



Completion Report

Project Number: 48062-002
Technical Assistance Number: 8802
July 2018

Mongolia: Strategic Planning for Peatlands

This document is being disclosed to the public in accordance with ADB's Public Communications Policy 2011.

Asian Development Bank

In preparing any country program or strategy, financing any project, or by making any designation of or reference to a particular territory or geographic area in this document, the Asian Development Bank does not intend to make any judgments as to the legal or other status of any territory or area.

TA Number, Country, and Name:		Amount Approved: \$400,000	
TA 8802-MON: Strategic Planning for Peatlands		Revised Amount: Not Applicable	
Executing Agency: MET (Prior to 2017, MEGD)		Source of Funding: JFPR	Amount Undisbursed: \$8,822.66
TA Approval Date: 12 December 2014	TA Signing Date: 28 January 2015	Fielding of First Consultant: 18 August 2015	Amount Utilized: \$391,177.34 ^a
			TA Completion Date Original: 30 June 2016
			Actual: 31 October 2017
			Account Closing Date Original: 30 September 2016
			Actual: 9 February 2018
Description			
<p>Peatlands provide many important ecosystem services, including water regulation, biodiversity conservation, and carbon sequestration and storage; and maintain productive pasture land for livestock grazing.^b Peatlands contain 30% of the world's soil carbon but only cover 3% of the earth's land area. In Mongolia, peatlands cover 2% of the land area and constitute the last wet habitats in a major part of the country. Peatlands feed rivers, prevent soil erosion, maintain levels of groundwater necessary for forest and crop growth, and keep wells full of water. During dry periods, which may continue for years, the moisture preserved in peatlands is a source of life and a barrier to desertification. Overgrazing, human-induced fires, and unsustainable practices by extractive industries, combined with climate change, are resulting in loss of thousands of hectares of peatlands in Mongolia and hence compromising their hydrological and climate mitigation and adaptation functions. Lack of information on the distribution, natural functions, threats, and status of peatlands in Mongolia resulted in a lack of attention to peatlands in national development plans. The consequences of peatland degradation in Mongolia are not only loss of productive grazing land and carbon stores, but also the loss of important and sometimes the last source of water—as peatlands protect permafrost lenses, which fulfill the role of glacial water reserves in high mountains serving as water storage basins. Recognizing this urgent need to address the issues affecting peatlands in Mongolia, the Government of Mongolia requested for a capacity development TA from ADB.</p>			
Expected Impact, Outcome, and Outputs			
<p>The expected impact was improved management of peatlands in Mongolia. The expected outcome was increased capacity of key stakeholders and an improved planning and implementation framework for peatland restoration and management in Mongolia. The TA had three outputs: (i) a review and assessment of the distribution and status of peatlands in Mongolia; (ii) enhanced awareness and capacity of key stakeholders at the national and local levels in relation to sustainable management of peatlands; and (iii) a draft action plan with priorities for sustainable peatland management in Mongolia prepared.</p>			
Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities			
<p>A consulting firm comprising one international and four national consultants, engaged using quality-based selection, supported MET for TA implementation. The TA involved 5.5 person-months of international and 18.75 person-months of national consultants input. To enhance the analysis of remote sensing data, and strengthen the assessment of the status of peatlands, TA 6498-REG: Knowledge and Innovation Support for ADB's Water Financing Program financed an international remote sensing specialist. An additional \$50,000 was mobilized from the facility for PDAs for water under RETA 6498 to conduct a scientific and innovative community-based approach to peatland hydrological restoration by adopting ecological restoration concepts. The letter of agreement for the PDA between ADB and the consulting firm supporting TA implementation was signed on 15 September 2016. The PDA was implemented from 26 September 2016 to 31 October 2017. The TA completion date was extended from 30 June 2016 to 31 October 2017 to enable integration of the key results and recommendation of the PDA into the TA final report and draft strategic plan.</p>			
<p>The performance of the consultants was <i>satisfactory</i>. The consultants worked closely with the executing agency and local level administration in targeted <i>aimags</i> (provinces), as well as international and national expert institutions. The consultants provided high level technical expertise and engaged extensively with beneficiaries in the pilot sites, local expert institutes, and policy makers at the national level. The performance of the executing agency was <i>highly satisfactory</i>. MET provided counterpart staff, made meeting arrangements, coordinated the circulation of the TA progress reports, collated feedback and/or comments from various agencies and departments, and provided guidance on quality and expectations for the TA outputs. The performance of ADB was <i>satisfactory</i>. ADB provided guidance and support on a regular basis and during TA inception, midterm, and final review missions. The financing was adequate with 98% of the total TA amount disbursed. The terms of reference for the consulting services were adequately formulated and found to be <i>effective</i> in terms of cost and process. Equipment purchased under the TA for field surveys were transferred to MET.</p>			
Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome			
<p>The consultant team prepared a high quality final report documenting the achievement of all the intended TA outputs. All TA outputs were successfully completed. Key TA accomplishments were summarized by MET in the report on summary findings of the TA that was made available at the official website of MET immediately upon TA completion.</p>			
<p>For Output 1, the TA conducted bio-physical, geographic, and socioeconomic studies covering priority areas of peatlands in Mongolia; implemented capacity building activities on the conservation and sustainable use of peatlands with relevant organizations; upgraded research methodologies and equipment, including the use of remote sensing technology; and prepared an assessment report on peatlands in English and Mongolian, including the distribution of peatlands in Mongolia, their status and use, adverse impacts on peatlands, challenges, and ways to sustainably use</p>			

and manage peatlands. The assessment revealed that while the distribution of peatlands still covers about 2% of the total territory of Mongolia, 50% are already in relatively degraded condition due to the issues mentioned above.

For Output 2, a policy brief and summary findings were developed. It provides background on how the strategic plan for peatlands fits within Mongolia's broader policy environment. It also presents information on the natural features, values, and ecosystem services of peatlands. It identifies approaches to peatland restoration and management, focusing at the local, national, and international levels, and the need for awareness raising and capacity development.

For Output 3, the draft strategic action plan on peatlands conservation and sustainable use in Mongolia was completed. It includes the rationale for the plan, strategic objectives, a framework for strategic actions, and proposed actions for priority areas. Given the cross-cutting sectoral nature of peatlands, proposed actions are presented both from a geographic and sectoral priority perspective.

In relation to the expected outcome, the results of the TA were included in the Report on the State of the Environment of Mongolia (2015–2016),^c which led to the State Great Khural (the Mongolian Parliament) discussing the issue. The work of the TA and final workshop received participation of and coverage in the Mongolian media, and recognized JFPR and ADB. The Minister of MET publicized the TA findings at the official government website to provide an information source and guidance for relevant organizations, professionals, and decision-makers. Results of the TA were presented at several academic conferences and academic papers were published with due acknowledgement to ADB. The findings of the TA were also presented at the 23rd Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Bonn, Germany on 6–17 November 2017, which generated much interest. ADB's Department of Communications visited Mongolia and prepared a write-up on the TA.^d

Overall Assessment and Rating

The TA is *highly successful* and rated as *highly relevant* as it is closely aligned with the Government Action Plan, 2016–2020 and ADB's country partnership strategy for Mongolia, 2017-2020, for continued support for agriculture, natural resources management, and climate change adaptation and mitigation. The innovative technically-sound community-based PDA produced results on the ground with significant demonstration value for restoration of other potential areas. Despite the need for a 1-year extension due to extreme weather conditions, and to incorporate the PDA results, the TA was implemented within budget and is rated *efficient*. The TA was *highly effective* as it produced the planned outputs and made progress towards its intended outcome. Given the catalytic role in generating interest from other development partners, and high-level discussions within Mongolia, the results of the TA can be rated *likely sustainable*.

Major Lessons

Major lessons are: (i) the cross-sectoral importance of peatlands generated wide interest from stakeholders; (ii) the PDA showed positive results and highlighted that restoration was possible; (iii) involvement of key stakeholders and relevant *aimag* and *soum* leaders throughout TA implementation was important and their contributions to the strategic plan for peatlands; (iv) support to the consultant team by a wide international network was effective for achieving the TA outcome; (v) role of the media played throughout TA implementation was useful in highlighting the significance of the issue; and (vi) highly supportive personnel from the MET, despite the internal reorganization of the ministry, was essential for TA implementation.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

The TA recommended high priority actions for sustainable management and restoration of peatlands in Mongolia given its cross sectoral importance for water security, pasture productivity, climate change mitigation, and in increasing resilience of herders and livestock during the increasingly frequent extreme climate events. The TA final report, assessment report, and strategic action plan include follow-up actions to be implemented in priority sites as well as a sectoral planning perspective. A key follow-up action is to secure funds for the publication of the technical assessment report that was produced under the TA. ADB will also present the results of the TA in a session during the upcoming World Water Week in Stockholm in August 2018. MET requested ADB to explore collaboration with United Nations Environment for follow-up work on peatlands in Mongolia as the latter was seeking funds from the Green Climate Funds for further peatland work in Mongolia based on the findings of the TA.

Raising awareness on this important issue and integrating peatland considerations into sectoral planning and investments also require follow-up actions. For raising the level of awareness among key stakeholders, as a start, it was suggested that glossy summary booklets on the following subjects be prepared: (i) Peatlands and Climate Change; (ii) Peatlands and Pastures Productivity; (iii) Peatlands and Water Security; (iv) Peatlands and Disaster Risk Management; and (v) Peatlands and Biodiversity. It is recommended that "Gachuurt Peatlands" (close to Ulaanbaatar) be designated as a demonstration/exhibition and educational site for sustainable management of peatlands and necessary facilities and information be constructed. The feasibility of sustainable agriculture in peatland areas could also be explored.

ADB = Asian Development Bank, JFPR = Japan Fund for Poverty Reduction, MEGD = Ministry of Environment and Green Development, MET = Ministry of Environment and Tourism, PDA = pilot demonstration activity, TA = technical assistance.

^a Does not include additional fund from TA 6498-REG: Knowledge and Innovation Support for ADB's Water Financing Program.

^b Peatlands are wetlands with a thick water-logged organic soil layer (peat) made up of dead and decaying plant material.

^c Government of Mongolia, Ministry of Environment and Tourism. 2017. *Report on the State of the Environment of Mongolia (2015–2016)*. Ulaanbaatar.

^d <https://www.adb.org/results/mongolia-battles-save-its-peatlands-and-nomadic-way-life>.