



# MONGOL MONITOR

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## December Mission News



Welcome to 2012! Notably, 2012 marks the 25th anniversary of a landmark event – the establishment of diplomatic ties between the United States and Mongolia. While relations between the two countries have expanded and deepened over last 25 years, the future certainly holds even greater possibilities. US-

AID/Mongolia wishes the very best to all in the coming year.

The new Acting USAID Representative, Karen Hilliard, arrived in early January. A 23-year veteran of USAID, Dr. Hilliard comes to Mongolia after a four-year tour as Mission Director in Jamaica. Dr. Hilliard has served as both a project officer and a program/project design officer over the course of her career in countries as diverse as Egypt, Oman, Nicaragua, Malawi, Haiti, Ukraine and Jamaica. Dr. Hilliard holds a Ph.D. in Political Science from the University of New Mexico as well as a Master’s degree in Public Administration. She has three children in school in the U.S.



USAID and the State Department’s Public Affairs Office partnered to hold a Digital Video Conference (DVC) on December 6th, focused on increasing NGO effectiveness in influencing public policy. Featuring Dr. Kristin Goss, a civil society expert from Duke University, representatives from 15 different local NGOs enjoyed a lively discussion on practical measures to increase impact of their organizations, including marketing and messaging strategies, partnering with business, and the ins and outs of building a membership. This was the first DVC conducted at Ulaanbaatar’s new American Corner facility. (for pictures of the DVC, please visit USAID/Mongolia Facebook page.

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- Rural Agribusiness Support Program (RASP)--USDA





Mongolia's Snow Leopard Enterprises won BBC's 2011 World Challenge with an innovative business model that also benefits the environment. The

Snow Leopard Enterprise program helps herders in Mongolia make and sell fine wool handicrafts to increase their income. In turn, herders sign conservation contracts pledging to protect snow leopards living in their area. More than 600 proposals were submitted to World Challenge in 2011, from which a panel of judges selected 12 projects to compete. According to BBC World News, over 70,000 votes were cast for the 12 projects; with the most number of votes, Snow Leopard Enterprises earned the coveted top spot in the competition. As the first place winner, Snow Leopard Enterprises will receive a cash prize of \$20,000 to advance conservation for snow leopards.

December 18th marked Embassy's annual New Year's Party. The event was a chance to relax with colleagues, reflect on the accomplishments of 2011, and look forward to the challenges and opportunities ahead. And, of course, dance.

## PRIVATE SECTOR-LED ECONOMIC GROWTH

### *Business Plus Initiative Project (BPI) Chemonics*

#### Association strengthening and BPI grants program



The BPI grants program is officially under way, with all supporting tools and documentation in place. The "Grants Toolkit" training took place on December 1st with 66 individuals in attendance. Through December 2011, BPI has received 20 grant concept proposals

valued at over 700 million MNT.

### **Green technology association initiative**

A second meeting was held for Green Technology association startup on December 13 with 10+ companies involved/associated with green technology and production, ranging from alternative fuels, construction, eco lending/banking, and other products/services. Key spokesperson from the Ministry of Nature, Environment, and Tourism, discussed the government subsidy program supporting green technology producers. The proposed association is initiating work on charter/by-laws and looking to formally establish as an industry association in early 2012.

### **Quality Assurance Initiative**

BPI initiated its Quality Assurance (QA) training program with a food safety "Hygiene" foundation course. In attendance were 23 participants, all of which sat for examinations associated with UK-based Char-



tered Institute of Environment Health (CIEH). CIEH represents one of the most prestigious global accreditation bodies associated with food safety quality assurance training programs. A second foundation "Hygiene" training will be held in January 2012, as will the inaugural 2nd module Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) training. Each will target between 25-30 participants and continue to focus on both food safety and quality management. The overall objective is to build demand for this program and spin it off as a private sector driven partnership moving forward.

### **Loan Officer Development Program (LODP)**

BPI completed the full set of LODP training modules (18 compulsory and 7 elective modules for 240 class hours) for the Banking and Finance Academy (BFA) and handed over training materials at the BFA board meeting on December 15. The LODP training program is intended for junior loan officers to improve their skills in loan administration. The modules are consistent with international best practice materials

and include interactive learning methods such as hand-on exercises and case studies.

### **Training of Trainers for Banking and Finance Academy**

A second training of trainers was conducted on December 5-7, 2011 (first held on May 24-26, 2011 under the predecessor project – Economic Policy Reform and Competitiveness). A total of 33 future trainers were instructed on how to effectively deliver the modules. Trainers consist of the best loan officers at commercial banks, university professors, and other financial specialists.

### **Compulsory Drivers' Insurance training**

In collaboration with the Financial Regulatory Commission (FRC) and Press Institute, a training session was held on December 16th for the Economics Journalism Club (EJC) members on the new law on compulsory drivers' insurance. Specialists from the FRC Insurance Department gave an overview of the insurance market as well as the new law. EJC members introduced their news angles and FRC presenters provided a professional evaluation of their work. The new law on drivers' insurance is the first law on compulsory insurance aimed at protecting third party's interests and at improving drivers' responsibility.

### **Economic Journalism Club Contest Announced**

The Press Institute announced a contest for best journalistic articles/products on economic issues. The purpose of the contest, supported through BPI, is to motivate and encourage journalists to write and produce high quality newspaper articles and broadcast programs on the most pressing issues in economic development and, in turn, attract attentions of decision-makers and general public. The contest will also help evaluate the professional growth/writing skills of the EJC members.

### **Social Safety Nets Project (SSNP) --USAID Mercy Corps**

#### **In Ending with a Bang!**

In December, 3,500 direct beneficiaries and stakeholders of the SSN came together to evaluate and celebrate the project's impact and identify specific measures to continue the project initiatives with local government, employers, training providers and citizens themselves.

Ten aimags held individual "Aimag Forum of Social Safety Nets Sustainability" between December 8-15, 2011. Lively discussions and mobile opinion boxes ensured that hundreds of comments and suggestions came forward which led to concrete recommenda-

tions for local government, training providers, employers and project implementers/donors, including:

- The psycho-social support training should be continued in the provinces as it proved to be a powerful tool in motivating people to look forward to and create a better life.
- While the short-term technical trainings were successful in assisting people to find jobs or set up small business, training providers should offer optional training modules to fit with people's needs; some need longer training more professional, while some need shorter training with advanced technology.
- Employer Support Mechanism was a real support for local businesses to expand their businesses and to create permanent jobs. Thanks to the project, employers gained awareness about the importance of having trained employees and expressed willingness to share costs of vocational skills training in the future.

PSS (psycho-social support) participants performed gala concerts at the end of each forum making a number of PSS training participants' dream come true as they discovered their talents and displayed their self-esteem..

#### **A Very Happy New Year**

In December, advanced bakery technology training was organized in Uvurhangai province for nine newly hired staff of "Minii Bolor" LLC, ESM grant recipient of SSN. The training, conducted by an Ulaanbaatar consultant enabled those nine women to diversify their bakery products and to make delicious cakes for the New Year celebrations. Thanks to the training, they baked 550 cakes during the Christmas period and earned MNT 3,5 million.

### **411 Marginal Household Members Secured Long-Term, Full-Time Jobs as 150 Local Employers Expanded Their Businesses in 2011**

Under the Employer Support Mechanism of SSN project, 154 local employers were selected as potential grant recipients of the ESM to implement their business expansion plans. 150 of them fulfilled the agreement obligations successfully and created 411 full time jobs hiring the same number of vocational skills trainees of the project.

#### **Acknowledgement**

As these are the final monthly notes from SSN project, we would like to convey deep gratitude of thousands of rural Mongolians who benefited and changed their lives in the 10 aimags thanks to your generous support, USAID.

Beside of the project beneficiaries, 81 PSS trainers,

consultants of 61 vocational skills training providers, 22 kindergarten teachers and 24 Mercy Corps staff upgraded professional knowledge in respective areas as working for the SSN project accomplishment. *Thank you very much!*

## **USAID CENTRALLY AND REGIONALLY FUNDED PROJECTS**

### ***Sustainable Conservation Approaches in Priority EcoSystems (SCAPES) Project -- USAID Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)***

#### **SCAPES Annual Meeting**

The annual SCAPES meeting was held December 5-9 on the Eastern Shore of Maryland, bringing together SCAPES field and headquarters staff from across the globe as well as USAID and external technical experts. The theme of the conference was the interface between Conservation and 1) Agriculture and Food Security, and 2) Infrastructure and Industry. Mr. Buuveibaatar, WCS Mongolia Senior Wildlife Biologist, introduced the technical session on the interface between conservation and infrastructure and industry with a presentation on the Daurian Steppe and the current challenges of mitigating the impacts of planned mining and infrastructure development on the biodiversity of the region.

#### **Protected Areas Coordination Conference**

A conference of the Protected Areas Administrations (PAA) of Mongolia's Eastern Region was held on 23-24 December, 2011, in Choibalsan, Dornod Aimag. The agenda included annual reports from each of the PAAs with the goal of identifying common concerns and activities to be carried out in collaboration as a network of protected areas across the region. Protected areas in Dornod, Khentii and Sukhbaatar aimags were represented. Conference participants prioritized collaborative work on the monitoring and conservation of the Mongolian gazelle and white-naped crane, the two focal species of the Daurian Steppe SCAPES project. The protected areas are developing a joint work plan for 2012 covering joint inspections and wildlife law enforcement activities, capacity building programs and collaborative efforts to promote eco-tourism in the region.

#### **Wildlife Trade**

Multi-agency teams of law enforcement staff formed in November to address illegal wildlife trade in the Eastern Steppe region continued their work in December with a series of planned inspections along known trade routes combined with community outreach visits to Chukluunkhoroot and Dashbalbar soums of Dornod Aimag. The team also participated in a debate on law enforcement and wildlife trade that

was broadcast on DTV.

#### **Conferences & Meetings**

On December 15, 2011, DS SCAPES project staff participated in the National Environmental Master Plan workshop organized by the World Bank and the Ministry of Nature, Environment & Tourism (MNET) and on December 23, 2011, staff presented in a conference on Biodiversity Offsets organized by MNET.

### ***Mongolian National Consensus Building Program (NCB) - USAID International Republican Institute (IRI)***

#### **IRI Polling Data Analysis Finished**

IRI and its Mongolia-based partner the Social Policy and Development Institute finished data collection and data-entry of its autumn public opinion poll in November 2011. The poll is designed to measure perceptions about the responsiveness and quality of governance, perceptions about opportunities for citizen involvement, the popularity of political parties, citizen views on current events and social problems, and to test the favorability of individual political leaders and policy proposals. IRI's U.S. based pollster also completed analysis of the collected data; the poll results are being reviewed and prepared for release at IRI's DC office. The final results of IRI's poll are planned for release to the leaders of the political parties, the Mongolian Parliament and local governments in January 2012. The key results of the poll will provide detailed and scientifically based information to the decision-makers on pressing problems faced by the citizens, perception and popular opinions of the citizens' on the government's policy proposals and indicate directions for improving quality of the central and local governance.

#### **Preparations for Two-Day Comprehensive Seminar for Mongolian Parliament Completed**

On December 3-4, IRI held a joint two-day training with the Parliament Secretariat for staff from the Parliament Research Center as well as the standing committees and the legal division of the State Great Hural Secretariat. A total of 40 Mongolian Parliament staffers were in attendance, including the General Secretary of the Parliament Secretariat Mr. Ts. Sharavdorj and the Director of the Parliament Research Center Dr. Ts. Norovdondog. Detailed presentations by two researchers from U.S. Congressional Research Service, Susan Lawrence and Megan Lynch, who specialize in the U.S. Congressional budget process, research methodologies, and information management techniques, were well-received by participants. The participants and the trainers exchanged views and information on the role of the researchers and parliament staff in Mongolian and U.S. legislatures'

budget processes, identified differences and similarities of the budgeting process at the Mongolian and U.S. legislatures, and shared experiences on using research and information management tools.

**Fostering an Inclusive Environment for the Disabled Project 2 (FIELD-2)**  
**Mercy Corps**

**The Celebrating International Day for Persons with Disabilities**

FIELD 2 Working Groups in Arhangai, Dundgovi, Bayanhongor, Uvurhangai andUvs provinces celebrated International Day for Persons with Disabilities (PWD) on December 3rd by organizing activities and competitions among local PWDs and government officials. In total, 716 people participated in these activities, including sports competitions, mini-Olympic games, and handicraft exhibitions. Round-table discussions between representatives of Disabled People's Organizations (DPOs) and government officials and the introduction of newly approved accessibility standards were also featured.

**Rapid Cycle of Learning and Doing**

Two hundred and twenty-one citizens along with local officials took part in a December capacity building training, focused on proposal writing techniques, accessibility standards, and understanding the social model of disability. The participants demonstrated their skills by mobilizing quickly in Uvurhangai, Arhangai and Dundgovi provinces, conducting training of their own which brought accessibility standards to more than 150 local officials and construction specialists.

**Enabling Market Integration through Rural Group Empowerment (EMIRGE)**  
**CHF International**

EMIRGE confronts the challenge of rural poverty commonly faced by marginalized farmers by designing and testing methods to collaboratively mobilize rural resources toward attainable market opportunities. In Mongolia, EMIRGE works with small-scale producer groups to raise productivity and profitability through innovation and greater integration with other economic actors.

**On Farm Management Training (OFMT)**

In order to expand the number of producer groups and farmers reached by EMIRGE and by request from local dairy farmers, a 3 day intensive OFMT was organized for 50 farmers with the support of Mandal and Bayangol district government Agricultural Departments. OFMT focused on proper feeding techniques, feed rationing, shelter construction, animal health and breeding issues including milk hygiene

and common diseases. The farmers also enjoyed site visits to a model farm and a dairy processing company. A study visit to the EMIRGE farm shelter will be organized in January for new farmers to gain knowledge and insight from existing farmers and agricultural association members.

**Follow-up Activities after Business Training**

Business training is currently being conducted with assistance of Development Solutions, a local NGO; the training will continue through April 2012. A total of 7 farmers groups in Zuun Haraa are participating in the training program and learning household accounting, cost benefit analysis, marketing, and business planning. Monitoring conducted in December 2011 on how farmers are using knowledge of household record-keeping demonstrated that farmer is on start-up point for using proper record keeping book for calculating all expenses and income in household business.

**Monitoring Silage Use**

EMIRGE farmers groups produced silage throughout the fall; due to its nutritional value, silage improves animal health, increasing milk yields in winter months. Now half of farmers under EMIRGE program have transitioned to silage for dairy cows.

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE FUNDED PROJECTS MANAGED BY USAID/MONGOLIA**

**Rural Agribusiness Support Program (RASP)-USDA**  
**Mercy Corps**

**Business Expansion through Strategic Grants**



*(Photo: (Govi-Altai meat processor shows high-capacity drying machine purchased through business expansion grant. Newly-hired staff look on. Photo by J.Butz.)*

December wrapped up a year-long program element that saw 47 businesses in 12 aimags make \$624,338 in investments. Mercy Corps' contribution in that investment was just 22 percent; local businesses did the rest. Since those businesses introduced their stra-

tegic expansion plans, sales income has increased 20%; intake of locally produced raw materials has risen 28%; and 203 new and improved agricultural products have entered the local market, including packaged dried curd, soft cheese, butter, mutton, dried meat, horse jerky, canned beef, new types of sausages, pickled cucumber, barley flour, felt products, camel wool socks, and pellet fodder. In addition, these local businesses created 342 new jobs. RASP will conduct another round of these impactful business expansion grants in 2012.

### Indoor Food Markets Are Clean and Welcoming

Food safety starts on the land with healthy animals and proper handling. But until recently, food markets in the aimags have been a source of contamination. Poor lighting, little or no access to water, infrequent cleaning all contributed to colorful, but unsafe conditions. Mercy Corps' RASP project is assisting food market owners and their clients and customers by providing modern laboratory equipment to test milk and meat, training food market owners, sellers, and producers on food safety standards, and partnering with the Ministry for Food, Agriculture and Light Industry on public awareness campaigns. In Uvs, for example, the indoor food market opened in June 2011; located next to the outdoor market, the new building includes a bathroom, heating, cold storage units, and laboratory facilities. "The environment is good. It makes it possible for customers to make choices. They walk slower and take more time to buy. Sometimes they buy more" says local produce vendor, Sarantuya, age 38. The manager of the indoor market, Ankhbayar, has a positive outlook about the future. "Change is difficult but I believe we will be successful" says Ankhbayar.

### Sometimes the Best Result is When Something Doesn't Happen

In December, the veterinary laboratory in Suhbaatar aimag tested six types animal diseases using modern diagnostic equipment (the ELIZA reader) provided by Mercy Corps' RASP. The laboratory found that the entire aimag is free of tuberculosis. This impressive finding comes as a result of several RASP Animal Health initiatives during 2011, including provision of the modern lab equipment, analyzing nearly 12,000 blood samples collected from 455 herders in all 13 aimag soum, and training veterinary technicians to assist in the process. Mercy Corps' partner in this program has been the Mongolian Veterinary Medical Association.

### Goat Coats!

Goats and sheep are weakened most by the combination of high winds and cold--common during Mongolia's long winter. After learning of an initiative by the International Women's Group in Ulaanbaatar that

supports poor and disabled women to make "goat coats" to protect these ruminant animals, RASP purchased several hundred coats to pilot an experiment. The goal of this pilot project is to reduce body weight loss, improve quality of the animals' fiber, and increase revenue of herding community. Herder groups in Suhbaatar, Umnugovi, Govi-Altai, and Uvs aimags were selected, with a total of 380 goats and 120 sheep. In the controlled experimental project, half the animals will wear coats and come spring, the animals will be weighed, and the fiber quality reviewed.



*(Photos show before and after images of Uvs food market.*

*Photo by S. Enkhtuya)*



*(Suhbaatar goats model new coats. Photo by Enkhtuya)*