



**Darwin Initiative/Darwin Plus Projects
Half Year Report
(due 31st October 2021)**

Project reference	Unique Funding Reference (UFR): DI 28-006
Project title	Protecting Mongolia's Gobi Desert for wild camels and herder communities
Country(ies)/territory(ies)	Mongolia
Lead organisation	Zoological Society of London, Outer Circle, NW1 4RY, UK
Partner(s)	Great Gobi 'A' Strictly Protected Area (GGASPA) Administration Office Collaborative Management Council (CMC) National University of Mongolia (NUM) Ministry of Environment and Tourism Mongolia (MET) UNDP/GEF ENSURE project
Project leader	Dr Tungalag Ulambayar ZSL Mongolia Country Director Tungalag.ulambayar@zsl.org +971771111138
Report date and number (e.g. HYR1)	HYR1
Project website/blog/social media	www.zsl.org/conservation/regions/asia/mongolia

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

Output 1: GGASPA monitoring programme is informing effective GGASPA and CMC management, and future-proofed by building the capacity of Mongolia's future conservationists.

The project organized a kick of meeting with project main partners in this output, including National University of Mongolia (NUM) researchers, UNDP/GEF ENSURE project and GGASPA Administration. ZSL and NUM mutually agreed approaches for implementing Biodiversity monitoring programme and signed the contract. Parties agreed to share available data and co-create the GGASPA biodiversity database.

Activity 1.1. Procurement process for field equipment for ongoing camera trap surveys and SMART patrols has started by ordering camera batteries and searching for smart phones for SMART app for rangers.

Activity 1.6. ZSL reviewed and updated the methodology of the camera trap research in GGASPA. Five water points which were selected to represent annually permanent water sources encompassing different habitat types and regions of the park that may be affected by varying anthropogenic pressures and climate change. In each water points, five cameras will be deployed (camera sensitivity will be programmed to high with a time interval of 30 seconds) in early November 2021. The camera data will be collected twice yearly: November and April.

Activity 1.8. Three Mongolian MSc applied to NUM to work on research of rangeland survey and wildlife camera trap study, and two will be recruited based on the competitive selection by ZSL, GGASPA Administration and NUM.

Activity 1.10. The project held an initial online meeting with ZSL London SMART expert regarding the methodology for SMART training, agreed to have SMART implementation plan including Training of Trainers from GGASPA Administration and NUM researchers.

Output 2: Scalable habitat management and waterhole restoration model areas are demonstrating effective conservation interventions to restore the Great Gobi 'A' Strictly Protected Area desert ecosystem, to support the recovery of Wild Camels Species and other biodiversity.

Activity 2.1. At meeting, it was agreed that NUM will produce a rangeland map of GGASPA and its bufferzone to define priority habitat management intervention sites as well as pasture management plan for buffer zone districts. ENSURE project agreed to share photo monitoring data and remote sensing data for the mapping.

Activity 2.2. ZSL team selected two waterholes (Zuun sharga and Choniin dov) in GGASPA to install solar-powered pump using participatory matrix ranking method by experts, including GGASPA, Mongolian WCPF, the Institute of Biology and ZSL. This assessment in 2020 included seven boreholes made in GGASPA and used criteria for number of species potentially accessing water, distance to closest water source, location on migration routes of camels, water charging capacity, and suitability for building a small pond for wildlife. The two highest scored waterholes from the seven were installed solar-powered pumps in 2020 funded by the NGS project.

Output 3: Collaborative and inclusive governance institutions are in place and making coordinated, landscape-level management decisions, employing adaptive management approaches informed by robust ecosystem monitoring.

Activity 3.1. ZSL team with (Dr. Tungalag U, Country director of ZSL Mongolia. Munkhtuvshin N, VSLA Officer, Delgerbilguun Y, Outreach and social research assistant, and Amartaivan U, Driver and Operation Assistant), made a round tour visiting the five bufferzone soums between 17-23 October, 2021. The trip also included Bayantooroi village (which is buffer zone bag of Tsogt soum (district) that hosts the GGASPA Administration Office) in Gobi-Altai aimag. Purpose of the round trip was to have project kick off meetings with soum authorities and Eco- clubs to introduce the new project, learn about their ongoing activities, and agree on draft MOU with Soum Buffer zone Councils. Meetings involved 198 people in six locations, including Soum Citizen Representative Khural or CRK, Soum Governor, relevant government officers like rangers, environmental inspectors, land specialists, food and agriculture specialists, welfare workers and pastureland officers. The mission achieved the objectives set in the trip agenda, and collected necessary information for further cooperation and logistics.

Activity 3.2. Due to local election this summer, CRK chairpersons were changed thus during the visit to GGASPA buffer zone soums (Activity 3.1), ZSL team met the newly elected CRK chairs and Soum Governors and discussed areas for Soum Buffer-zone management plan and ways to integrate with local plans.

Output 4: Ground-up awareness-raising about Great Gobi uniqueness by environmentally conscious GGASPA communities that are empowered with the skills and knowledge to improve livestock management and comply with the Responsible Rangeland Management Regulation (RRMR).

Activity 4.1. One of the goals of visiting GGASPA buffer zone soums (Activity 3.1) was a meeting with Eco-clubs of secondary schools in buffer zone soums. The team met the school director, eco-club teacher and eco-club students at schools, and learned about eco-club activities and plan. ZSL team introduced project activities related to awareness raising and planned work with Eco-clubs. In Bayantooroi village, where GGASPA Administration office is located, the team met the eco-club of the village school at their request and agreed to collaborate for awareness raising. Most eco-clubs had 20-30 members and meetings involved 86 pupils from six schools.

Output 5: Remote rural herders have improved wellbeing and financial stability built through a successful and sustainable community banking model that supports sustainable resource use efforts e.g. through rangeland management actions and Eco Clubs.

Activity 5.1. This activity will start from late November when rural households moved to their winter camps.

Activity 5.2. Munkhtuvshin, ZSL VSLA expert, participated in the GGASPA buffer zone soums mission (Activity 3.1), and introduced VSLA and key VSLA activities and discussed about pasture management in buffer zone soums and shared experience of other herders. The team also collected statistical information of herder community including livelihood, livestock and contact details of officers. VSLA officer will plan for creating VSLAs and pasture management training based on the information collected considering specifics of each soum.

2a. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments/lessons learnt that the project has encountered over the last 6 months (for COVID-19 specific delays/problems, please use 2b). Explain what impact these could have on the project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

The rangeland health survey (aboveground biomass, species richness, soil stability) inside SPA (5 plots) and Bufferzone areas (year 1 and 3) has to be conducted using remote sensing data and other studies results due to delayed commencement of the project. This survey should be done in summer during growing season.

2b. Please outline any specific issues which your project has encountered as a result of COVID-19. Where you have adapted your project activities in response to the pandemic, please briefly outline how you have done so here. Explain what residual impact there may be on your project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

No issues encountered.

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

Discussed with LTS: No

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?

No

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. Please DO NOT send these in the same email as your report.

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

No issues to raise

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.

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. 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: 25-001 Darwin Half Year Report**

Unique Funding Reference (UFR): [DWIN-ASC18-002](#)