Pastoral Nomads take Climate Action in Mongolia



Girl milking a yak in Arkhangai aimag.

The pioneer project engages Mongolian nomads in the mountains and steppes of a globally important biodiversity heritage. The aim is to enable ecosystem recovery and carbon uptake of rangelands that typically suffer from degradation. Overgrazing, the main cause for degradation will be addressed by improving land and animal herding management practices, protecting key wildlife species and habitats and generating alternative income sources.

The project involves over 100 herder households of four herder groups (Hongor Ovoo heseg, Ikh Am heseg, Dert heseg, Dulaan Khairkhan) in the Mongolian mountains, steppes and desert steppes. Generally, the herders are characterized by low income levels and depend on their livestock and natural resources. The groups cover rangelands of around 70'000ha which are typically experiencing degradation. Degradation is driven by overgrazing and caused by four main factors: Firstly, the groups have adopted more sedentary lifestyles and reduced the seasonal mobility in comparison to their ancestors. Secondly, the families tend to keep larger herds that exceed the carrying capacity of the land. Thirdly, pastures close to urban facilities and markets are under particularly high pressure because migrating herders from the whole country gather in these areas. Finally, the herders compete with an increasing number of mines in the region, which consume large amounts of natural resources. Due to these developments - without any intervention - the grasslands are in danger of further degradation.

The community-led initiative aims to sequester carbon, conserve biodiversity as well as to improve herders' livelihoods and well-being. This will be achieved by a set of activities: The herders receive direct payments for ecosystem services (PES) in exchange for actively contributing to carbon sequestration and conserving biodiversity. In this way, herders are incentivized to improve land management and reduce grazing pressure by having fewer livestock and moving more often. In addition, the project encourages herders to strengthen the traditional groups called "Hesegs".

Project type:
Land Use and Forestry

Project location:
Mongolia Arkhangai Aimag (region)

Project status:
In operation, credits available

Annual CO_2 reduction:
10,096 t (2020)

Situation without project
Soil erosion, overgrazing and biodiversity loss

Project standard

PLAN VIVO
For nature, climate and communities

Impressions



The nomad herder groups in the Undurshireet soum district depend on Yaks as an income source.



Overgrazing leads to the degradation of biodiverse rangelands that are covered by nomad herder groups in Mongolia.

This allows to pool resources and skills and to produce and sell finished products instead of raw materials while achieving higher prices. Diversifying livelihoods in that way contributes to improve the herders' well-being. Furthermore, the herders are incentivized to cooperate to protect key wildlife species and habitats such as the Mongolian gazelle, ibex, red deer, marmot and saxaul forests. To support this goal, activities such as licensed logging, planting seedlings and biodiversity surveys will be conducted.

The project was set up as a result of a research project by the University of Leicester (UK) and is implemented in collaboration with the Mongolian Society for Range Management. MSRM is a nationally recognised NGO with a substantial track record in implementing community/ herder group projects and programs in Mongolia since 2007. Money from carbon credits is used to pay participating herder groups for their engagement in grassland protection as well as for related activities such as trainings in sustainable rangeland management, tree planting as well as collaborative production and marketing of finished products.



In the project, the nomads collaborate to protect key wildlife species such as the Mongolian Gazelle. Copyright: WWF Mongolia.



The project improves the well-being of herder families by creating income sources such as producing and selling felt products instead of raw material.

This project contributes to 5 SDGs (as of end 2022):

Find out how myclimate reports these SDGs in our FAQ.

The following SDGs are verified by Plan Vivo:



Improved household income from sale of wild fruits and nuts, collaboratively processed milk products and felt production



The nomads are trained in sustainable rangeland management, tree planting and collaborative production and marketing.



Three wells were dug to enhance water supply in under-used pasture areas.



Sequestration of 10,000 t CO_2/year



Planting of 1000 saplings in forest areas and establishment of a tree nursery