

Sustaining the Wonders of the Forest

by National Association of Mongolian Agricultural Cooperatives (NAMAC)

Background

At the collapse of The Soviet Union in 1991, Mongolia began its transition from a socialist, centrally-planned state towards a democratically-controlled market economy.

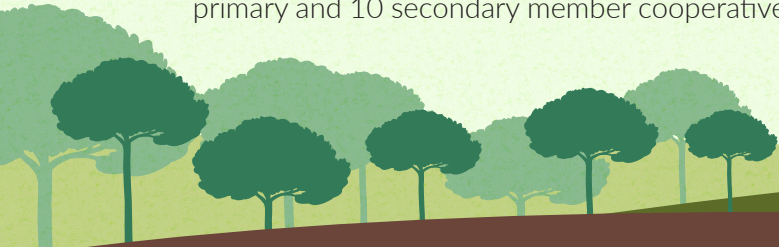
Mongolia then focused on its transformation to a full-fledged democracy and denationalization of major state assets. Most industries were privatized, adversely affecting the agricultural and forested areas. Mining activities and other heavy industries were destroying farm land, forests, and pasture land. Furthermore, the living spaces of local residents were being compromised and depleted.

Proper planning of resources, particularly of forest development, was unfortunately left out of the new Mongolian government's attention leading to losses in environmental conservation. Mongolia has already lost some 10.8% of its forest cover or around 1,240,000 hectares.

The Mongolian forestry sector lacks capacities in proper forestry management. It has insufficient legislation on pressing environmental issues such as climate change, wildfire, and other causes that disrupts natural forest regeneration. Uncontrolled animal husbandry likewise contributed to rapid deforestation.

Thus, the National Association of Mongolian Agricultural Cooperatives (NAMAC) developed a project to contribute to the development of Regional plans for Forest Development in the framework of sustainable development. Specifically, it targeted on improving the gene pool of local forest trees and restoring ecologically-stable forest communities as well as establish networking of forest user-groups throughout Mongolia.

NAMAC was founded in 1967 to strengthen agricultural cooperatives through training and support. As of 2017, it has 22 branch offices in 21 provinces and the capital city, and 640 primary and 10 secondary member cooperatives, serving a total of 150,000 individual members.



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NAMACs greatest achievement is building a nationwide network of agricultural cooperatives and turning the cooperative model as a tool to overcome major issues (economic and social) in the farmer and herder communities.

Domogt Sharyn-gol cooperative sets up a forest training center

NAMAC helped establish the *Wonders of the Forest Training Center* of the “Domogt sharyn gol” forest community cooperative in Sharyn-Gol soum, Darkhan-Uul province, Mongolia. It assists farmers whose livelihoods directly depend on forest resources.

The training center was set-up by Domogt Sharyn-gol cooperative, a member of NAMAC , with the assistance of forest experts from the Czech Republic. They trained foresters and farmers in the forested areas, particularly on the following topics:

- long-term forest development and management
- methodologies for identifying and registering forest stands with extraordinary genetic qualities
- effective production of reproductive material, and
- complex approaches to planting, including initial planning, soil preparation, effective planting and protection of seedlings and saplings.

Around 65 participants from forest users, government, academe, civil society, private and international organizations were involved in the initiative, including the Ministry of Nature and Green Development, the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Mongolia, the Chamber of Forest-timber in Czech Republic, Czech-Mongolian chamber of commerce, seed laboratories, wood planting park, representatives from provincial nature and green development departments, NAMAC's members, and members of the Foresters and Wood Working Manufacturer Association of Mongolia.

Issues tackled

With the encroachment on agricultural and forest areas of industrial development, the living spaces of local residents are also compromised and depleted. Intergenerational agricultural manufacturers have no other choice than to seek refuge in the cities for survival, which leads to rise in poverty.

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To discuss these issues, the training tackled several major issues such as deforestation, climate change, establishing community forestry areas and improving livelihoods with better access to forest resources. Major challenges identified were the need for effective laws and policies as well as improved capacities at forestry management.

The most important gain from these training activities was how different stakeholders could collaborate and share their experiences --- from the State, NGOs and international resource groups, particularly from Czech experts.

Interventions and Effects

After these trainings, the participants disseminated their knowledge and good practices to other members in their local areas. Moreover, they worked with international and local organizations in the region to promote how the people's livelihoods were improved through community forestry activities.



These forest user communities also pursued dialogues with their local governments to increase and secure their access and benefits from forests and forested land.

NAMAC and the Domogt sharyn gol Cooperative approached the Embassy of the Czech Republic for modules on practical training on professional forestry management. They pursued the training center project to ensure sustainable forest management, increase timber volumes and protect biodiversity. They likewise worked on influencing the amendment of the country's Forest Law. This project was made possible by working closely with international organizations who support such projects, such as GIZ.

The project largely contributed to the development of regional plans for Forest Development with preserving the gene pool of local forest trees and strengthening ecologically sustainable forest communities, thereby establishing a solid network of forest users throughout the country.

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Moreover, by organizing capacity building activities, the participants gained increased awareness on the importance of protecting their forested areas to help them increase their basic income and address their needs by using forest resources sustainably. Also, they developed a deeper appreciation of effective forest management which they could apply in their daily work.

Recommendations from stakeholders

From the results of the project, the various stakeholders came up with the following recommendations:

- For the government to develop a long-term strategy plan from 10 to 20 years for forest management program modeled from the Czech Republic experience. If the Government could develop a long-term strategy, this can help the forestry communities/users groups and enterprises with their economic needs as well as ensure environmental conservation.
- There is a need to establish an independent and comprehensive agency under the Mongolian Government which aims to implement forest related programs, such as forest planting and restoration, timber production, slice production and forest protection, training and research activities, etc.
- It is also important to provide necessary machineries and techniques to forestry enterprises, enhance the capacity of human resources and to regulate forest communities and enterprises (as in the case of using felled biomass fully in the mechanical processing stage).
- Provide a natural ecological knowledge to the next generation and include it in a long-term education program as a critical intervention to promote a sustainable forestry program.

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