



**Darwin Initiative/D+ Project  
Half Year Report  
(due 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019)**

<b>Project reference</b>	25-012
<b>Project title</b>	Steppe up: Community-led recovery of Mongolia's iconic species and forest- steppe ecosystem
<b>Country(ies)/territory(ies)</b>	Mongolia
<b>Lead organisation</b>	Zoological Society of London
<b>Partner(s)</b>	Ministry of Environment and Tourism (MET), Governor Office of Arkhangai, Arkhangai Environmental Department (AED), Arkhangai Police Agency (APA), National University of Mongolia (NUM), Spirit Mongolia NGO (Spirit), Independent Research Institute of Mongolia (IRIM), Arkhangai Province Forest Unit
<b>Project leader</b>	Monica Wrobel
<b>Report date and number (e.g. HYR3)</b>	1 <sup>th</sup> April 2019 – 30 <sup>st</sup> September 2019, HYR2
<b>Project website/blog/social media etc.</b>	<a href="https://www.zsl.org/conservation/regions/asia/mongolia">https://www.zsl.org/conservation/regions/asia/mongolia</a>

**1. Outline progress over the last 6 months (April – Sept) against the agreed baseline timetable for the project (if your project has started less than 6 months ago, please report on the period since start up to end September).**

Following AR1 the project is on track to meet Year 2 milestones. Some notable events include:

- In the last report, community groups were called Forest User Groups (FUGs) as per Mongolian Environmental Law. Recent legislative amendments now require community groups to be called a 'Community Based Organisation' (CBO) to reflect wider natural resource management (i.e. including pasture). This has no technical project impact.
- A total of 47 capacity building activities have been conducted for CBOs involving 470 members with 37% of participants female.
- Three new CBOs have been established in *Jarantai*, *Jirh* and *Uvurteel* communities. There are now 11 CBOs in the LPA, encompassing around 85% of the LPA's total area.

**Output 1 – Focal Species Recovery.**

**Activity 1.2:** Updates were made to the biodiversity monitoring plan to include SMART patrolling, line transects for bird species, camera trapping for musk deer and point counts for marmots. Eight volunteer rangers are actively involved in biodiversity monitoring.

**Activity 1.3 - 1.4:** Year two biodiversity monitoring surveys were conducted for musk deer and marmot between June 18-24<sup>th</sup>. As the project was unable to conduct year one surveys on marmot, community members were trained on marmot point-count and camera-trap survey techniques. To survey musk deer, 23 cameras were installed in three sites identified by communities as important/threatened musk deer habitat. Surveys have been ongoing now for four months. In addition, six community sites were selected for marmot surveys, and fortnightly point-count surveys for marmots have been ongoing until their hibernation in September.

On the 16-22<sup>nd</sup> July, project advisor Gombobaatar Sundev (NUM) trained community rangers on focal bird species (saker falcon/steppe eagle) survey methodology (line transects) and species identification. Rangers have since conducted fortnightly bird species monitoring.

**Output 2 – Sustainable Forest Management.**

**Activity 2.3:** In align with the development of community forestry methods in August; the Arkhangai Forest Unit developed a forest management intervention plan for each CBO in October. These forest management intervention plans will guide CBO forestry management.

**Activity 2.4:** To support forestry management planning all CBOs have developed a forest area map. As a part of implementation, in June three CBO's installed winter shelter livestock fencing to prohibit livestock overgrazing in the forest. In November, forest cleaning has been planned with communities and local officials to support forest regeneration and income generation.

**Activities 2.5 - 2.6, and 2.9:** On June 23<sup>rd</sup> SMART training and piloting of patrolling in high-risk illegal logging areas was conducted in *Bayanbulag* CBO for seven community rangers. *Bayanbulag* CBO has now been conducting ongoing regular SMART patrols within their community boundary. On the 9 - 11<sup>th</sup> September, SMART patrol training and equipment was provided to volunteer community rangers in four additional CBOs. In support of communities and the LPA's SMART approach, local Arkhangai police participated in community patrolling and monitoring of illegal activities in the LPA (i.e. poaching, logging).

**Activity 2.8:** To improve awareness of CBO boundaries and LPA conservation, information boards were installed in each CBO. In total, 18 information boards were installed in July.

**Activity 2.10:** Year two forestry management workshop is planned for November 6–11<sup>th</sup>.

### **Output 3 – Sustainable Pasture Management.**

**Activity 3.1 - 3.2:** Soil nutrient and compaction surveys delayed until project year two, were conducted at 30 sites within the LPA South Tamir river basin. Initial survey results indicate that 17 sites are overgrazed by livestock. The full report, including piloting of different pasture management strategies for each CBO will be developed by the end of October. During the survey, CBO members attended training on pasture management, plant species identification, photo vegetation monitoring and soil sampling methodology.

**Activity 3.3:** To support LPA implementation of the Responsible Rangeland Regulation (RRR), the community boundaries and natural resources were mapped for 11 CBO pastoral areas. The ZSL Mongolia Country director and project officer visited the CBOs between 12-18<sup>th</sup> May and delivered training to support the development of 2019 Action Plans for seven CBOs.

**Activity 3.4:** On the 20 - 24<sup>th</sup> May, ZSL Project Officer and two CBO members participated in a Sustainable Fibre Alliance workshop in Ulaanbaatar. The two CBOs were evaluated by the Sustainable Fibre Alliance NGO on their eco-friendly livestock with cashmere standards.

**Activity 3.5:** The annual community workshop will be conducted by December, with the UCC meeting to approve and sign the RRR and identify suitable pasture management strategies.

### **Output 4 – Sustainable and Equitable Livelihoods.**

**Activity 4.1 & 4.3:** On July 24<sup>th</sup> a meeting with 25 members from six CBOs was organised. Livelihood diversification activities were discussed including the community exchange trip and procurement of equipment for CBO small business development (e.g. scaling dairy production). A consultancy to develop small business opportunities for each CBO in November is currently under review to complement work conducted by Arig Bank in year one. Small business plans will be developed for each CBO, including advising on potential ecotourism location and opportunities.

**Activity 4.2:** On the 13 - 14<sup>th</sup> September, the project organised a "Made in Arkhangai" trade fair. The exhibition has been expanding annually, and this year the Arkhangai Governor and officials attended and were positive of the trade fair and the LPA's high-quality dairy products. Participating LPA CBOs earned MNT from this event.

Eco-tourism has been tested from May – October in the *Temeenchuluu* CBO, raising MNT. A small ger camp was setup, with activities including horse tours and traditional Mongolian culture shows.

**Activity 4.5 & 4.6:** The UCC's executive director delivered a VSLA training workshop to 163 CBO members. In addition, three new CBOs established their VSLA groups, totaling 63 members (30 males and 33 females). These new VSLA's have raised MNT for their loan fund and MNT for their social fund.

### **Output 5 – Effective LPA Governance, Monitoring and Evaluation.**

**Activity 5.1 – 5.2:** The UCC all members' conference was conducted on 19<sup>th</sup> August with 80 members of seven CBOs in attendance. The purpose of the conference was to discuss the LPA

management structure, progress towards implementing the UCC's annual management plan, CBO level management plans, and daily LPA activity implementation. Other notable outcomes were the election of seven women to the Controlling Board from each CBO, and the approval of new UCC Executive Director (Munkhtuvshin. N) to lead and coordinate the UCC. To observe the UCC LPA governance model, on August 19 - 20<sup>th</sup>, Vice Ambassador of The British Embassy of Mongolia visited the project site and attended the UCC all members' conference.

**2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months. Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.**

Following the completion of project year one, ZSL evaluated Arig Bank to be making insufficient progress towards satisfactorily completing its agreed deliverables. As a result, ZSL made the decision to terminate its contract with Arig Bank. Arig Bank's activities will now be implemented by UCC Executive Director (who has significant VSLA and small business development expertise), ZSL (in support of new Country Director's community organisation and livelihood management experience) and through new consultancies to support business model development, ecotourism and cashmere development.

**2b. Have any of these issues been discussed with LTS International and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?**

Discussed with LTS: Yes

Formal change request submitted: No

Received confirmation of change acceptance No

**3a. Do you currently expect to have any significant (e.g., more than £5,000) underspend in your budget for this year?**

Yes  No  Estimated underspend: £

**3b. If yes, then you need to consider your project budget needs carefully.** Please remember that any funds agreed for this financial year are only available to the project in this financial year.

If you anticipate a significant underspend because of justifiable changes within the project, please submit a rebudget Change Request as soon as possible. There is no guarantee that Defra will agree a rebudget so please ensure you have enough time to make appropriate changes if necessary.

**4. Are there any other issues you wish to raise relating to the project or to Darwin's management, monitoring, or financial procedures?**

No.

**If you were asked to provide a response to this year's annual report review with your next half year report, please attach your response to this document. Additionally, if you were funded under R25 and asked to provide further information by your first half year report, please attach your response as a separate document.**

**Please note: Any planned modifications to your project schedule/workplan can be discussed in this report but should also be raised with LTS International through a Change Request. Please DO NOT send these in the same email.**

Please send your **completed report by email** to [Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk](mailto:Darwin-Projects@ltsi.co.uk). The report should be between 2-3 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message e.g. Subject: 25-035 Darwin Half Year Report**