



MONGOL MONITOR

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March Mission News

Mongolia, along with many nations of the world, celebrated International Women’s Day on March 8th. Women’s Day is a global day to acknowledge the economic, political, and social achievements of women past, present, and future. In Mongolia, International Woman’s Day is a public holiday; celebrated within the family, men express their gratitude for women’s contributions (and, according to some, are obligated take on the cooking duties for the day). Mongolia also celebrated Men’s Day 10 days later on March 18th. Although officially the anniversary of the establishment of the Mongolian military, it has evolved into a day to pay tribute to all men.

USAID/Mongolia proudly launched its Citizen Engagement and Elections (CEE) project, focusing on citizen education, mobilization and political engagement leading up to the June 2012 Parliamentary elections in Mongolia. Internews and Women for Social Progress, USAID/Mongolia’s first local partner, were selected to implement the project. Activities are already underway for this much anticipated program.

USAID Representative Karen Hilliard along with USAID staff visited Tsetserleg, the capital city of Arhangai Province, 600km from Ulaanbaatar, in late March. The trip was an opportunity to assess the progress and impact of ongoing USAID programs as well as talk to local citizens about community dynamics and needs. Beneficiaries of Fostering an Inclusive Environment for Local Disabled (FIELD-2) and Rural Agribusiness Support Program (RASP) warmly welcomed the delegation and proudly discussed their achievements, whether in championing the rights of the disabled in their communities or learning new business skills to increase their family’s income.



Mission Director Karen Hilliard with a felt maker in Arhangai province

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USDA Funded Projects Managed by USAID

- Rural Agribusiness Support Program (RASP)--USDA



Unuudur (Today), a major local newspaper, highlighted USAID's work in a two day series. The article focused on USAID's contributions to the economic improvement of Mongolian citizens and featured interviews with FIELD-2 and RASP beneficiaries. The interviewees, including the owner of a small furniture manufacturing business and a felt-making cooperative, explained in their own words the direct and critical impact that USAID assistance has had on their lives.

Sadly, USAID/Mongolia bid farewell to Michelle Bahk, our Private Enterprise Officer, at the end of the month. We wish Michelle all the best on her onward assignment to Kabul, Afghanistan.

PRIVATE SECTOR-LED ECONOMIC GROWTH

Business Plus Initiative Project (BPI) Chemonics

BPI Grant Awarded for Small Business Advisory Services

BPI signed its first grant award to Development Solutions, a Mongolian business development service (BDS) provider. Development Solution is based in Ulaanbaatar and offers consulting services to entrepreneurial startups and small businesses. The grant will co-fund the establishment of a fee-based, online access to advisory services and best practices on operating a business in Mongolia (www.bizguide.mn).

Quality Assurance Awards Ceremony

BPI held its first awards ceremony for participants of its international quality assurance training and certification program on March 22nd. Approximately 50 public and private sector participants successfully completed program requirements in i) Hygiene: Food Safety and Manufacturing, and/or ii) Food Safety Hazard analysis and critical control points (HACCP) management systems. U.S. Ambassador Jonathan Addleton, USAID Mission Director Karen Hilliard, and Nomin Holding General Manager Sh. Nurmaalent their support to this inaugural event. Since the inception of training in December 2011, BPI has trained 120 individuals.



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Addressing Draft Laws on Press Freedom

In January 2012, Parliament approved two draft laws on press freedom for further discussion by the Standing Committee on State Structure. These draft laws would allow journalists to conceal sources, require the owners of media outlets to be publicly identified, and ban the publication or broadcast of information that threatens national security or public interests. USAID's Business Plus Initiative project, in conjunction with The Press Institute, organized the first national meeting of Mongolian media managers, media associations, and journalists in Ulaanbaatar on April, 7th 2012 to discuss the importance of advocacy in legislation in the context of these new laws. The landmark forum produced a written agreement on actions required to improve professionalism and ethics of journalists and strengthening corporate governance in media outlets to minimize politically-motivated funding and control.

USAID CENTRALLY AND REGIONALLY FUNDED PROJECTS

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

The Eastern Steppe Multi-Agency Collaborative Wildlife Protection Team Year End Workshop

March 19th – 20th WCS conducted a workshop and held a series of meetings in Choibalsan, Dornod Aimag, with members of the multi-agency collaborative wildlife protection team to assess progress, receive preliminary reports of the season's activities, and discuss next steps. There was overwhelming support from all of the agencies represented (Mongolian Protected Areas Administration, Dornod Aimag Police, Environmental Protection and Tourism Agency, Dornod Mongolian Customs Agency and Intelligence Agency) to continue collaborative work to address illegal wildlife hunting and trade on Mongolia's Eastern Steppe. Participants felt that the multi-agency enforcement efforts and the public awareness campaign was effective in reducing illegal hunting and wildlife trade on the steppe; this was indeed supported by the fact that the "catch per effort" or number of violations of the law detected for the level of patrol effort in 2011/2012 was lower than 2010/2011. During the 2011/2012 season the team covered three provinces in Mongolia, six protected areas, six main roads and the three major international border crossings (2 between China and Mongolia; 1 between Russia and Mongolia) inspecting close to 600 vehicles. Specific issues for follow-up highlighted at the March 2012 multi-agency workshop included secur-

ing long-term financial and administrative support for the multi-agency collaborative wildlife protection team and expanding the team's engagement with the District Courts and Prosecution Agency so that illegal hunting and wildlife trade related cases are given an adequate level of attention.

Mongolia's National Action Program on Climate Change

On March 28, 2012, the Mongolian Ministry of Nature, Environment & Tourism formally introduced Mongolia's "National Action Program on Climate Change". The workshop, attended by the Daurian Steppe SCAPES project staff, was designed to engage the international community in the national-level dialogue in Mongolia around climate change mitigation and adaptation as well as coordinate donor support for activities outlined in the national action plan. The National Climate Committee has established the Climate Change Coordination Office within the Ministry of Nature, Environment and Tourism, which will be responsible for on-going coordination of activities and assessment of progress towards the goals and objectives as outlined in the National Action Program.

Mongolian National Consensus Building Program (NCB) - USAID International Republican institute (IRI)

On March 19-21, 2012, IRI presented the results of the Institute's public opinion poll to the leadership of the Citizen's Representative Khural and Governor's Office of Orkhon aimag and Darkhan-Uul aimag. Also, IRI presented the poll results to the district representatives of Members of Parliament elected from Orkhon aimag. The results of the poll provided detailed and scientifically based information to local decision-makers on pressing problems faced by the citizens of Orkhon and Darkhan-Uul aimags, revealed citizen perceptions and popular opinions about the government's policy proposals and indicated directions for improving quality of local government services. Poll results were also presented to the Secretariat of the Mongolian Parliament, the Research Center of the Mongolian Parliament, the Press Institute, the Zorig Foundation, Women for Social Progress Movement, the U.S. Embassy and USAID Mongolia. The results of the poll can be found at:

<http://www.iri.org/sites/default/files/2012%20March%209%20Survey%20of%20Mongolian%20Public%20Opinion,%20October%2012-November%2012,%202011.pdf>

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

Advanced Business training by DS

In March, CHF provided advanced business training for dairy group members using the services of a local resource partner, Development Solutions. This unique training used case studies to help the farmers understand benefits and effects on milk yield of using various types of feed for cows. Farmers, for example, analyzed the long-term profitability of making silage versus production of green fodder. Many group members decided to transition to silage production this spring.

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

Rural Agribusiness Support Program (RASP)-USDA Mercy Corps

Comprehensive Pasture Management Planning training in Gobi-Altai

Mercy Corps teamed up with the Aimag Governor's Office, the aimag Agricultural SME Department and the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF) to conduct a mid-term training course on Soum Pasture Management Planning for representatives from Gobi-Altai and Hovd aimags in Gobi-Altai during March 9th-18th, 2012. 72 participants attended including pasture management specialists, land inspectors and environmental protection staff from 19 soums of Gobi-Altai Province and 4 districts of Hovd Province. Training topics included pasture management and planning, land pasture database management, and participatory pasture management planning. Participants developed initial pasture management models using GIS for 23 districts.

Young Business People training courses in Hovd and Zavhan

Mercy Corps conducted three 12-day Young Business Training courses in Hovd and Zavhan Provinces, selected because of high potential for economic growth, large populations (over 8,000), and high demand for skills training. 62 young people (under 35) attended the courses, with 92% completing both stages of the business and technological skill building training course. After the training 45 of the participants developed business plans to start up or expand their own businesses and applied for commercial bank loans to finance these business ventures.

Veterinary capacity building

RASP's Animal Health Component organized training for state and private veterinarians on "Toxic, Me-

dicinal Pasture Plants and Endemic Disease” in 12 provinces. The Veterinary Research Institute (VRI) and the State Central Veterinary Laboratory (SCVL) were selected to implement the capacity building training. The joint team developed and printed two information booklets titled “Toxic and Medicinal Plant Identification and Usage” and “Illustrated Reference of Commonly Occurring Endemic Diseases in Mongolia”, as well as re-printed the booklet “Endemic Diseases”. In total 2,100 copies will be distributed to training participants.

Food Product Packaging Standards & Hygiene Requirements training

RASP’s Food Safety component organized a 1.5 days training on Food Product Packaging Standards and Hygiene Requirements for nearly 100 owners and personnel of food factories, cooperatives and related enterprises in Dornogobi, Gobi-Sumber and Uvurhangai Provinces. Trainees were provided sample packaged food products to analyze and identify weaknesses and ways to improve the packaging. After the training, 15% of participants signed contracts for Food Product Package Improvement grants.

March in pictures



The road to Arhangai province



Children at daycare center in Arhangai province



The town of Tsetserleg, capital of Arhangai province



The Arhangai team



Alyson tries her hand at felt making

