

Darwin Initiative

Half Year Report (due 31 October each year)

Project Ref. No.	162/12/029
Project Title	Steppe Forward Programme: Training Conservationists for Mongolia's Future
Country(ies)	Mongolia
UK Organisation	Zoological Society of London
Collaborator(s)	National University Mongolia
Report date	31 October 2005
Report No. (HYR 1/2/3/4)	3
Project website	www.steppeforward.com

1. Outline progress since October 2004 against the agreed baseline timetable for the project

Year 3 of the programme began on 1st May 2005

October 04

Agreed outputs:

- Six month report submitted to Darwin Initiative.
- Field course report submitted to Darwin Initiative.
- Field course report in Mongolian submitted to National University Mongolia (NUM).
- Two steering committee meetings were held.
- Article published in Mongol Messenger (English language Mongolian national newspaper) (copy to DI).

Other progress:

- Awarded \$18,000 from World Bank and \$12,000 from ZSL to produce a Guide to Birds of Mongolia.
- Mongolian counterpart submitted 6 month report to the Whitley Fund for Nature.

November 04

Agreed outputs:

- Project manager and counterpart present talks at ZSL.
- Conservation club arranged a day of activities with environmental NGOs including book sales to raise revenue.
- Project counterpart gave publicity talks at a Whitley Award event, Cambridge Conservation Forum and to UK schoolchildren.

Other progress:

- Conservation club merges with Ecology club to form a group of 100 active members
- Conservation club wins a university prize for having the most effective and useful activities.
- Participants of 2004 field courses present their field course project work to NUM lecturers and students.
- ZSL volunteer joins the project for 12 months.
- Began process of having Mongolian Journal of Biological Sciences registered with BIOSIS.

December 04

Agreed outputs:

- Assisted students with CV presentation.
- Puzzle section of primary school book planned out.
- Community project had six herder group meetings, one workshop and met with IPECON consultants.
- Four conservation club meetings and a weekend walk organised.
- Distributed SFP flyers around UK universities and organisations.
- Printing of ZSL Conservation Programmes publicity leaflet on Training Conservationists for Mongolia's Future (copy to DI).

Other progress:

- Opened a WWF sponsored noticeboard showing conservation club activities.
- Advertised 2005 field courses to students.

January 2005

Agreed outputs:

- Within the community project 13 families in Dersen Us formed a group and started pasture management activities, and five families formed a group in Khalzan mountain.
- Fuel efficient stove makers started production.
- Conservation club renamed 'Ecology and Erdem (wisdom) club'. Conducted several events.
- Conservation club president interviewed on national Mongolian TV.
- Mongolian national radio interview with project counterpart.
- Article about Ecology-Erdem club published in NUM publication (No. 57/096/).

Other progress:

- Club members collected 5000 letters and 140,000T from students and staff at NUM to support people affected by the earthquake in Japan in October 2004. The letters were given to the Minister of Natural Hazards and Ambassador of Japan. The event was televised on Japanese and Mongolian national TV.

February 05

Agreed outputs:

- Puzzle section of primary school book completed and translated with help from Erdem club.
- Visited Omnogobi herder community groups to discuss progress.
- Students interviewed and chosen for eco-herder course work (both chosen were SFP field course alumni) and prepared training presentations.
- Erdem club prepared open day: invited Parliamentary Speaker to talk; Mongolian national TV and radio media were present; prepared and handed out their CVs to conservation organisations.
- Confirmed five of six visiting lecturers for 2005 field courses.

Other progress:

- Contract signed with World Bank and work started by senior author on Field Guide to Birds of Mongolia book.

March 05

Agreed outputs:

- Steering committee meeting.
- Volume 2 Number 2 of Mongolian Journal of Biological Sciences printed and distributed.
- Journal listed in Zoological Abstracts.
- Experience sharing workshop organised and implemented by the community project.
- Two week Eco-herder workshop held at NUM – trained 2 park rangers, 2 volunteer rangers from herder groups, 1 park specialist and 2 NUM students.
- Erdem club organised open day in collaboration with Alliance for Religion and Conservation (ARC) attended by 200 people. Televised by all Mongolian TV channels.

- Received 96 applications for 60 places on field courses, 65 students selected.
- Article on SFP published in Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust magazine 'Lapwing' (copy to DI).

Other progress:

- Employed Mongolian project co-ordinator.
- One week visit and assessment by ZSL Conservation Programmes Director.
- Confirmed future collaboration with NUM President, Vice President and Dean of Biology Faculty.
- Discussions with Ministry of Nature and Environment (MNE) Secretary General to promote SFP and form future collaborations.
- Four student places on field courses sponsored by 'Friends of Bourne Woods' (UK charity).

April 05

Agreed outputs:

- Community project made a trip to the south Gobi where seven herder groups have been established. Conducted PRA with two of these groups.
- Preliminary visit to Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park with two NUM students and observed wildlife.
- Article written about the Eco-herder project and published in a Mongolian local newspaper.
- For 'World Day' the Erdem club invited Y. Barsbold (Minister of Nature and Environment) to talk about his plans for sustainably developing Mongolia. The event was televised and about 250 students, lecturers and NME employees attended.
- An article on the Erdem club's activities was printed in a Mongolian Daily newspaper (copy to DI).

Other progress:

- Project counterpart participated in two conferences: 'Biodiversity and Sustainable Development of Livestock Husbandry' organised by NUM and the University of Halle, and 'Integrated System Modelling' organised by the Hovsgol Project and the Global Environmental Faculty.
- Created a tripled contract between SFP, Department of Studies of Biology Faculty and students outlining the duties and responsibilities of the parties involved.

May 05

Agreed outputs:

- Community groups in the south Gobi were visited.
- 5-6 Erdem Club members secured work as scientific research assistants on World Bank biodiversity Hovsgol Project during the summer.
- SFP staff organised meeting with field course participants.

Other progress:

- Erdem Club helped organise a biology competition for high school students from 21 aimags.
- Erdem club obtained funding from ARC for an essay writing competition.
- Project counterpart attended a Nature Conservancy (TNC) seminar 'Conservation by Design'.

June 05

Agreed outputs:

- Erdem club produced first edition of their newsletter ('Our World').
- Organised a behavioural ecology field trip to Erdensant with 19 students and two British lecturers.

Other progress:

- Dairy product training arranged for community groups with IPECON consultant.
- Eco-herder students completed first phase of data collection.
- Erdem club organised a 10 day tour of Khentii region funded by ARC. The trip included students and Buddhist monks and was designed to raise awareness of the need to remain in balance with nature.

July 05

Agreed outputs:

- Organised a field trip to Khan Khentii Special Protected Area for 21 students with two British lecturers teaching about research design and data analysis.

Other progress:

- Erdem club elected a new president for the 2005-2006 academic year.
- Two field course alumni got jobs with a WCS marmot project.
- Funding for field courses donated by NUM.
- ZSL obtained for creation of a Mongolian Biodiversity Databank (\$80,000 for Mongolian mammals and \$25,000 for Mongolian fish funded by World Bank Netherlands Trust). SFP will get \$5000 of these funds to administer the project, which involves creation of a permanent databank and a workshop to discuss nomenclature, endangered status and distribution of Mongolian species.

August 05

Agreed outputs:

- Organised a field trip to the south Gobi for 17 students to be taught about desert ecology and census techniques by two British lecturers.
- Articles on Steppe Forward Programme and the community project published in the Mongol Messenger (English language Mongolian national newspaper).

Other progress:

- Eco-herder students completed second phase of data collection.
- Ex-Erdem club president presented Erdem club activities at a student conference in Seoul, Korea.
- Project leader and counterpart presented at the International Asiatic Wild Ass conference. The proceedings will be published.

September 05

Agreed outputs:

- Students presented their field course projects to other students
- Steering committee meeting.

Other progress:

- Awarded \$50,000 from World Bank Netherlands Trust Fund for Raising Environmental Quality of Private Sector Development in Mongolia via Approved Consultancies and Bank Credit Lines grant. This work will involve running an EIA refresher training workshop for environmental consultancies and training banks in environmental guidelines before giving business loans.
- Organised steering committee meeting and local participant list for Mongolian Biodiversity Databank.

Oct 04 – Sep 05

- Biobeers networking event organised every month except August, with between 40 and 70 people attending on each occasion. Representatives from national and international organisations attended.
- 35 postings to MongolBioweb; 29 new members (177 members to date).
- Ongoing work translating and producing Ecological Census Techniques book.
- Receiving and reviewing manuscripts for the Mongolian Journal of Biological Sciences and distributing and exchanging copies.
- £100 received from journal subscriptions and sales.
- Website updated.
- Notice board updated.
- Newly received journals placed in NUM Biology faculty library.

2. Give details of any notable problems or unexpected developments that the project has encountered over the last 12 months. Explain what impact these could have on the

project and whether the changes will affect the budget and timetable of project activities.

Overall the project has been very successful over the past 12 months with most outputs met. A full report detailing the summer 2005 field courses has been posted to the Darwin Initiative together with another report containing results of the first year of the community project (funded by a Whitley Award) and a photo guide produced by that project. Newspaper articles, copies of the Mongolian Journal of Biological Sciences and outputs of the conservation club have also been sent.

A new project coordinator, Oyunchimeg Sharav, was hired in March to manage logistics of the field courses and office, replacing a previous employee. This will continue the objectives of the project to train Mongolians in project management.

ZSL obtained funding from the World Bank Netherlands Fund to establish a Mongolian Biodiversity Databank, including funding a five day workshop to discuss endangered status and nomenclature of Mongolian mammal and fish species. \$80,000 will be directed to establishment of a mammal databank and \$25,000 for a fish databank. SFP will get \$5000 of the funds from ZSL for assistance in setting up and running the project. This money will be set aside for the future of the project. A \$50,000 grant from the Netherlands Fund was also obtained for training environmental consultants and bank managers in charge of credit lines in environmental guidelines. This project will be run by SFP. Any funds remaining at the end of the project will also be saved for use post April 2006.

Change in project leader: Regrettably the PL, Nigel Barton, had to stand down due to personal reasons and left SFP on 31 March, 2005. The current PL, Sarah King, did not take up this position until 10 June due to a delay in appointing a suitable person to meet the challenges of this role. Furthermore, upon arrival the new PL spent her first three months immediately in the field running summer field courses. This has led to an inevitable slowing of programme activities whilst the new PL becomes acquainted with tasks, staff, equipment, networks etc. However, only a few project outputs have been delayed, none cancelled, and in fact new, additional outputs achieved including a significant large grant to run environmental training for consultancies and banks.

NUM lecturers: In 2005 no NUM lecturers attended the field courses. In June three had been finalised to attend. However one subsequently had a conflict with other field work, one had a family bereavement and the other did not come due to his parents being in town. It is very important that Mongolian lecturers attend the field courses both so that they can see the content and workload of the courses to compare with university courses, and also so that they can be exposed to western teaching methods and the experiences of foreign academics. The problems with getting lecturers to attend the courses are the same as in previous years: lecturers normally spend the summer earning money by working on contract work, or else using the time to conduct their own field work. For 2006 field courses lecturers will be paid for their time and expertise. As time, as well as money, is a constraint, it can be made possible for lecturers to not stay for the entire length of the course, but to come and go as necessary. In 2006 foreign students will also take part in the field courses. The fee that they pay will cover the salary of Mongolian lecturers, among other costs. Presence of Mongolian lecturers on the field courses is essential for their continuation, so every effort will be made to have them included in 2006. At the moment the students are more aware of the benefits of SFP courses than the lecturers, so more publicity events within the university will take place.

Rangers: Rangers only attended the field course in Khan Khentii Special Protected Area in 2005. The field course in Erdensant is not in a protected area, and although no official rangers were involved we had a good relationship with the local community. Rangers were due to attend the Gobi field course, but unfortunately were not able to come due to an influx of illegal miners into national parks in the region requiring their attention. It is important for rangers to get good training. Further training of Gobi rangers will occur as part of the community project. Khan Khentii rangers were very interested in more training, so a field course will be arranged for them in the spring, with possible co-funding from GTZ.

Careers course: The careers course was not held between November 2004 and February 2005 due to Kate Oddie being away from the country and Nigel Barton suffering from time constraints. Help has been given to students instead on an ongoing basis, and the main aim of helping them find work with national and international organisations has not changed, with many students being placed. There is

currently discussion with NUM for a series of workshops in winter of 05/06, rather than a regular lecture course.

Ecological field techniques book: The ecological techniques book is still undergoing translation. This project was delayed due to staff changes and the primary translator having to devote a large amount of her time to the community project. The translation is now nearing completion and it is hoped that it will be published in January 2006.

Have any of these issues been discussed with the Darwin Secretariat and if so, have changes been made to the original agreement?

All of the above issues are as previously reported; no changes have been made except in timing. Following discussions with ZSL and NUM some changes for the future might need to be discussed with the secretariat. Items to be discussed will consist of the possibility of future funding and the furthering of some activities.

Discussed with the DI Secretariat: no/yes, in..... (month/yr)

Changes to the project schedule/workplan: no/yes, in.....(month/yr)

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

The project started later than intended and has had various changeovers in leadership which has slowed progress, although agreed outputs, and significantly more, will be met by the end of the project. Future plans for the project involve continuation and development of sustainability of the field courses, extension of the community and conservation club projects, consolidation of scientific journal publishing, as well as involvement in a suite of other projects. The conservation club, Biobeers and MongolBioweb have successfully become self-sustaining, but further funding would help greatly in enabling the other projects to become embedded in the framework of the National University of Mongolia. Successful implementation of field courses in 2006 will be critical. These courses, involving NUM university lecturers and foreign students for the first time, will provide a template for future field courses. They will demonstrate how courses can be funded by foreign student fees, and organised and run by the university with a Mongolian personnel led Steppe Forward Programme. Field courses provide a vital source of knowledge for students and will be expanded to cover more structured training for protected area staff. The community project has been extremely successful with development of community groups who have now committed themselves to monitoring and conserving the flora and fauna of their areas. Future funding would help this project to expand and continue to support these communities, as well as supporting further initiatives involving communities in research on land and water use and how it affects wildlife.

In general, future funding would help the Steppe Forward Programme attain wider recognition as an organisation in Mongolia and to become an integral part of the university through actions and publicity. Importantly, further training of local project personnel is essential so the project can be run to its full potential and become sustainable. SFP has already made a wide network of local and international contacts and collaborators and would be strengthened in the future by continuing to work with them. The programme will continue its core projects, and new projects that are underway, but will expand to incorporate further activities that will significantly contribute to the host country's conservation of its biological resources through capacity-building exercises.

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 or budget should not be discussed in this report but raised with the Darwin Secretariat directly.

Please send your **completed form by 31 October each year per email** to Stefanie Halfmann, Darwin Initiative M&E Programme, stefanie.halfmann@ed.ac.uk . The report should be between 1-2 pages maximum. **Please state your project reference number in the header of your email message.**