perennial grasses like *Desmostachya bipinnata* (Dhrab), *Sporobolus marginatus* (Dhrabad), *Dichanthium annulatum* (Jinjvo), *Cenchrus ciliaris* (Dhaman), *Sporobolus fertilis* (Khevai), and *Chloris barbata* (Siyarpuchha); and sparsely distributed colonies of *Cynodon dactylon* (Chhabar), *Dactyloctenium indicum* (Madhanu), *Eleusine compressa* (Nanu Mandhanu); besides sedge like *Eleocharis atropurpurea* (Nano Chiyo), *Cyperus rotundus* (Chiyo), *Cyperus alopecuroides* (Kaluro) and coarse and pioneer colonising grasses like *Aeluropus lagopoides* (Khariyu) and *Cressa cretica*

(Oin) occur extensively. Undershrub like *Suaeda fruticosa* (Lano), *Suaeda maritimum* (Moto Lano), *Suaeda nudiflora* (Lano), and *Tamarix aphylla* (Lai), occur abundantly all over especially in the places where water logging occurs in pools during the rainy season and sedges with annual grasses also occur around the fringes of such pooling spots.

The soil of Banni is inherently saline and consists of recent alluvium mixed at places with Aeolian sandy deposit and the entire area has deep to very deep clayey and coarse textured soils in discontinuous patches.

The climate of the Banni is arid therefore, the temperature is high during most of the time and it reaches a maximum of 48-49° C during May-June (the hottest months). The winter temperature goes down to 10° C with January and February being the coldest months. The total annual rainfall, occurring through southwest monsoon between June and September, is very low with an average of 317 mm per year with a coefficient of variation of 65% and droughts are a recurring phenomenon.



conserving tree species diversity near the natural water resources and priorities of local inhabitants which included protection of plenty of large trees (including many fruit trees viz. *Mangifera indica* (Ambo), *Cordia dichotoma* (Gunda), and *Pithecellobium dulce* (Gorasamli), improvement of woody fodder tree and grass species regeneration, and reduction of overgrazing pressure on grasslands.

From the interviews it was clear that practically all informants had noted deterioration in the natural grassland ecosystem in Banni region during their lifetime. Some of the oldest people in the group said that the decline had been particularly happening since the 1950s, while younger people said it had been expressed since the mid- 1960s, after introduction of *Prosopis juliflora* - an invasive plant.

Until some decades previously, the grassland and other natural vegetation were dense with healthy environment. Fodder and fruits trees had become rare and were growing only near water sources, which are again conserved by few people. A few trees had become extinct or

would become extinct from this area, including *Acacia leucophloea* (Harmo Baval), *Prosopis stephaniana* (Bethi Khijadi), *Suaeda katchensis* (Moto Lano) and *Prosopis cineraria* (Kandho).

Earlier most of the ponds had dense vegetation cover including palatable grass species and fodder trees that remained long into the dry season; now the grasses and woody tree species had become scattered and water pools had dried out. Focusing management strategies on increasing populations of such declining and highly preferred tree and grass species, by active restoration and grazing policies, would enhance the natural resource value and biodiversity wealth considerably and thereby the quality of life for the local inhabitants.

The following recommendations are suggested by local inhabitants for conservation, management and sustainable utilization of the fragile grassland ecosystem of Banni region.

## Observations and Recommendations

1. People had some complaints concerning management of the grasslands

in past decades. First, they felt that the district authorities were not serious about restoring or conserving the natural grassland resources but were concerned about completing the project and second, there were no controls on migratory livestock coming from rest of the state during good rainfall year, which resulted in more burden on native grass species as well as grassland ecosystem.

2. Sometimes, illegal logging of valuable tree species, *Prosopis cineraria* (Kandho) and *Acacia nilotica subsp. indica* (Bavar), caused serious deterioration of native tree species.

3. Most respondents preferred the previously dense grasses with tree cover and would like it to be restored. They also suggested some preferred species including grass and trees to be restored at various degraded sites with few amended techniques, but often without clear ideas about how that should be done.

4. Better management practices and

grazing systems were also proposed by a few respondents. People in general preferred their own grazing route as well as their traditional free grazing system between each adjoining villages, but they had difficulties agreeing on stall feeding of livestock.

5. Some respondents stated that a good option would be to protect regeneration of grass species and other fodder tree species by cutting the surrounding *P. juliflora*. According to them, charcoal making activities from this woody invasive species would also generate extra income or benefit to poorest of the poor in each villages.

6. Although it was difficult for local inhabitants to give exact ideas about grassland management in the Banni overall, they were able to define traditional strategies to manage their own grazing area that would improve the status of grasslands and maintain fodder tree species diversity.

Strategies are needed to ensure all pastoralist communities and poor households are able to benefit equally from native grasslands of Banni Region.

However, development plans aimed towards these communities need to blend policies and technologies with indigenous knowledge systems held by the communities. Several grassland development or restoration efforts in Banni region that were imposed through the various agencies in the 1990s collapsed shortly after implementation due to lack of ownership as the communities were never involved during the planning stages.

Therefore, understanding and involvement of such communities will lead to focused development plans which will have a higher probability of success upon implementation.

**See also article on the Banni buffalo overleaf.**

## News and Events

**SAFE DRINKING WATER:** LPPS was invited to participate in a National Consultation on "**Safe Drinking Water Act: Protect Public Health from Source to Tap**" organized by **Jal Bhagirathi Foundation at Jodhpur on September 27 2008.**

Panels formed the previous day were invited to share their findings and recommendations on the following topics: "Drinking water standards, monitoring, compliance and enforcement", "Public access to information about drinking water quality and community management of drinking water from purification to distribution", "Protection of drinking water sources and catchments" and "Roles and responsibilities of the Public, Government and Industry to ensure availability of safe and uncontaminated drinking water". Among those who spoke were the Chairperson of the Jal Bhagirathi Foundation, Maharaja Gaj Singh, Shri Agam Mathur, Chief Engineer of PHED, Dr. Maxine Olson the UNDP Resident Representative, and Shri Ashwani Bhagat, Special Secretary, Water Resources Department, Government of Rajasthan.

**CRIC-7:** LPPS Coordinator to the DRYNET Project, Namitha Dipak, along with other DRYNET representatives, attended the CRIC-7 at Istanbul, Turkey. At a side event on November 6 2008 on "The Myth of the Wastelands: mobile pastoralism in the drylands", Ms. Dipak gave a presentation on behalf of LPP and LPPS entitled "The role of pastoralism in the conservation of dryland ecosystems". which highlighted the various ecosystem services provided by pastoralists, in particular, the Raika pastoralists of Rajasthan. An overview of pastoralism in India, the challenges faced by the pastoralists, and some positive proactive examples of innovative livelihood alternatives from different parts of India were also mentioned.

**INFORMATION MANAGEMENT:** We live in a digital world, and information is increasingly being received and disseminated through digital means. In order to keep on top of trends, organization and appropriate tools are essential, whether it is for a small NGO or a large institution. Every institution can record its history in an organized manner, and archive its resources,

whether printed or audio-visual material efficiently, to enable themselves and other interested parties to retrieve the information easily. A four day workshop on "Information Management in the Digital Age" was organized in December 2008 by the Centre for Science and Environment, a pioneering environmental NGO with vast experience in documentation and research-based campaigning in Delhi.

Namitha Dipak of LPPS participated in this workshop along with other participants from different parts of India. The workshop provided inputs on tools and techniques to document, disseminate and archive important information like news items and audio-visual material. Practical exercises were conducted and besides this, many useful tips were shared by the dedicated and highly motivated team of instructors.

**BOOK in BRAILLE:** A classic treatise of traditional water harvesting systems of Rajasthan, "Aaj bhi khare hain talaab" by Anupam Mishra has now been printed in the Indian Braille script by the Delhi Blind Relief Association. This is apparently one of the only books after Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography to be printed in Braille.

## PHOTO FEATURE

### The Banni buffalo of Gujarat

A few hundred kilometers south of Jaisalmer in Rajasthan is a region known as Kutch. Kutch is a low-lying and largely barren peninsula in the western most part of Gujarat. But during the monsoons, extensive parts of this low-lying land are flooded by rainfall and a large number of small rivers that drain into the area. This annual flooding has given rise to the Banni grasslands. The Banni supports a large number of different pastoralist groups, collectively known as Maldhari. The Maldhari herd camels, sheep, goats, cattle, and buffaloes; they produce ghee (clarified butter), wool, and handicrafts. Since the land is not suitable for agriculture, the region was by-passed by conventional development.

Over the last few decades, the Banni grasslands have seen serious environmental change due to the construction of dams that prevent the seasonal flooding. In addition, an exotic shrub that was introduced by means of air-seeding, *Prosopis juliflora*, has invaded a large area of the Banni grassland and replaced the nutritious grasses. This change in vegetation has had effects on the livestock population: cattle numbers have declined, since these animals thrived on the Banni grass; on the other hand, the number of buffaloes has increased.

The local Banni buffalo, not officially recognised as a distinct breed, is an amazing animal that produces even more milk with a higher fat content than the famous Murrah buffalo - which is normally regarded as India's premier breed.

Because the Banni buffalo shares some characteristics with the Murrah buffalo, animal scientists insisted that it was the same breed, although the Maldhari knew that their buffalo had a different history.

The Banni buffaloes also produce much of the milk that is consumed in Mumbai and other large cities. The breeders send many of their female animals to the urban dairies in Bombay, although only in their third or fourth lactation to make sure that they retain the female offspring.

The NGO Sahjeevan is helping the buffalo breeders to get this breed recognised and to establish a breeders' association. It has encouraged the breeders to organise an annual fair with competitions in which livestock is judged for beauty and milk yield. Sahjeevan has also convinced the National Dairy Development Board to install bulk coolers so as to be able to collect milk from remote villages. This has had a big impact on peoples' lives.



Scenes from the annual fair in 2008. Above: Getting a Banni buffalo ready for the beauty competition.

Middle: Milking competition in full swing. Below: An imposing specimen of Kankrej cattle breed.

Images are previews of a documentary film series on livestock produced by LPPS, LPP and Moving Images.