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FINAL REPORT

PROJECT 35.01.08

SUPPORT AND STRENGTH THE BEING ESTABLISHED HERDER'S COMMUNITIES

PERIOD: JULY 2008 TO JULY 2009



Argali wild sheep (Ovis ammon) habitat at the Unjuul mountain area

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TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Aimag</i>	Second level of Government; largest political territorial division in Mongolia (English equivalent: “province”)
<i>Soum</i>	Third level of Government; second largest political territorial division in Mongolia (English equivalent: “district”)
<i>Bag</i>	Fourth level of Government; smallest political territorial division in Mongolia
<i>Suom Khural</i>	District citizen representative
<i>Ger</i>	Traditional nomad dwelling

Abbreviations

CBWM	Community Based Wildlife Management
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
GPS	Global Positioning System
MNET	Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NP	National Park

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We are thankful to all stakeholders and local communities who live around the Unjuul mountain area for their involvement, understanding and support the team in the implementation of the project activities.

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SUMMARY

The Argali wild sheep's historical home range is threatened of disappearance and the area is one of them in Mongolia. The focus of this particular project was to support and strength the being established herder's communities at the area and build local level capacity while supporting the herders' initiatives. The report presents activities and achievements from July 2008 to July 2009 as set in the project document. During implementation of the 46.09.06 (Rufford Small Grant) project it was clearly showed that the water supply for both domestic and wild life was the most essential and priority issue for the area and the problem required urgent solution.

The project team and the herder community members of the Buren soum effectively cooperated with local stakeholders particularly with the soum governor administration and were repaired, restored one hand operating (the project), built and equipped one new wells (with co-financing) in the community managed area.

One of the important achievements of the project is the ban on the Argali wild sheep (*Ovis ammon*), Government of Mongolia prohibited the trophy hunting on Argali for two years in the Unjuul mountain areas. Poaching and violation of law is not observed for 3 years in the area. The project team are still working and lobbying on idea and initiative to create an Argali breeding and study centre at the site along with the community managed area. As we had reported last year the Institute of Biology Academy of sciences agreed on cooperation and the Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism of Mongolia willing to support if we could find and secure appropriate financial sources.

INTRODUCTION

The population of argali in Mongolia seems to be declining rapidly due primarily to poaching and competition with domestic sheep and goats, which have increased over the past decade. At the same time, argali trophy hunting has been increasing (Amgalanbaatar.S, Reading.R.P, Lkhagvasuren.B & Batsukh.N. Mountain Ungulates Research 2002).

Official government figures from Mongolia's Scientific Authority (the Mongolian Academy of Sciences) estimated 50,000 argali in 1975, 60,000 animals in 1985, but only 13-15,000 in 2001 (Dulamtsereen et al. 1975, General & Experimental Biological Institute 1986, Institute of Biology 2001). The estimated area inhabited by argali declined from about 264,000 km² in 1985 to about 48,000 km² in 2001 (General & Experimental Biological Institute 1986, Institute of Biology 2001).

Argali undoubtedly suffer from competition with livestock, particularly domestic sheep and goats, for limited forage and water (Mallon et al. 1997, Amgalanbaatar and Reading 2000, Schuerholz 2001). Livestock numbers in Mongolia increased dramatically after the fall of communism, but especially after 1993 when most herds were privatized (Amgalanbaatar and Reading 2000, Shagdarsuren, 1999). The total number of livestock in Mongolia increased from 24.7 million animals in 1989 to 42 million in 2008. This has resulted in substantial degradation of pasturelands throughout large portions of the country (Schuerholz 2001, Finch 2002). In addition, as the number of livestock increases, herders move their animals into more marginal lands that were traditionally little grazed, often displacing wild ungulates in the process (Lushchekina 1994, Mallon et al. 1997, Amgalanbaatar and Reading 2000, Schuerholz 2001).

Poaching is another major and growing cause of argali decline in Mongolia (Mallon et al. 1997, Amgalanbaatar and Reading 2000).

Other threats to Mongolia include habitat degradation due to off-road vehicle use, mining operations, and possibly desertification due to global warming. Trophy hunting poses less of a threat, at least given the relatively low recent quotas, but could affect local populations if not well managed. Removal of all trophy sized males from a population or an excessive amount of activity associated with trophy hunting could negatively impact a hunted population, although this has not been well studied (Wegge 1997, Schuerholz 2001, Shackleton 2001). Alternatively, the presence of trophy hunters could deter poaching and, if funds generated from trophy hunting were used for conservation, the overall impact of well-managed trophy hunting to the harvested population could even be positive (Johnston 1997, Shackleton 2001).

The estimates of the last 3 surveys of argali during the last 26 years suggest that argali population rapidly decreasing mostly due to human influences. These factors are maybe hunting, habitat degradation, and competition with livestock for forage and water. All these factors are examples of the mismanagement of argali, which soon or later may cause complete extinction of this species (Amgalanbaatar S, Reading. R.P, Lkhagvasuren. B & Batsukh N. Mountain Ungulates Research 2002).

Finally, the traditional herding practices and nomadic way of lifestyle will not be changed for a long time in Mongolia therefore it need to be developed and introduced

different appropriate adaptive managements, combination of solutions that could promote and improve living standards and livelihoods of a local people. It is clear that any conservation activities will not have success if it will ignore the native people who are living in harmony with the nature in generation to generation.

The project purpose was to promote community based conservation and sustainable natural resource management approach in the mountain-steppe by establishing herder's community managed areas basing on protection of Argali wild sheep (*Ovis ammon*) as a key species.

The Argali are the most important game species for big horn trophy hunting but little material benefit to the impoverished local people.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the project were:

- ✚ Support and strength the being established herder's communities and facilitate implementation of their work plan.
- ✚ Construct well for livestock, restore and rehabilitate open spring water for wildlife in the community managed area.
- ✚ Train the stakeholders on alternative income generating activities and improve understanding about conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

1. GENERAL INFORMATION ABOUT THE AREA

PROJECT SITE: As a result of analysis of appropriate research data and information the South and North Unjuul, Bichigt, Argali mountain areas of Buren and Bayan-Unjuul soums (village) territory of Tuv aimag (province) that locate in the central steppe zone part of Mongolia were selected as a more suitable place for creation of community managed area. The site situates 185 km far from to the south west of Ulaanbaatar. Survey data says that Argali sheep distribution area covers 322 sq km or 2.03-5.08 percent of the Tuv aimag territory and there were observed trends to expand its range and increases in numbers during the last few years. 285 Argali sheep estimated in the selected area and the density is 3 individual animals in 1000 ha. This is the 1.9 percent from the total of country resources.

The selected site serves as a crossroad of moving and migrating point of the central steppe part's Argali sheep.

Latitude	47° 07' 52" N	46° 52' S
Longitude	105° 29' W	105° 30' E

BENEFICIARIES: 16 households with 96 family members from Buren soum

NATURAL AND CLIMATE CONDITION

Geographical location. The selected project site or South, North Unjuul, Bichigt and Erdenekhairkhan mountain groups at the borders of Buren and Bayan-Unjuul soums (village) territory of Tuv aimag (province) locates 1300 m above sea level in the central steppe zone part of Mongolia. The area situates 25-30 km from both soum centers, 172 km from Tuv aimag center Zuunmod city and 185 km far from to the south west of Ulaanbaatar. The area is characterized by mid-low hills and higher mountains with deep breaks of steppe zone whose top - and north-facing slopes are rocky with cliffs and the rocky terrains often last 100-300 m. The area is 94916.7 ha or 11.0 percent from the total territories of Bayan-Unjuul (482762 ha) and Buren (377947) soums.

The south Unjuul (1820 m), north Unjuul (1735m) and Erdenekhangai (1698 m) mountain areas are untouched and have many specific natural features.

Climate. The climate is sharply continental with well-marked seasons of the year. It is characterized by large diurnal and annual variations in temperature. The temperature reaches +29°C in July during the hottest month and -23°C in January. The annual average precipitation is 273 mm. It is very usual that the dry weather lasts from mid of spring until mid of summer seasons in the area.



Fauna and flora. The area has a fauna that includes a number of globally and nationally threatened species such as Argali sheep (*Ovis ammon*), Siberian ibex (*Capra sibirica*), Black tailed gazelle (*Gazelle subgutturosa*), Mongolian gazelle (*Procapra gutturosa*), Grey wolf (*Canis lupus*), Eurasian lynx (*Felis linx*), Manul (*Felis manul*, or *Pallas' cat*) Corsac fox (*Vulpes corsac*), Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*), Ceneraceous vulture (*Aegypius monachus*), Steppe eagle (*Aquila rapax*), Saker falcon (*Falco cherrug*). And the site is also home to many other important species such as Red deer/Elk (*Cervus elaphus*), Roe deer (*Capreolus pygargus*), Badge (*Meles meles*), Hedgehog (*Erinaceus auritus*), Marmot (*Marmota sibirica*), etc.



Flora and vegetation of the site is represented and dominated by typical steppe region's plant species but the mid and alpine parts of the mountains attract attention with many native and rare trees, shrubs, grasses, flower and medicinal plant species that are characteristic of forest steppe zone vegetation.

The Argali sheep (*Ovis ammon*)

The argali sheep (*Ovis ammon*) is listed as threatened in the Mongolian Red Book (1997) of threatened and endangered species and included in Appendix II of CITES. A combination of intensive hunting, poaching, natural disasters such as severe winters and droughts and competition with livestock for pasture has greatly reduced argali numbers and these negative impacts obstacle to its natural growth, stable inhabiting and might drive to population decline, distribution area decreases and habitat fragmentation.



Currently 13000-15000 argali sheep inhabit 47815.0 km² territory of the country (Argali sheep population census in Mongolia -Report, 2001).

Argali sheep distribution areas in the project site by two soums

Soums/villages	Soum's total territory (km ²)	Distribution area of Argali sheep (km ²)	Argali sheep distribution area from the total territory (%)
Bayan-Unjuul	4827.62	245.31	5.08
Buren	3779.47	76.68	2.03

License hunting. Foreign hunter's camps exist at the Unjuul and Bichigt mountains. But the area is currently under a ban for trophy hunting on Argali wild sheep for two years.

Business activities. The nomadic stock-breeding is the only business of local people at the selected project site and they are processing and using raw materials of cattle in own needs and are going to a market to sale some excessive outputs of livestock. Sometimes hunting on Marmots and Mongolian gazelle for a meat takes place in a small scale. Water supply is provided by hand operating wells and rain water for all of the area. A cattle duns or bio-fuels are the main energy source. The area has 15474 head of different domestic animals (horse, camel, caw, goat and sheep) and from this 84 percents are sheep and goat.

2. PROJECT MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS MEETINGS

Basic data and information are available on two soums of the project site as well as collected last year.

It has been undertaken the planned field trips to the project site. During the field trips organized meetings with herders and local authorities.



Meeting at the summer camp



Herders' children during the summer holidays

The team visited herders' families in their summer and winter camps who are living in the community conservation area from both soums. More than 120 herders, local citizens and soums' governor administration representatives have been met in different places during the field trips and project time.

Local authorities supported and cooperated closely with project team and herder's communities for successful implementation of the project.

The project team had continued to provide necessary advices and new ideas for locals to overcome their challenges and to use the available resources and opportunities in nature conservation and its sustainable use. We also advised them on the activities to improve livestock production and herders' livelihoods. In doing so, we shared with them the expertise and experience of the herders in other areas of Mongolia.

After the meetings, we met with active individual persons and advised them how to encourage others and empower herders, how to support the herders' initiatives in developing their collaboration.

3. THE TRAINING WORKSHOPS

The project organized two training-workshops. The first one organized at the site involving all herder community members in July on different issues including conservation measures, sustainable natural resource use, law enforcement and government policy to support communities on pasture management and nature conservation. It was planned only one training as well as set in the project document but we agreed with herder community members that we can spend the budget more efficiently and organize second training in Ulaanbaatar, because there was planned joint training on community development, reduction of poverty and alternative income generation activities and exchange experiences of different communities from other regions. The capacity building training-workshop organized in November 2008 and 5 members of herder community attended the workshop and trained on above mentioned issues.

The herder community members provided with simple brochures, guidance and training materials that will help to get ideas on different environmental issues and practices.

It took place two times free broadcasting on Mongolian radio.

The training workshops and entire project activities focused on the following topics:

- ✚ Improve all local stakeholders knowledge on advantages of community-based pastoral development approach and convince them that its implementation offers the best possibilities to overcome the present problems of pastoral economy and pastoral management
- ✚ Discuss alternative development options for mobile livestock keeping under the present ecological and socio-economic circumstances
- ✚ To provide full information on Argali wild sheep and other wildlife conservation issues, their ecology, main habitats and importance for the ecosystem as an indicator
- ✚ To assist them in identifying ways and possibilities of their collaboration and setting up their goals and plans for their livelihood improvement and conservation.
- ✚ To improve cooperation among herders and to promote their relationships and cooperation with governmental, non-governmental organizations and private sectors

Key observations:

- ✚ The herder groups and local stakeholders supported the project's conservation approach while improving the pastureland management to promote the wildlife conservation
- ✚ The brochures and other materials circulated had played an obvious awareness-building role in highlighting the issues important to wildlife conservation and sustainable pastureland management and served as an efficient tool for making local governments and herders better understand the role of improved pastureland management and ways for its implementation and its benefits

4. THE MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The project have been introduced a collaborative management approach for conservation of Argali sheep and other wildlife, and trained the herder groups on how to protect and manage important habitats of wildlife while improving their livelihoods. As result of the project activities and negotiation with Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism and local stakeholders the Argali sheep trophy hunting stopped for one more year in the area.

The project team and the herder community members of the Buren soum effectively cooperated with local stakeholders particularly with the soum governor administration and were repaired, restored one hand operating (the project), built and equipped one new wells (with co-financing) in the community managed area.

It was made decision on co-ownership of the wells by herders. The main result was an improvement of a water supply regulation and it would definitely influence for both proper pastureland management and wildlife conservation in the area.

The herders group of Buren soum together with the project team found small amount of additional funding for tree planting and more than 100 saplings of different shrubs and trees were planted near the spring water at the site.

CONCLUSIONS

The main constraints for the locals and the herders for improvement of their livelihood were and still existing poverty, unemployment, lack of funding, poor management capabilities, inadequacies of knowledge and technology, lack of information and communication as well as inter-sector co-ordination in Mongolia.

We see the community based natural resource and collaborative management approaches as one of the best solutions and ways to overcome the above mentioned problems. It will be improved step by step the close cooperation of the local authorities, the local herders and other stakeholders in order to together identify problems and find solutions for their common future and improvised livelihood.

We see an integrated approach to rangeland management as a key to the coexistence of traditional herding practices and biodiversity conservation in and

around the community managed area, with strong linkages to the improvement of livestock and product marketing and enterprise development.

The project team will continue to support the locals and local authorities on solution of the above mentioned issues.