

# Promoting social equality in the Gobi-areas of South Mongolia by fostering human security with integrated and prevention approaches



UN Trust Fund for Human Security



## Fast Facts

**Country:** Mongolia

**Duration:** June 2010 to March 2013

**Implementing UN Agencies:** UNDP; UNICEF; UNFPA; WHO

**Other Implementing Partners:** National Ministries; Mongolian Red Cross Society; World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF); local Government

**Budget:** \$2,779,483.30

**Key Words:** Climate adaption; rural development; food security; water; sanitation

## BACKGROUND

Mongolia struggles with severe climatic conditions where long and cold winters followed by dust storms in the spring result in a vicious cycle of desertification, malnutrition and poverty. With less than one per cent arable land, the country has been severely affected by climate change and its related consequences such as droughts, lack of access to clean water, and higher rates of morbidity and mortality. In addition to its fragile ecosystem, there are many sources of risk and

insecurity in the Mongolian economy. Due to its heavy reliance on pastoral animal husbandry and limited agricultural land, Mongolia's traditional economic activities and its nomadic way of life are highly vulnerable to climate change. The situation is particularly acute in the Gobi desert areas where the interaction between climate change and human insecurities is likely to be long, complex and full of uncertainties.

## PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

### GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

To improve the resilience of communities in the Gobi areas from both persistent poverty and the impacts of climate change, the project advanced a four-pronged intervention with interrelated components as follows: (i) increase access to safe drinking water among those severely affected by climate change by building the capacity of both local Government and service providers through the rehabilitation of water resources and water waste management facilities; (ii) improve the quality of formal education with emphasis on proper hygiene practices; (iii) enhance access to and quality of primary health care through community-

based health-care mechanisms; and (iv) strengthen economic security at the individual and community levels through training in business management, product development and technical support towards income generating activities in rural development, recycling and waste water treatment. A comprehensive and multi-sectorial intervention was recognized as the most appropriate strategy to address the consequences of climate change as well as to meet the country's sustainable development goals and aspirations for economic growth and prosperity.

### BENEFICIARIES

The number of direct beneficiaries was approximately 39,000 persons in the Gobi desert areas in southern Mongolia in the provinces of Gobi-Altai, Bayanhongor and Omnogobi. The indirect beneficiaries were people in and around the three

provinces who benefitted from the added capacities of local actors. They included: (1) Government officials and decision-makers, (2) NGOs and associations, and (3) vulnerable persons, particularly women and youth.



## NOTABLE ACHIEVEMENTS

- (i) To respond to the needs of the most vulnerable, the project supported an integrated package of coordinated interventions in health, education, water, sanitation and economic sectors. Recognizing that overall improvements in human security are closely linked to progress in activities in each sector, the project advanced an integrated community approach that together helped improve the quality of primary health care, strengthened waste management, enhanced access to safe water and sanitation facilities, and provided sustainable income opportunities for rural communities most impacted by climate change.
- (ii) Since Mongolia's traditional economic sectors are highly vulnerable to climate change, the project improved income generation activities by promoting

alternative livelihoods as well as helping pastoralists manage risk, diversify their incomes and mitigate the future impact of climate change on their overall productivity.

- (iii) A key component in reducing the negative impact of climate change is strengthening the capacities and resilience of individuals and communities to cope with climate-related challenges. By building on existing community networks, the project established effective coordination and participatory processes that encouraged ownership of the local communities over the project's implementation. This helped strengthen public-private partnerships, increase knowledge, enhance awareness and improve preparedness and adaptation to climate change.

## LESSONS LEARNED

Given the future impact of climate change on the socio-economic situation of the most vulnerable in Mongolia, a comprehensive and multi-sectoral intervention that combined improvements in and access to social services, with the provision of adaptation strategies to climate change, was paramount in reducing the immediate harmful consequences of climate change and developing a platform from which to build resilience and to advance future avenues for sustainable development and economic growth. Accordingly, since vulnerabilities to climate change were multiple, the project

simultaneously addressed and supported an integrated package of coordinated interventions in the health, education, water, sanitation and economic sectors. Moreover, since these interventions were based on the actual needs expressed by the participating communities, they advanced solutions that were embedded in local realities. This greater focus on the community as whole ensured genuine ownership and commitment beyond the timeframe of the project. In this way the project contributed to bolster local capacities to mitigate and respond to climate-related threats in a sustainable manner.