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Rural Development and Environmental Education in Mongolia

Assessment of Ecotourism Development in Khar Us Nuur National Park and its buffer zones, Mongolia

Opinions and experience from a Practitioner – Jan Wigsten

*Results of research presented in preliminary form for discussion
and critical comment*

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Acronyms

CBNRM	Community Based Natural Resource Management
CBT	Community Based Tourism
EE	Environmental Education
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
IIED	International Institute for Environment and Development
ISLT	International Snow Leopard Trust
JW	Jan Wigsten
KUNNP	Khar Us Nuur National Park
MNE	Ministry of Nature and the Environment
MTA	Mongolian Tourism Association
PA	Protected Area
RD	Rural Development
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
SMME	Small, Medium and Micro Enterprise
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature

Summary

Tourism development will beyond doubt arrive in the KUNNP area in the next few years and present itself as an opportunity for income generation for people in Hovd and herders alike. More often than not, the carriers of these tourist's will be Ulaanbaatar based tourist companies. More benefits will be captured locally if properly planned, and that local people are well informed. Especially herders have no clue no grasp that their lifestyle is at the core of tourist's motivation to come to Mongolia. Herder's are literate and understand their livelihood approaches. If they have more knowledge about tourism dynamics from the beginning it will be easier for those with an aptitude for tourism involvement to become engaged and get a fair trade deal out of it.

To achieve the twin objectives of rural development and conservation, tours with high community level benefit should be promoted among herders, which represent a low impact kind of tourism.

There are as yet no negative impacts of any tourism development in Khar Us Nuur National Park (KUNNP) and its buffer zones, why re-active measures against it are not needed. Rather, WWF should adopt a pro active role to create an enabling business environment for sound ecotourism development in KUNNP and its buffer zones. There is a need for further planning with local stakeholders on planning for the future tourism that is to come.

- i) The zoning is recommended to include the locations of highest market tourism potential within KUNNP and its buffer zones. These are suitable camping places as well is visitation sites. These "tourist honey pots" could be considered as "grazing areas" for tourist's and co-management of each location - with primary resource user families - may be sought. If properly zoned as such, this measure may assist visitation management and revenue to the national park at the same time.
- ii) Extend the buffer zone to also include the distant summer pastures used by KUNNP primary resource users. A further professional assessment of the suitability of these areas as tourism trek zones is required. If positive, it should be promoted that any herders that are primary resource users may consider to extend tourism services by riding camels, horses and as trailfinders at the distant summer pastures during the hot months of July and August. If the appropriate links to commercial partners an be established.
- iii) Free camping should be forbidden within KUNNP, however, a camping permit may be bought from the PA administration for privileged use of specified camping locations pointed out in the management plan. Such an arrangement would create revenue for KUNNP administration.
- iv) Hovd University is the institution of higher learning in western Mongolia and it is likely that local youth with language capabilities are enrolled there only. Possibly the suggested that a Community Tourism Resource booklet may be co-produced with the Department of Geography. Mongolian tourism is seasonal and it will depend on a seasonal and a young workforce with language capabilities for its future development, why cooperation with the Department of Geography should be promoted.

- v) The formation of the national working group of Community Based Tourism is a positive move. The WWF participation in the same is very useful for sharing of experiences with other parts of Mongolia. It may also result in co-financing and parallel funding of activities. The working group will however need professional guidance, since currently there are none of its members, with a professional tourism background. Especially during its early formative period of work. It is more important earlier than later. WWF are recommended to promote the linkages with the Mongolian travel industry and to urge the working group to hire some external consultant to assist to enhance their work so that it can gain focus.
- vi) For micro enterprise development only tour products with high community benefit should be actively promoted. Especially treks and rides where camel and horse hire is involved.
- vii) Vehicle based tour products and tours that require comfortable accommodation such as ger camps need not be promoted by the project. It will anyhow develop naturally. The tourism zoning and the management plan should be developed to meet these developments and it is suggested that it is supportive of the sustainable use of KUNNP. WWF and the KUNNP administration should create an enabling business environment for these.
- viii) Whether the establishment of a ger camps should be permitted within KUNNP is an open question still and it require further careful assessment. Mongolian tourism entrepreneurs are currently keen to build ger camps, and more often than not, investments are being made that are quite heavy on the soils, despite gers being of the most low impact technology available. It is because ger camps are usually built as largem with concrete floors, and permant shower and flush toilet blocks. If ger camp is at all to be permitted, it should be of a low impact kind as detailed in this report.
- ix) As part of an awarness building strategy it is recommended to disseminate business information to herder levels and the surrounding soums, as to the characteristics of tourism developments in other parts of Mongolia, so that community level people, may understand and detect when the business opportunities are presented to them. It is recommended to liaise with the working group of CBT in UB and also with the Department of Geography at Hovd University to introduce such a train the trainers program in the immediate KUNNP areas. In order to facilitate this training, and if funding is available, the Handbook For the Community may be produced. In the format developed by Nunavut Tourism¹ in the Canadian Arctic.

¹ Ask JW for a copy or information of how to get it from Nunavut Tourism.

Rural Development and Environmental Education in Mongolia.

Report presented to Ramboll Natura and WWF Mongolia.

Preface and Acknowledgements

This report draws on my experience working with the private sector in Mongolian tourism and identifies mechanisms to extend community benefits and alternative income generation through appropriate tourism development. The topic of this report is the livelihood option of tourism for the local people who inhabit Khar Us Nuur National Park, KUNNP, its buffer zones and areas of their influence for summer pastures. The diversification of the livelihood options available to the local populations of KUNNP will enable WWF and park staff to better achieve the conservation goals.

The research for this report was conducted during a field trip to Hovd at the end of October 2004. We were a multidisciplinary team of Mongolian and foreign experts in rural business development, rural tourism, rangelands management, local park staff and WWF Mongolia managers.

I am grateful for the assistance provided by WWF Mongolia and their associates in Hovd and I highly appreciate and value to take part in this important work alongside with the WWF team, and the multidisciplinary team of national and foreign experts of Ramboll.



1. The Big Picture

Ecotourism is not a kind of tour product: rather, it is a set of principles on how to implement tourism through understanding the livelihood approaches of local people and to bring about a value for natural areas locally. This approach leads to meeting conservation goals. A tour product that promotes the appreciation of nature should be labeled “Nature Tourism.”. For example, a horse riding holiday may be a horse riding tour product, and planned and executed locally according to Ecotourism principles. This involves planning with local stakeholders which includes public-private partnerships and business development partnerships. It is extremely difficult to deliver what Ecotourism sets out to do, public-private sector entities, in isolation of each other. Protected Area (PA) managers, business managers, local authorities and the partners in the tourism supply chain extending to the marketplaces and the attitudes of the tourists themselves and their travel choice are part of the ecotourism equation. Everyone contributes to the Ecotourism Equation.

But for three locations outside of Ulaanbaatar, tourism was not developed until fundamental changes in Mongolia were introduced as a result of the major changes, called “glasnost” and “perestroika”, in the early 1990s in the former USSR. Until the 1980’s only Hujirt (Övörhangai), Terelj (Töv) and Gobi Gurvansaikhan (Ömnögobi) had tour camps. All tourists came in a barter trade agreement from the Comecon countries and Finland. A few, who paid the full price, came from other countries such as Sweden, Norway and Denmark². There were no French, British, Japanese, Koreans or Americans. Hovd Aimag was off limits for all foreign tourists until some time in 1989-1990.

International tourism started to trickle into Hovd Aimag in 1992. Since then, very little of the tourism industry has developed. In 2002, a small number of tourists fly to Hovd, mostly on group tours, and exit to neighboring Bayan-Ölgii aimag, where more of the majestic Altai Mountains are located. The main emerging destination in the west is Altai Tavanbogd National Park. In the peak tourism period of July and August, Khar Us Nuur is ridden with hordes of mosquitoes and it is very hot which keeps even local people and their livestock away. The remoteness from Ulaanbaatar, the lack of communication and a basic tourist infrastructure, the summer heat and mosquitoes has (until now) reduced tourism development in Hovd Aimag.

1.2 General characteristics of Travel & Tourism production

Tourism is unique from other businesses. These unique qualities have implications for local development:

- Unlike manufacturing where businesses typically manufacture a product and ship it at a cost to a distant market, the tourist pays for the transport himself and arrives in the area. Remote areas of the world produce few manufactured goods for distant markets, since the majority of what they can produce may also be manufactured closer to the market, making this local production less competitive. If the

² JW lead tours in Mongolia since 1980 and onwards.

destination can draw on its unique character, remoteness is not a hurdle for tourism. On the contrary, the transport to location is paid for by the tourist.

- Any tourism growth needs to be accommodated in location (e.g., if the number of tourists are growing and too many arrive in Rashantiin Am, it will be crowded!). As a consequence the value of the tourist experience is reduced? would erode. Find a balance between number of tourists able to sustain local businesses but not so many that the experience is eroded. This balance is central in bringing about sustainable tourism and ecotourism.
- Travel and Tourism is an Assembly Industry that in location is more or less dependant on a wide range of interconnected services such as hotels, restaurants, ger camps and transport to deliver a service to the same tourist as he/she travels around rural Mongolia. Once a critical mass of tourists is reached, market forces usually respond positively and these service industries develop. The added advantage is that this development benefits the local population and, jointly together with tourists, there may be enough market for these businesses also serves a local market.
- The natural and cultural environment is a key resource when travelers decide to move their consumption to a place or country. This natural environment is not usually owned by the tourist enterprises, but rather it is a shared environment with local people and also industry competitors. Tourism does not have ownership of its “natural resources,” nor does it have formal concession agreements like industries such as forestry, oil and gold mining for which there is extended temporary ownership phrased out in concession contracts for exploitation, or ownership in the form of subsurface mineral rights, lease agreements, or outright ownership. In some cases for these other industries, there is contractual responsibility of environmental performance.
- While the key factor for the tourist to choose a particular destination lies in the quality of nature and culture (that represent only marginal direct revenue for the enterprises), the main revenue is generated by the enterprises extending support services such as restaurants, hotels, ger camps and transportation. The latter are weakly developed in Hovd Aimag likely due to poor demand.
- The “product” is a service that is being produced at the same time it is being consumed by the tourist.

GUIDELINE

Tourism is a powerful economic activity with a pronounced seasonality which can occur without any costs for the local communities and is an income generating opportunity. Tourists are attracted by unique features of the region and overdevelopment might erode these qualities. It is always better to plan for tourism in advance

1.3 Characteristics of Tourism specific to Mongolia

Further to the unique general characteristics for travel and tourism development there are unique characteristics of Mongolian tourism:

- Mongolia is a fairly large territory with little or no infrastructure which is why tourists need the assistance of tour operators to a greater extent than in other countries. Tour operators bring together different service items into package holidays and make sure that transport, food and lodging arrangements have been prebooked and work together as a whole.
- Mongolia has the highest atmospheric pressure in the world with blue skies and very little winter precipitation. Therefore, prospects for winter-based skiing tourism are very limited, which further compounds the dependence on the relatively short summer season. Ulaanbaatar is, in addition, the coldest capital city on Earth, with a mean average temperature of -2°C per annum. For a winter season, the normal returns on investments in hotel facilities that are heated and located in attractive places is limited, since the winter occupancy from tourists is very low.
- Mongolia is a big country with a very small rural population over its territory. It is not likely that a local tourism market will develop to the extent that appropriate tourism infrastructure will be developed for year-round use through market forces within Mongolia.
- There is almost a total lack of tourism infrastructure in rural areas such as appropriate accommodations, restaurants, surfaced roads, communications, and internet services. These needs must be organized for the short summer season, and paid for, by the tourists alone. This is an attainable goal. The lack of these features presents an opportunity to provide a complete and organized travel solution for those tourists that appreciate undeveloped environments, and who desire to experience natural landscapes and peoples. The numbers of tourists, suitable for the conditions in Mongolia, are indeed few, but enough to generate profitable businesses for Mongolia. These travel flows are small compared to world markets; however, even in Mongolia, these flows have already created negative impacts in some places, for example in Gorkhi-Terelj and Hövsgöl National Parks.
- Almost half the population is pastoralists. No other country has such a living connection to its historical past. The Mongols were on horseback and lived in gers at the time when the Great Wall of China

was built, some 2000 years ago. The main attraction of Mongolia is its rural population and their lifestyle; the ownership of this “natural resource” is with the rural communities.

- The huge open landscape in which these mobile peoples live is also a key factor in the core tourism product for Mongolia. Hence, the primary experience of the Mongolian tour product is not site-specific. Harhorin, Lake Hövsgöl and Tavanbogd glaciers are merely secondary experiences.

GUIDELINE

Tour Operators are important business links in Mongolia. The lack of a domestic market makes return on investments in high end countryside hotels extremely challenging, which is why the Mongolian tourism industry has developed a low cost seasonal solution such as ger camps. Unlike other countries, the core experiences are not directly connected to monuments or certain places, but rather to its rural population. These core experiences are not site-specific which is why competitiveness between destinations inside Mongolia to a large extent depends on the ability of local people to develop skills to meet tourist needs.

Mongolian tourism is still in a phase of growth that is being promoted through mechanisms outside of the country, such as television documentaries, photographic spreads, and articles filled with the images of Mongolia which proliferate, worldwide interest. It means growth automates by itself still. It is an emerging tourism summer destination with unique features and characteristics and it is likely to continue to grow for several more years. With the sole exception of the year 2003 when the SARS epidemic in China hampered all tourism in Asia, Mongolian tourism has had a growth rate of some 20 percent per annum³, without any major marketing efforts. World tourism is estimated to double by the year 2020⁴! Mongolia will be no exception. Currently tourism generates 11 percent of GDP which is the worldwide average.

To date, Mongolian tourism has been developed in three tourism areas known since the socialist period with the fairly recent addition of Lake Hövsgöl (off limits in the 1980's):

The most popular and four main clusters of Mongolian tourism development are:

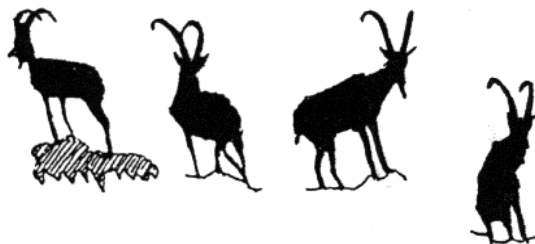
- **Harhorin** (Övörhangai) and **Hogno Khan Uul** (Bulgan) are near each other and build their popularity from the remains of the former capital of the Mongol Empire and the Erdenezuu Monastery.
- **Gorkhi-Terelj National Park** (Töv) represents the southern fringes of the forested areas of Mongolia. It is grossly overdeveloped with ger camps and serves as a major picnic area for Ulaanbaatar residents due to its proximity to the capital. The main area around Gorkhi Mountains is saturated and has been allowed by the relevant authorities to expand way beyond its carrying capacity.

³ Nomadic Journeys Ltd. and others.

⁴ WTO, World Tourism Organization, Madrid.

- **Gobi Gurvansaikhan⁵ National Park** for Yoliin Am⁶ and Bayanzag⁷ (Ömnögobi). Although this national park is very large, tourism is highly concentrated to Yoliin Am, which is a gorge in the Gurvansaikhan Mountains, that in the past had ice and snow at its bottom all through the summer. Today, the ice eventually thaws in July or August. The Roy Chapman Andrews' expedition in the 1920's labelled Bayanzag "the Flaming Cliffs", where the first fossilized dinosaur eggs were unearthed in the 1920s. Some tourists also drive about 6 hours westward visit the scenic Hongoriin Els⁸, a 180 km long sand dune.
- **Lake Hövsgöl (southwestern shore) and the village of Hatgal.** The twin lake of Baikal at 1635 meters above sea level near the Russian border is the only recent major tourism destination that has emerged over the last 10 years. It has been developed as a "backpackers corridor" for overland transport to/from Ulaanbaatar.

All of the above destinations represent clusters of rapid tourism development. Investments have been made here for seasonal ger camps and guest houses serving the full range of independent travelers as well as group tourists and the domestic Mongolian tourism market. All, except possibly Gobi Gurvansaikhan, has experienced a rather unguided tourism development and is now becoming saturated. At Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park, however, tourists complained of severe littering at Yoliin Am which was probably caused by migrant souvenir sellers, and tourists from Dalanzadgad, Ulaanbaatar and abroad who do wild and unregulated camping in the area.



Hence, there is currently a need to further diversify the products (i.e., destinations) being offered as there will be an increased demand for other areas from the "organized tour sector" (meaning group tours from abroad serviced by Mongolian tour operators). This current situation presents itself as an opportunity for the area of KUNNP. In the next 5 to 10 years,, tour companies and tourists alike will increasingly look for alternatives to the destination mentioned above. Sustainable development and ecotourism have failed when saturation makes quality tour operators to abandon productive areas thus driving development of tour destinations to other places. Simply moving away and allowing mass tourism to develop is counter to the principles of ecotourism.

Mass tourism is when tourism generates large quantities of tourists for a low price. Due to the competitiveness of the industry, tourism is an economic activity that may generate "profitless volume" which means the social and environmental costs are higher than what is paid for. In addition, only marginal profits are generated for tour companies and local people

⁵ Three Beauties

⁶ Lammergeier gorge or Yol Valley

⁷ Rich Saxaul

⁸ Singing Sands or Hongor Sands.

alike, and the profitable tourism moves on to other areas. A current example is the Gorkhi Terelj National Park in Ulaanbaatar and this is now about to happen at Lake Hövsgöl National Park. At KUNNP, there is a very low risk for this to happen.

The point of this project is to strike the balance of *profitability* and *sustainability* at KUNNP. KUNNP will likely not experience any major impact threats from tourism for years to come; rather the challenge lies in getting a few interested tourists and tour operators to choose the area. The tour companies that come to KUNNP first are also the ones that spearhead alternatives to major tourism destinations.

In western Mongolia Bayan-Ölgii are the most popular, and several small service providers and tour companies have developed there. Ölgii is only a 6-8 hour drive from Hovd airport. The next destination that potentially will become overdeveloped may be Tavanbogd glaciers, should it follow the same path of other large Mongolian tour destinations.

GUIDELINE

More tourism will undoubtedly be developed in the KUNNP area in the near future. The smarter tour operators and tourists that find their way to KUNNP should be seen as potential future customers and/or partners in development. Small tour operators based in neighboring Ölgii are also potential partners and should not be overlooked. If there is no strategy to meet this emerging tourism demand, the local people will to a large extent be sidelined and will not benefit from this development and its opportunities.

1.4 Characteristics of Tourism specific to KUNNP and Hovd aimag

In recent years, Altai Tavanbogd National Park has emerged as a desirable tour destination for hikers and travellers who only need basic amenities. Since flights into Ölgii often are fully booked, a fair number fly to Hovd airport and continue into Bayan Ölgii. The perception by tourists is that the main advantage of Bayan-Ölgii is the unique features of Kazakh people who are visually distinct from Mongols. Kazakhs have their golden eagles and the high snow-capped mountains which stretch to the Hovd border. Hovd Soum has Kazakhs, but these Kazakhs do not have eagles.

Tourism knows no administrative borders. Tsambagarav Uul National Park and Höh Serhiin Nuruu⁹ Nature Reserve are high mountain zones with Kazakh people and eagle hunters around them. These protected areas are shared between Hovd and Bayan-Ölgii and are relatively near Hovd. Should overdevelopment occur at Altai Tavanbogd, tourism will move nearer to Hovd, and, therefore, KUNNP areas. Some group tours already offer treks across Höh Serhiin Nuuru and around Tsambagarav Uul.

Khar Us Nuur National Park lies in an arid Gobi area which extends up to the Russian frontier in Uvs aimag. It is in The Great Lakes Basin which constitutes the world's northernmost desert zone with an annual precipitation of some 120 mm per annum. Altan Els¹⁰ Nature Reserve, almost on the Russian border, has the world's northernmost sand dunes.

⁹ Blue Goat Mountains

¹⁰ Golden Sands

Compared to other destinations in Mongolia, the unique features of Khar Us Nuur are:

- The great lakes are situated in a quite arid, desert-like environment with snow-capped mountains as a backdrop and resemble the Changtang Plateau in Tibet.
- The number of camels that are trained for riding is higher near Khar Us Nuur than in other areas accessible to tourists in Mongolia. However, the camel owners and camels are likely not aware of their tourism potential and most migrate to distant summer pastures in the mountains in July and August.
- The Mongolians are very friendly and hospitable in Khar Us Nuur area in a way associated with how Mongolia used to be and still is in some places. This attitude of hospitality is currently being compromised in some of the more popular tourist destinations.
- Hovd airport is the only one in western Mongolia with a paved runway. Hovd airport is close to Khar Us Nuur and within easy driving distance of the other four westernmost aimags of Uvs, Bayan Ölgii, Zavhan and Gobi Altai. Hovd's long distance from Ulaanbaatar makes driving an unrealistic prospect.
- The Tsaaganuur land border in Bayan-Ölgii opened up on June 1st 2005 to third country nationals¹¹. It means some group tours will be able to combine Russian Altai with Mongolian Altai. This new circumstance could potentially increase the flow of tourists through Hovd. Aeroflot Russian Airlines is cost effective when in order building so-called open-jaw¹² tickets from Europe to/from Barnaul (Russia) and Ulaanbaatar via Moscow.
- Bayan Ölgii, Uvs and Hovd Aimags are considered a single tour destination within Mongolia; in other words, international travelers that choose to visit any one of these three aimags are likely to visit the remaining two. Hence, they do not compete with each other, but rather, together, they strengthen each other.
- Chandman Soum (located partly in KUNNP) claim to be the cradle of world famous throat singing and therefore are of some interest to tourists.
- KUNNP has a very mobile herding population. During the peak Mongolian tourism season of July and August KUNNP is traditionally vacated, as nomads move to higher ground, some distance away from the national park and its buffer zone. Some Mankhan and Chandman herders – only – move to higher ground at

¹¹ Other than Russian and Mongolian nationals.

¹² Open-jaw is to fly out to one destination and back from another, still getting the benefits of a lower fare, just as if it is a return ticket, rather than two one-ways.

Jargalant Hairhan Mountain, which is inside KUNNP, where they have summer pastures. Hence economic benefits from tourism for KUNNP herders may take place outside the park itself.

- There is a need to divide the tourism product and its product development into two different seasons. One is the Mongolian peak tourism season in July and August, when local people and animals should be at the distant summer pastures. KUNNP proper is virtually depopulated and filled with heat and mosquitoes. Although shorter visits may be offered in KUNNP, treks and nomadic experiences should be offered in the mountains in summer pastures. Whereas for the shoulder seasons, in May-June and September-October respectively, opportunities for tourism nearer to the lakes when the local people are back in KUNNP areas. The mosquitoes are gone due to the colder nights. Tourism during this time of year offers different kind of experience which is connected to having the local people present. KUNNP also offers an alternative to other Mongolian destinations during this time when the mountains and the north become more exposed to cold and snow.

GUIDELINE

The future tour product development of KUNNP is very much connected to the mobility of its people. The mountains are preferred in July and August whereas the KUNNP proper area has more potential for longer stays in May-June and September-October. Tourism management should reflect this reality imposed by nature on tourists and nomads alike.

2. Tourism Policy and KUNNP Spatial Development

The need for “spatial planning”¹³ for travel and tourism development in KUNNP is evident. Tourist visitation rates are likely to increase in the area in the near future. Due to the aridity of the landscape, the number of camping places suitable for foreign tourists is limited (for example, only a few camping spots have inviting grass and are near a water source).

Some important species occur in the core areas. These species include the Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*) and White-headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) in the Tsaagan Gol reed beds and the Saiga Antelopes (*Saiga tatarica mongolica*) at Dörgöniy Huren Tal. The presence of rare birds such as Hodgson’s Bushchat (*Saxicola insignia*) and Altai Snowcock (*Tetraogallus altaica*) in Jargalant Hairhan Mountain is appealing for bird specialists and avid birdwatchers. This area also supports snow leopard (*Panthera uncia*) habitat. The Snow Leopards’ prey species, Argali Sheep (*Ovis ammon*) and Siberian Ibex (*Capra sibirica*.) are more likely to be seen than the Snow Leopard. The dissemination of information about these wild features needs to meet the needs of the wildlife, and to be adapted to what is permitted by law and policy.

¹³ Spatial Development is the spatial consequences of socioeconomic development.

2.1 Protected area revenue streams

The role of a protected area is to adopt the role as a natural resource manager. Which is to protect the integrity of its ecosystems and charge the users fees for its use, so that it as much as possible is self-funded. Tourism businesses have, in theory, a vested interest in protected areas management for wildlife and resource protection. In Mongolia, there are a number of different types of protected areas and these areas are managed by government departments and depend almost entirely on allocations made by the government from the national budget. As in most other developing countries with budgetary constraints, the amount of money to manage parks and other protected areas is too low. Because of chronic under funding the public sector is currently a dysfunctional partner to the private sector. In addition, the little funding available is open to change from year to year, due to changes in politics in Ulaanbaatar.

Management entities of protected areas in other countries vary and include¹⁴ parastatal bodies.

Nongovernmental Organizations,

community organizations,

the private sector, or combination of the these

There is no prerequisite that the government ownership of protected areas also means that only government entities should manage these. For the future development of protected areas in Mongolia, the current funding mechanisms and management are dysfunctional, and do not easily lend themselves to future partnerships. In KUNNP, the involvement of WWF is an exception for the better.

A parastatal is essentially a public sector organization with some elements commonly found in the private sector. In Africa, several parastatals¹⁵ have been formed to run protected areas so that management is less affected by changes in government priorities following a change of government. They would still operate at “arms length” from the government. Parastatal agencies in order to operate effectively should be managed by a Board of Directors who are a mixture of experts in various aspects of tourism, business and protected area management¹⁶. The end results have been mixed from these type of entities.

In some cases governments have transferred responsibilities of PA management to **qualified NGOs**. NGOs usually develop revenue streams generally through wildlife related tourism or sale of concessions to private businesses that can be used to fund the proper management of the PA.

In the case of KUNNP, a management regime that is a partnership between a government entity, KUNNP administration under the MNE, and an international NGO (WWF Mongolia) is currently in place. They have separate offices in Hovd, but work very much in tandem with each other.

¹⁴ Font, X; Cochrane, J and Tapper, R; (2004). WWF Netherlands.

¹⁵ E.g. TANAPA, Tanzania National Parks and once Kenya Wildlife Service under Dr. Leaky.

¹⁶ Font, X; Cochrane, J and Tapper, R; (2004). WWF Netherlands.

The same report¹⁷ further states that:

- “**Concessions and leases** are contracts between protected areas and businesses or individuals under which those are permitted to operate within a protected area and to use certain land or facilities owned by the protected area for a specific period in exchange for making payments to the protected area and subject to compliance with protected area regulations.”
- Traditionally, protected area attitudes to the private sector encompassed a range of approaches including trying to keep them out or ignoring them, marketing them, licensing or restricting them, competing with them, and forming partnerships with them (Buckley, 2002). However, in the current climate of shrinking funds for management of PAs coupled with increased awareness of the value of managed market forces, there is now a trend towards greater cooperation with the private sector. Governments increasingly recognize the value of providing an enabling environment for the private sector to operate within a protected area. Around one in five protected areas worldwide use some form of concession or licensing system¹⁸, and the increasing privatization of service delivery in protected areas will increase their popularity.

In the KUNNP buffer zones, the contractual counterpart is not KUNNP administration, rather the respective Soum authorities.

- “The principal rationale for use of concessions and leases is that private operators bring expertise to PAs of tourism, which PA managers traditionally have little experience of, and the system can bring mutual benefits. The concessionaire or leaseholder acquires – in exchange for a contract with and payments to a protected area – the right to run a business in an attractive location that is a potential honey-pot for tourists and the protected area gains extra revenue. Concessions and leases also helps to balance demands from the private sector for development of PAs, by allowing a limited amount of controlled business activity”.

What the WWF Netherlands report fails to recognize is that the prerequisite to be able to sell such a “service” to any private sector entity, this arrangement need to be defined in the management plan (MP) and supported by the tourism zoning. A MP could enable the PA to parcel out management in bits and pieces to a variety of partnerships. Complicating factors for KUNNP are its remote location and Mongolia’s short tourism season. For the next couple of years, KUNNP will only be a stop over on a wider circuit on western Mongolia which is why such leases may not be as valuable here as elsewhere. These factors should be considered in planning since the financial revenues that may be generated by tourism, can only provide a portion of the revenues needed for KUNNP.

Because the tourism market value of KUNNP may be limited, Mongolian tour companies may be reluctant to consider a high annual fixed fee for concessions. However, they would be more likely to consider a lower fixed fee and/or higher variable fees (e.g., once the operators have clients, they pay according to the business revenue generated). In addition, such concessions should be of long duration, e.g. at least 5 years, with a possibility for renewal. It also means that there is a greater emphasis on assessment of the company since as long as the concessionaire is successful of the business venture it is likely that the PA will

¹⁷ Font, X; Cochrane, J and Tapper, R; (2004). WWF Netherlands.

¹⁸ Font, X; Cochrane, J and Tapper, R; (2004). WWF Netherlands.

receive ongoing source of revenue. One may spread the risks, and it is perfectly possible that different companies use the same zones at different times, which is a unique characteristic that tourism and herding shares. In addition, concessions should be granted to successful businesses and spread among different companies to use zones at different times of the year.

GUIDELINE

There is a full range of recommendations on funding of protected areas in the recent report by WWF Netherlands, and I am confident it can be acquired from André Brasser at e-mail: abrasser@wwf.nl. Appropriate zoning should be redefined in the Management Plan in order to successfully sell use of the PA to the private sector. Currently there is little market demand for KUNNP, and, accordingly, tourism has little to offer. However, the small number of tour operators will increase and gradually become more significant. A joint long term effort between x and x is required in order to achieve significant revenue from the tourism sector. This successful partnership will depend on the ability of the PA to work with local tourism businesses thus strengthening the local tourism sector. Due to a number of factors, a concentrated effort is needed to increase the potential of KUNNP to generate revenue from tourism.

2.2 Tourism zoning

Whereas the core areas have been identified in the Management Plan, there are no provisions for specific tourism zoning for the following:

- Suitable camping places
- Appropriate locations for ger camp investments, if any
- Visitation places “Honey Pots¹⁹”!

The draft Management Plan (June 2004) identifies three major tourism zones which are Jargalant Hairhan Mountain, Avgash Island and Khar Us Lake (covering 150 000 hectares, which is a total tourism zone of 17,6 percent of the entire KUNNP land area. Really, such a large space for tourism in desert steppe landscape is not a useful kind of zoning.

It is unclear what the justification is for the current tourism zones. In contrast, the justification for most of the core zones are more easily understood, since they are obviously located where conservation goals are the most important.

The interest of tourism companies and tourists alike are to include some tourism activity into the core zones. There may be negative impacts from such tourism activity. The Management Plan has some conflicting messages regarding **Jargalant Hairhan Mountain** being a designated core zone and having many pressures from summer grazing as well as being part of the tourism zone. During my short visit, it remained unclear to me the desired use of Jargalant Hairhan Mountain. Should it be promoted for tourism? Or should it be allowed to be a low impact tourism zone for licensed guides only? Or should parts of it be off limits for herders and tourists alike?

¹⁹ Honey Pot is a place with great uniqueness and of interest to the tourist.

A similar lack of clarity was evident for the **Tsaagan Gol Reedbeds**. On one hand, tourists using boats to see birds was cited as one source of revenue as well as concern for the importance of the reedbeds for local herders use. While the number of tourists and locals may be low in the middle of the tourism season, due to the mosquitoes, and heat, there may be conflicts between conservation goals and tourism development. The Management Plan should clearly indicate sensitive breeding periods for the avifauna that may be adversely impacted by the presence of tourists and motorboats. And clear spatially explicit provisions for temporary restrictions.

In their report on ecotourism development in KUNNP, Liegl and Eberherr (1999) have identified nine camping/visitation locations suitable for tourism. These places are limited in extent. I recommend these zones to be considered as *tourism resource zones* and if necessary modified for such ends in the the Management Plan. I believe there are more tourism resource zones in KUNNP.

By applying a specific zoning to these locations and placing them under a specific management regime, the national park administration may co-manage each zone with local herders and/or rangers. The permitted use should evaluate potentially negative impacts on wildlife and soils from tourism and implement measures to mitigate or prevent these impacts. These particular zones are the key tourism resources, and it will possibly allow for selling user rights for privileged access to independent tourists and tour companies alike. This approach would enhance the revenue streams generated by the national park. Moreover by managing the visitation to the camping sites, as well as to the visitation sites (“honey pots”), it allows for a way to monitor visitation and carrying capacities as well as providing revenue for the park administration. Tourism has been identified in earlier reports as the sole source of income generation for the park. I believe that in these same reports that there is an overestimation of the tourism potential due to KUNNPs unique flora and fauna. Mongolia is not like Africa where wildlife-based tourism is the core experience. Rather in Mongolia it is the nomads and their lifestyle that is at the core of the experience and the wildlife and landscapes add value to that experience. As a consequence, local people also is part of the Tourism equation in KUNNP.

Tour companies are usually willing to pay additional fees for national park use provided:

- Funds are reinvested back into the park in a visible way
- The operators get something tangible in return

Tangible returns could, for example, be exclusive overnight use at the camping site at Rashantiin Am, which is booked in advance. Once booked, no other tour group may use the site on that date and this could be administered on a first come-first serve basis. Hence, the national park coordinate the camping nights according to the desired number. If there are fragile environments, regulations for use could be imposed and certified guides could be trained to accompany the tourists to these places. The national park could charge for this administration.

One system that works quite well in some protected areas in Mongolia is to allow licensed tour operators to issue service vouchers on park entry fees (in other words, pick up some of the administration costs). For example, a voucher will be issued to park visitors and park rangers will collect these to verify the fee has been paid.. Vouchers reduce the need for park rangers to handle money in the field as it can be cumbersome.

Any change in regulations often require a 1 to 2 year implementation period so that the existing users of the national park may adapt their tour itineraries to these changes. Such information should to be included at the KUNNP website and communicated to the Mongolian Tourism Association and directly at the different ranger posts. And any folders about the national park should include this information.

Professionally designed maps and folders have already been funded by USAID program, The Competitiveness Initiative for Altai Tavanbogd National Park and Lake Hövsgöl National Park²⁰.

GUIDELINE

Implementation of new regulations requires more than a year's advance notice to tour businesses. USAID is funding professionally designed national park folders and maps, and it seems likely that KUNNP could qualify for this support as well. I recommend that KUNNP consider the use of service vouchers for payments to the park administration. Each camping location needs management, either by the campers themselves (guidelines) or if more intensively used, assisted by local or park guides.

Some of the issues regarding some of the zones we inspected are as follows:

2.3 Elsen Shanaa Beach

This location is situated in Buyant Soum and is reportedly the best beach location on Khar Us Nuur. Being sandy and away from reedbeds, we were told this area has the least number of mosquitoes in July and August. If this is true, it would be the most interesting overnight location on the lake. However, it also seems to be a popular picnic spot and swimming area for local people from the town of Hovd in June, prior to the arrival of mosquitoes. Nearby is the bird watching tower overlooking the Tsaagan Gol reedbeds. Hence, there is a need to work out whether Elsen Shana Beach is a spot that should be maintained for the following users:

- a) picnic site for locals
- b) people picnics at random
- c) a tourist ger camp with managed reservations
- d) a possible camping site for tourists and locals alike, but managing reservations separating the need for locals and foreigners allowing them to camp at different times.

Tourists generally make their reservations well in advance. This opens up a possibility to sell the number of overnight camping nights at a higher price if booked early, and later on cheaper, if some still are available. If the sites are available, Aa last-minute discount could be provided to locals so to speak. Needless to say, such

²⁰ (see www.conservationink.org, Ted Wood and Jeremy Schmidt Conservation Ink, P.O. Box 7494, Jackson, Wyoming 83002 USA. +1(307)733-5841, e-mail tedwood@conservationink.org).

management should be regulated in the management plan (you need a standard way to refer to the existing mp), as well as clearly communicated to both local people and Mongolian tour operators a year in advance of implementation.

2.4 Jargalant Hairhan Mountain

Jargalant Hairhan Mountain is the only elevated zone within KUNNP and is thus attractive also for hiking. It is, however, also a core zone with an imposed restricted use and also perhaps the most likely location of Hodgson's Bushchat²¹ (*Saxicola insignis*). This particular bird is the most sought after bird species by professional birdwatchers visiting Mongolia. Especially if Altai Snowcock and Kozlov's Accentor also can be seen in the area, which I believe is the case. The reasonable likelihood to see these bird species would draw birdwatching groups to come to KUNNP, particularly Jargalant Hairhan. One would think other larger birds such as Dalmatian Pelicans and White-headed Ducks would attract borders to KUNNP, but these may be seen elsewhere in Mongolia or in other countries where birding tourism is more established. However, the combination of high elevation zones and the waterbirds is very good once there.

Jargalant Hairhan and Bumbat Hairhan Mountains are also key resources for hiking; however, it is poorly marked for hikers. Jargalant Hairhan is also a core area and, therefore, could be a resource for tourism by employing local people as trailfinders. Rather than developing self-guided trails which would not provide any local employment. A special preparation for those interested locals and a course with a local guide licensing procedure could provide training for understanding park rules, and the basics of safety and being sensitive to any wildlife. Visitation to core zones should be permitted only with a park ranger or a licensed guide for which there could be a fee with some alternative hiking areas in less sensitive areas. Managing visitation in this way, it is possible to open up core zone for low impact use against higher revenue for KUNNP.

2.5 Rashantiin Am²²

This is an impressive and unique landscape in Jargalant Hairhan Mountain consisting of an alluvial wash. There has been no wash out at least since 1997²³. Even for being in an impressive country like Mongolia with its many unique landscapes, Rashantiin Am is an extraordinary landscape. The alluvial wash exposes bare boulders with poplars growing in the middle of them. There is a cold spring, considered sacred, for its perceived curative properties. We came there when it was growing dark, and I understand there was flat ground of grass further inside the canyon. As I understood it, there was a grass area, where the park ranger collects fees. Thereafter, there is a 4 km trek until the core zone limit, where there are three waterfalls. The drop of the waterfalls is 8m and 6m. It is permitted to be inside the core zone if causing no damage. But overnights were said to be restricted both in the core zone and at the green area. I believe there is much here to appeal to tourists.

2.6 Tsaagan Gol reed beds

The reed beds in the middle of this arid environment are certainly a unique feature of Khar Us Nuur which constitute a very small core zone called Mandal Islands²⁴. Inside the reedbeds are colonies of Grey Heron and Spoonbill as well as rare species such as White-

²¹ Interview Axel Bräunlich, September 2004.

²² Spring Valley.

²³ According to Hashbaatar, park ranger.

²⁴ Mandaliin Aral

headed Duck (*Oxyura leucocephala*) and Ferruginous Duck (*Aythya nyroca*) breeding, as well as breeding or potential breeding site for Dalmatian Pelican (*Pelecanus crispus*).

Apparently, one of park rangers offers visitors motorized boat excursions around the reed beds. In addition, I encountered local people with the idea to invest in ger camps and also to buy boat for sightseeing. If this is to be the case, the core zone may be too small to protect breeding birds from impacts from tourist visitation. In this case, guiding tourism development is essential to protect the resource. Needless to say, bird areas are most sensitive during breeding times. Some birds adjust to visitation when they are on eggs especially. I believe this zone management should be discussed with a qualified ornithologist, which is Axel Bräunlich, who will start work in KUNNP in the fall of 2005.

There is also a bird watching tower; a scope²⁵ is essential in order to see anything. Apparently, the soil is too soft to place the tower nearer to the reeds.

An interesting winter feature of these reed beds is the way they are used by some of the Manhan and Chandman Soum herders. After November 1st (and when the water has frozen over), the herders are allowed to winter on the islands. Hence, bringing the desert dwelling camels on to the ice of the lakeside reed beds to winter there!

I did not visit the places listed below:

2.7 Lung Strait²⁶

This is a core area south of Avgash Island. This is supposed to be a scenic area and is a core area for Reed Boar.

2.8 Avgash Island

This is a desert steppe landscape and whose primary resource users are one of the ethnic minorities. Avgash Island is not a core area, but is currently designated as a tourism zone. The presence of suitable camping places should be evaluated there.

2.9 Eastern Hovd River Delta²⁷

Eastern Hovd River Delta is a core area. It may be viewed from a small hill, Ulaan Tolgoe, which otherwise is difficult to appreciate from the ground. It apparently is a good birdwatching spot.

2.10 Dörgön Huren Steppe²⁸

The best place to view big mammals is at this location in Chandman Soum at the southwestern corner of Dörgön Lake. These are the steppes where it is possible to view Saiga Antelopes (*Saiga tatarica mongolica*) and the Black-tailed Gazelles (*Gazella subgutturosa*). In order to see mammals, driving is probably necessary. How this should be regulated should be considered and planned for. How driving will impact soils and other sensitive resources should be considered. If wildlife viewing is beneficial for the livelihoods of local people or in the economic interest of the KUNNP, then it may be promoted. Otherwise, this area may be better left alone and used primarily for research. I imagine the topsoils are too fragile for chasing Saiga by vehicle over the steppes. Proper guidelines and

²⁵ Tourists or tour companies should provide their own scope. This is not a role for the national park. Alternatively, somebody local could rent scopes. If there was enough of this kind of business.

²⁶ Lungiin Holoy

²⁷ Hovd Goliin Zuun Tsutgalan

²⁸ Dörgöniy Huren Tal

licensed guides should be promoted for wildlife viewing. It is quite similar to whale watching, where elaborate guidelines have been developed either by researchers or by the tour operators themselves. This kind of activity is preferably managed in partnership with the private sector. Detailing exactly I will not do, since I have not seen this myself.

2.11 Hoomi Steppe - Takhi reintroduction site

Takhi²⁹ (*Equus przewalskii*) have been reintroduced in a buffer zone in Dorvoljin Soum in Zavhan Aimag. This location is next to Har Lake, east of Dörgön Lake and north of Mongol Sands (the most extensive sand dunes in Mongolia). It is furthest KUNNP zone away from Hovd, and one third of the distance to Uliastai in Zavhan. It is likely to have some future visitation by French visitors. However, the presence of Takhi horses at Hustai National Park near Ulaanbaatar where they are easy to see competes with this site; therefore, it appears unlikely that this area would develop into a major attraction. It is remote and will only attract a few travelers over the next few years. Visitors to the Takhi would also be likely to try spot saiga antelopes nearby.

2.12 Dörgön soum hydroelectric plant

Needless to say, if the hydroelectric project proceeds, it is hard to see how Dörgön Soum could benefit from tourism development. The hydroelectric power plant will detract from the experience of untouched landscapes. If the plant is not developed, the riparian zone at Chono Hairakh is healthy, beautiful and lush and could provide an interesting tourist attraction. The plant will certainly provide other benefits, but not for tourism.

2.13 Spatially Explicit Mapping (Geographic Information System GIS)

There is a need to plan visitation in KUNNP and its buffer zones. A good tool would be develop a GIS database and associated graphics (maps). In addition to showing the core zones, the GIS database could include:

- “Honey pots” Key visitation locations of value for tourist experience of KUNNP with associated restrictions
- designated camping grounds.
- Areas with restricted uses
- Areas for public use
- Hygiene facilities and freshwater sources
- Soum Centers
- Park rangers’ gers (or do they also move around?)
- Jeep roads, both for tourists use and roads with restricted use
- Electricity lines
- Potential locations for ger camp, which could be rented to the private sector.

²⁹ Przewalskii Horse

- Location and zone of impact of hydroelectric project at Dörgön soum
- Areas of significant biological value
- Sensitive areas and when they should be avoided
- Wetlands and other types of habitats

2.14 Camping locations management

Camping location management can be delicate and the approach is determined by the intensity of camping use. Once camping locations are designated, overnights then become concentrated in certain places. Thereafter, management of each of these camping locations must be determined. Management consists of a service that consists in:

- Advance reservations so that no one else is in the same place the same night.
- Possible toilet facility built and maintained regularly
- These identified spots are near a water source or have some mechanism to provide water.

For the purpose of managing impacts, it is important to monitor campers. This is easy if there are designated camping locations, supported by the zoning of KUNNP. If coordinating reservations for these, one would also gain information about who is camping where, and at what night. It becomes easier for rangers to verify that visitors have paid the park fees. Moreover, there is no need to mark the camping locations on official maps. Rather, regulations could stipulate that tourist camping is forbidden; however, one may apply to get a permit and then be given the guidelines and maps as to where the designated camping places are.

The toilet facilities may be of various kinds depending on the soils, etc.:

- A built dry composting toilet which should be managed by someone nearby.
- Impose on licensed tour operators to bring moveable toilets that then brought out again.
- If there is very little use, allow for holes to be dug and again covered, just as herders do.

THE WAY FORWARD

Responsibilities: WWF: *Jointly with the national park identify the best camping locations and “tourist honey pots” and add these to the zoning of the park. Some locations are identified in Eberherr and Liegl (1999), which should be carefully crosschecked with Hashbaatar and other local specialists. Add these zones as digital layers in GIS database as appropriate. Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of these and other chosen locations with the relevant experts, internal WWF, park administration as well as external experts (e.g. the Ramboll team and specifically Axel Bräunlich regarding desired visitation rates at Tsaagan Gol for any potential negative impacts on birds)..*

Responsibilities: Ramboll: *Discuss the chosen sites with relevant experts and JW and develop a mechanism for co-management and review the management strategies for each site.*

GUIDELINE

Regulations and recommendations for the core zones should be developed and clarified.

3. Assessment of the Tourism Potential of KUNNP

Apart from the Eastern Steppes, the western Mongolian Aimags of Uvs, Hovd, Gobi-Altai and Zavhan are the least exploited for their tourism potential in Mongolia. To a large extent, tourism has not yet arrived. This fact presents itself as an opportunity. The future tourism development will be selective and slow, and it will depend on the regional peoples’ ability to understand and capitalize on this opportunity. Otherwise, as tourism grows elsewhere in Mongolia, individuals from elsewhere in the country, in particular Ulaanbaatar, will seize this opportunity. A major hurdle for locals, compared to Ulaanbaatar-based individuals, is probably the relative lack of capital and understanding of credit. There is a tendency that even Ulaanbaatar-based individuals, that when they have money to invest tend to do so in parts of the country where they have relatives. This is not entirely bad, as it facilitates an investment flow from Ulaanbaatar to the countryside.

In all, in and around KUNNP, it is not necessary to adopt a *reactive* approach to adverse developments; there is an opportunity to embrace a *proactive* one. Rather than tackling the demand side to address problems of rapid growth – as in Lake Hövsgöl, we may make an inventory of the supply side of attractions, experiences and local people that are willing to invest in tourism business and assist them to target the opportunities that lie ahead.

Currently the tourism route, what little there is, generally heads west from Hovd into Bayan Ölgii. However, many of the ethnic Kazakh features are available quite near to Hovd, and a tourist route could also exit from Hovd towards Gobi-Altai or through Zavhan to the sacred and eternally snow-capped Otgontenger Mountain in westernmost Hangai Mountains and near to Uliastai airport. Hovd and Uliastai are two of the three historical towns of Mongolia.

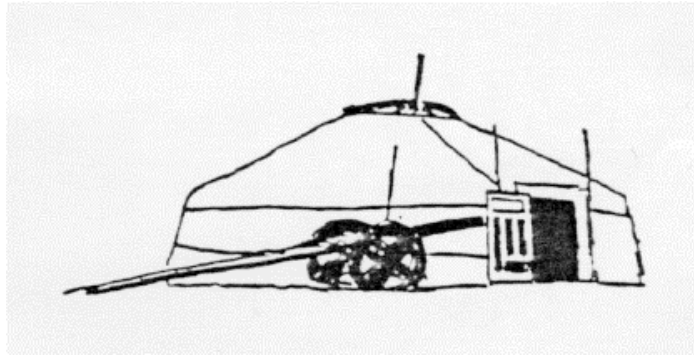
GUIDELINE

Tourism will grow in the KUNNP area by itself; it is only a matter of pace of growth and how much economic benefit might be generated for park management, soums and people in the communities.

3.1 Infrastructure

- **The airport at Hovd**, unlike the airports at Ölgii, Ulaangom, Hovdiin Bulgan and Baruuntuurun, has a good surfaced runway and is located near the center of five western aimags including Gobi Altai and Zavhan. However, aviation schedules in Mongolia can be volatile due to weather and lack of planes? . Hovd is the most important airport in the west.
- **Hotels** in Hovd are substandard for international use, and staff appears to be underpaid, which is most likely due to the low prices charged. The owners of the Hovd hotels are in need of business advice if they want to appeal to a more international market. These hotel operators should increase the prices, take loans to improve the quality of their hotels and invest in staff training. In particular, the bathing facilities are inadequate. The failure to provide better standard hotels in Hovd directly hampers the opportunity to develop the surrounding areas to its full potential.
- The two **Internet** facilities in Hovd are of great help for any local entrepreneur as it facilitates communication with Ulaanbaatar and abroad inexpensively. These facilities provide a service to visitors. Hovd town is also connected to the national cellphone GSM system which facilitates the contact with tour companies in Ulaanbaatar. However, the nearby soum centers still rely on 1 or 2 public phones for the entire village with no internet connections and GSM possibilities as yet.
- **Ger camps:** There are no ger camps in the entire aimag except for one run by Ms. Bayarhuu, tourism teacher at the Department of Geography at Hovd University. Without any sales channels, she has ended up serving mostly a local audience. It is located at Hovd River northwest from Hovd³⁰. Another ger camp will start operations in 2005, and it is being developed near the Hovd airport by a Ulaanbaatar-based tour company, which also operates a ger camp at Harhorin, the Mөngөн Mod Ger Camp (Silver Tree Ger Camp).

³⁰ Outside KUNNP and buffer zone



- **Hygiene** is a problem and also an opportunity. There are public bathhouses, but most tourists would prefer better facilities. There is certainly a business opportunity to invest in better bathing facilities that could include a sauna, which could be reserved for private use. There is probably a market from foreigners and Mongolians alike. In Ölgii, there are many such facilities. The lack of proper bathhouses is a major bottleneck for the colder period. September and October are excellent months to visit, but there are no adequate heated bathrooms and saunas to be found anywhere. Although technically there should have been hot water in Buyant Hotel during the time the team was there in October and early November; it was in fact ice cold for the entire period.
- **The Bird Observation Tower** is located overlooking the Tsaagan Gol reed beds, quite near Elsen Shanaa Beach. Observation opportunities would be better if it was covered on the sides to function as a hide, and if it were closer to the reed beds. However, the soil may be too loose nearer to the reed bed.

GUIDELINE

The solutions for the shortcomings of basic infrastructure lies beyond the scope of our project. However, these weaknesses need to be recognized as bottlenecks for development of tourism. To develop bathhouses, or saunas may be seen as a potential business in or near the soums. There may be technical difficulties to move the bird watching tower closer to the birds but it is a desired move.

3.2 Core experience of Mongolian tour product offer

No other nation has the lifestyle of the Mongols, and this lifestyle has been somewhat preserved on the steppes north of the Great Wall of China. The latter, a structure built some 2000 years ago, whose history and existence is directly related to the equestrian Mongolian nomads. Both have to date survived since that time. The Mongols, however, were already on horseback and living in gers, and tending their animals on the steppes when The Great Wall was built! The main difference is that the Mongol side continues as a living cultural heritage, almost like living archaeology, which is a unique asset in tourism terms. Mongolia possesses a living cultural heritage which is connected to ancient history. The fame of Genghis Khan, the Mongol Empire, the Great Wall of China and the Mongol rule over the Middle Kingdom

by Khublai Khan are times that fascinate overseas visitors the seemingly similar lifestyle in contemporary Mongolia compounds this fascination. These features are unique and only destinations within Mongolia have ample resources to provide this core experience. This core experience is essentially extended by the herdsman populations. Hence, very good opportunities exist to capitalize on the above by local people working with tour operators. What benefit is there then to the carriers of this lifestyle?

3.3 Tours with high community based tourism (CBT) benefit

An untapped potential are the unique features of the KUNNP region which are its people and the Great Lakes environment located in a landscape reminiscent of the Tibetan plateau. There are lakes with large reed beds and waterfowl, and a nomadic culture with camels. The most important tourism products – *multiple service products*³¹ - that potentially have a community level benefit are:

Treks: In the peak tourism season, local people may support treks³² over several days, carrying equipment on camels and/or horses. These treks would occur most likely in the summer pastures in the Jargalant Hairhan Mountain or Bumbat Hairhan Mountain or possibly in the most distant summer pastures. In the shoulder seasons³³, treks could be located at the lower elevations around the lakes. The desire to walk in nature is quite an alien concept to Mongolians which is why treks are rarely offered by Mongolian tour companies. Mongolia is also perceived as a huge country with steppes uninviting for walks which is partly true. The many different landscape types in Mongolia offer different experiences and the Mongolia experience is often focused on meeting nomads. Since jeep roads are bad, walking is actually an activity that produces very satisfied tourists. Those tourists that understand to try this are always very satisfied³⁴. The desire to walk in untamed nature is quite strong in western countries. For example, Trek Magazine in France publishes dates and prices for hundreds of great walks around the globe on a quarterly basis.

Horse rides as trail riding. Vehicle-supported or pack camel supported horse riding trips are very popular elsewhere in Mongolia. Such “nomadic journeys” are supported by the indigenous ways and modes of transport while bringing along tents, cooks, local horsemen and trailfinders. There is a need for investment in Russian saddles and saddlebags. Guests bring their own hard hats and chaps. This is a smaller market. Mongolia is known for being the most equestrian nation on Earth, and this is a field in which nomads have considerable know-how especially when excluding vehicle support. Still a partnership with an agent who can provide other essentials is vital (e.g., it is of much value to have a doctor as part of the staff). Horse riding is a potentially dangerous activity. Another important consideration is the quality of horses.

Usually, the horses that are good for Mongolian riders are not always the best for tourists. It very much depends on the tourist riding abilities and just how often each horse is being ridden. When in remote areas, horses are not ridden often which is why it is usually best to select horses from a larger herd in order to find the few that are good for tourists. To mix horses from different herds makes the horses spooky and potentially dangerous. Moreover,

³¹ Multiple Service Products: Tour package with food, lodging, transport, guiding combined into one product and priced as one.

³² Walking tours, often supported by pack-animals and local people

³³ Shoulder season is May-June or September-October

³⁴ Nomadic Journeys Ltd.

there are many examples of tourists riding on horses selected from small herds and where they eventually end up riding pregnant mares. Hence, an important consideration is whether there are at least some families that have enough of large numbers of horses. Local people always know who the good horse trainers are, and when asked, they are always willing to cooperate and get revenue from horse rental. In such cases, they go along themselves or send some family members to take care of the horses.

Shorter camel rides. Mongolian camels are rather slow to ride but to ride in a camel caravan along Khar Us Nuur or in Chandman Soum would be a delight. The run off from melting water of Jargalant Hairhan Mountain feeds some surface streams on the arid plains of Chandman Soum, and these streams support birch groves. The backdrop along lake shores, birch groves and snow-capped mountains from camel back could be a part of the future tourism in KUNNP areas.



GUIDELINE

All of the above will require the labor and the service provision of herders in many different ways such as trailfinding, animal rental, animal handling, and sale of meat and yogurt. JW knows the contact details of the community at Bayan-Önjuul Soum of Töv Aimag at Arburd Sands, where this kind of community based tourism have already been introduced. For the purpose of conservation goals it would be good to promote this kind of tourism, extended by primary resource users of KUNNP, at their distant pastures. These distant pastures areas needs an assessment whether or not they are in attractive hiking areas.

3.4 Tours with low CBT benefit

The below *multiple service products* have less CBT potential, since they are totally vehicle supported and have similar or better alternatives elsewhere in Mongolia.

Bird watching Birdwatching tour groups are camping out and coming with their own entourage. The Khar Us Nuur and Jargalant Hairhan Mountain have potential as a birding destination. As yet, few birders³⁵ have been there to report what there is to be seen. The global birding community is well organized (for example, see web portals such as www.surfbirds.com). Still, ahead of most birders priorities is Gobi Gurvansaikhan National Park and the Gobi Lakes of Böön Tsaagan Nuur and Orog Nuur in Bayanhongor aimag.

³⁵ Axel Bräunlich was doing the bird inventories in preparation for the establishment of KUNNP.

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Nature Tourism Nature tourism is tourism based on a general interest in nature. It has similar low CBT benefits as for bird-watching. Nature tours represent by comparison a broader range of market segments and ways of distribution.

Sport Fishing: Hovd River is likely to have the Mongolian Grayling, (a subspecies of *Thymallus arcticus*), and it is the biggest Grayling of the circumpolar north. However, a fine sportsfish, the Grayling is present in other parts of Mongolia. These other areas also provide opportunities for other fine sport fishes such as Lenoks (*Brachymystax lenok*) and Taimen (*Hucho taimen*), trophy species that are absent in the Central Asian enclosed basin where KUNNP is located. Therefore, fishing may not have the best potential here. It would appeal to fishermen that repeat their visits to Mongolia and want to explore new areas or to those who enjoy other sports like walking.



Jeep tours: Motorized trips tend to circle larger areas and provide little community benefits unless the tourism business matures and a steady flow of visitors builds up to become a so-called “critical mass”. This makes it more viable to offer services in location, rather than bringing everything along in jeeps. Jeep tours are already one of the most popular ways to see Mongolia. Perhaps this is not the best way to see and experience Mongolia, but rather because it is the most promoted tour product by Ulaanbaatar-based companies. Jeep tours are also promoted as “the way” to do Mongolia by the Lonely Planet guide book and the majority of Mongolian tour operators. Drivers, cook and guide may accompany guests originating in urban centers and travel airport to airport with the jeep.

The role of trip development is with the private sector and not the national park or consultants. Since one should not compete with the private sector on trip development.

GUIDELINE

The above multiple service products have less immediate potential for community benefits, but jeep supported tours will be marginally more important as tourism develops and economically important because of its volume. However it also means some adverse environmental impacts such as increased driving in KUNNP zones.

3.5 Events

Hoomi Festival: Chandman Soum government plans to further develop the existing hoomi festival. Hoomi is the art of throat singing, and Chandman Soum people claim that it originates here. It is a recently developed festival, and usually takes place in September every year. They already have contact with one or two tour operators in Ulaanbaatar providing them with foreigners interested to learn hoomi. They are “thinking of” making the

hoomi festival more public. To develop it properly into tourism, they will need to set the date a year ahead at least. Moreover, there need to be some planning on how to accommodate visitors. Many are able to, with the assistance of local organizers and tour operators to camp out in tents. This is what Mongolians do. It is hardly worth the investment to acquire and build a ger camp for the festival alone. But it may very well serve to develop tourism and bring it a bit further, and it helps to justify the investments that are required for a summer ger camp.

September is also a period when most herdsmen are harvesting hay in the rest of Mongolia, which is why there are few festivals at this time. The competition is minimal. These kinds of exercises foster private-public partnership cooperation in a positive way. The patterns of cooperation created through this kind of joint effort, throughout the community, may well be used to organize other things as well (e.g. conservation efforts). Hence, CBT is not only a matter of revenue and jobs for community members but its may also have a positive organizational impacts among local people as well. Mr. Tseevenravdan is newly appointed (Sep 2005) as the WWF field director in Hovd, and he worked previously in Chandman Soum and was there the driver of these ideas,.

GUIDELINE

Chandman Soum stakeholders should be encouraged to continue the development of this idea, and if forthcoming, I recommend that it should be part of business advice effort, in full transparency, where both the soum authorities and the private sector may define their respective roles in such a undertaking.

3.6 Single Service Products

Ger Camps: There might be a potential to develop a ger camp at Chandman Soum, but it may take years before it can build up a reputation and get reasonable occupancy levels. If ger camps should be permitted at all within park boundaries, they should not be allowed to develop freely in the way as is in other parts of Mongolia. I recommend that achievable standards should be implemented and the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)³⁶ should include stipulations such as:

- Gers should rest directly on the ground, as is the case for all herdsmen (no concrete floors).
- Parking place should be kept at a distance from gers and location of the access jeep road should be planned. Preference to use camel carts or the like to transport luggage from car park to guest gers.
- Wind mills and solar panels should be used to generate electricity. The use of generators should be discouraged, and only to be used while guest's are not in camp. E.g. for the use of a washing machine to wash sheets and linen.

³⁶ EIA Environmental Impact Assessment

- Size should be capped at a maximum of 14 gers for guests in addition to staff gers. The smaller size is more manageable and it is possible to run with composting toilets, basic shower devices and solar and wind power generation for the freezer which will result in lower investment needs and less impacts to the surrounding areas.
- The company should demonstrate a readiness to buy meat and milk products from local people, hire their animals, and employ some locals in the operations.
- No flush toilets. Along drop dry composting toilets kept 60m away from a water source is OK.
- Staff (usually young and urban) should not be allowed to play loud rock'n'roll music.
- Whether located inside or outside park boundaries, the ger camp should not be located in the middle of a visitation site (honey pot). If the attraction is located away from the ger camp, they might spend 2 nights instead of 1 night, since it takes a day or half a day, to get to the attraction and back and it will not degrade the visitation site

The above works very well in a few other parts of Mongolia³⁷. Sharing experiences about the technically appropriate solutions running ger camps is a vital ingredient of know-how between Mongolian entrepreneurs. Foreign consultants have little hands-on knowledge about these details.

The only reason for having large ger camps is the lack of appropriate reservations. There are currently few price incentives to keep a smaller ger camp. Entrepreneurs want to be able to accommodate several groups at the same time without realizing that the value for visitors to stay in a quiet and small ger camp, for exclusive use, would make it possible to increase the price. Nomadic Journeys offers an additional USD 5 per person per night to ger camp owners that offer smaller and quiet ger camps. This incentive seems to work and with appropriate supply chain management it promotes sustainability. A large size ger camp that is fully booked generally does not have WC, shower and restaurant service capacity to meet the needs of all the guest's at the same time.

The community benefit of ger camp enterprises varies depending who is the investor. If it is locally owned or the investor is related in the area, it will provide more tangible monetary benefits. Such ger camps will need to buy labor, rent horses and camels, as well as buy vegetables, milk products and meat. The community benefits depend mostly on whether or not the locals can provide these services sustainably and safely. If not, tour companies tend to acquire their support by owning animals (further summer seasonal grazing pressure around the camp during the summer season) and bring in produce from wherever it can be delivered safely.

³⁷ Jalman Meadows (Töv), Arburd Sands (Töv), Dungeness (South Gobi) and Delger Ger Camps (Bulgan). Nomadic Journeys.

The wider community benefit in Mongolia means that each soum charges a lease charge for land use of ger camps. There are no examples of other community wide benefits. Labor and service provision is connected to individual community members so far.

GUIDELINE

Management Plan: *I recommend considering the inclusion of the above in the KUNNP management plan for any deployment of a ger camp inside national park boundaries. Suitable locations may be scarce as well and potentially in conflict with productive rangeland. The zoning of tourism key resources may help determine whether ger camp development is appropriate at all.*

Study tour: *If there is an interest during the proposed Study Tour to South Gobi for a tourism component, I would recommend to consider to allow time to visit Arburd Sands Ger Camp³⁸, and perhaps a trek with tourists there to be able to talk to herders in that area how they work with tourism, and could thus compare the situation in South Gobi as appropriate. There are differences in management and community benefit approaches, as well as South Gobi has massive visitation numbers.*

Eco-Gers is a concept introduced in the Gorkhi Terelj National Park by GTZ intervention in order to provide benefits to local people and the national park. While accommodating visitors in gers of families may not be appropriate, it might be worthwhile to consider the Eco-Ger concept of “satellite gers”. Meaning an empty ger for tourist use, for which a family is caretaker or owner. A prerequisite for this approach to work is to partner with good tour companies that process the reservations and streamline the business. It would work well, especially if connected to a real ger camp, from where there could be provided support. It would not compete with the real ger camp overnights, rather complement it, since the Eco-Gers could be considered as “Satellite Gers” to the Ger Camp proper providing an additional visitation zone within range. To date there is no role model for this to work effectively, but I believe it holds much potential as a community benefit, and certainly better than having tour guides from Ulaanbaatar knocking on the doors at random, soliciting overnight service for their tourists. It could be the start to continue and invest in a real size ger camp.

While for some families, on some pastures, development of EcoGer rental may be a good solution to diversify incomes of families with small herds, in other locations, it may need some environmental consideration since it might reduce mobility, and they will live there with their livestock. Especially in arid environments.

³⁸ Bayan-Önjuul soum, Töv aimag. 140km south of Ulaanbaatar by jeep track.

GUIDELINE

It is recommended a modification of the EcoGer concept. I believe it should be linked to some existing businesses, that can streamline sales mechanisms and reservations. Also, such an effort must consider the likelihood of reduced mobility with individual herds and subsequent settled grazing patterns.

Service provision for tour operators: West Mongolia is far from Ulaanbaatar and all tour planning is still made from there. It is difficult for tour operators in Ulaanbaatar to understand the erratic availability of local produce, and what must be brought to the west by air, usually at overweight charges. There is increased production in western Mongolia, and there are increased imports directly from Russia. While the coordination of this effort probably lies with an individual in Hovd, to contract with Ulaanbaatar based companies, there may be rural suppliers of potatoes, meat, vegetables that might benefit from the development of this market. The immediate Hovd area is a famous producer of vegetables, which includes the buffer zones of KUNNP (e.g., in Myangad and Buyant soums).

Good Guides, and Cooks and their helpers are needed. It is cumbersome for tour operators to fly their own staff out to the west and also these staffs do not know the area. The absence of restaurants makes catering service necessary on all tours. Mostly tour operators come with their own freelance cooks. However, for the western aimags, as well as for guides, there is opportunity to market oneself to several tour companies and put together the services locally. Cooks and guides that are from the local herding families have usually lived for a couple of years in town.

Handicraft: Tourists like to buy things while on a trip. A tour product is an experience, and there is a constant need for visitors to embody this experience in a souvenir or something bought connected to that experience. The volume of visitors is not sufficient to the extent that it will be profitable for locals to open shops and sit and wait for passers by. This market is, however, developing quickly in other parts of Mongolia, where there are thousands of visitors (e.g., people already travel to Bayanzag, Harhorin, Yoliin Am, Lake Hövsgöl to sell their produce) actually adding impacts attracted by tourism to the area. In 2004, complaints about garbage near Yoliin Am surfaced a lot, and part of the reason was due to sellers that camped in the vicinity of this important “honey pot.” At Lake Hövsgöl there are “souvenir shops” a long way up the western shore of the lake, which otherwise has no local population, other than tourism employees. Some even ply the forests and sell to trekkers along the most popular trek routes!

For KUNNP areas it will take time until one can sell locally to tourists due to the low visitation numbers here. However there would be some potential to keep a shop in Hovd or sell at the airport when flights are going and coming.

Transport: An opportunity for anyone with a good vehicle understands keep to a schedule and has a driver that knows how to repair.

GUIDELINE

*The above business opportunities are **Single Service Products**. For independent travelers these may be offered directly to travelers but it requires mature transportation companies be readily available, guides, restaurants and catering, etc. In short, there needs to be a bit more volume – a critical mass - in order to make development financially viable for independent travel while partnerships with tour operators may assist to foster this kind of development in the earlier phases until the market grows.*

*The **Irbis Enterprises** project is run by The International Snow Leopard Trust (ISLT)³⁹. There are some business linkages to be made with efforts done by ISLT and its effort for business development effort called Irbis Enterprises. Irbis Enterprises makes a contract with herders supportive of Snow Leopards. Good stories, e.g. about Snow Leopards and local people is an integral part of good tour products. Our project can perhaps identify sales channels through tourists visiting Mongolia?*

3.7 Human resources

In situations where something pays, Mongolians are both capable and eager to adapt to new ways. Most business deals require the development of personal relationships. In general, trust is between relatives and/or friends. It is often being said that patterns of cooperation are difficult in Mongolia. However, when a monetary incentive is involved, most obstacles are overcome, including environmental abuse of natural resources and conversely if tourism is introduced to value the wild resources⁴⁰.

There is a financial value from serving tourists in much the same way as poaching is a result of financial gains. As long as there are few options available for cash income, it will be a similar case with tourism as whatever pays will be done. From one report on wildlife utilization in Khentii aimag:

“Most people expressed an empathy with nature, despite the fact that they might also be using it in a disrespectful or destructive way. It was explained that in recent years people are increasingly aware as to what is happening and the related causes, but cannot see a workable way out. Having a market value has clearly affected how people use the resource to a very significant extent.”⁴¹

It cannot be overestimated or overstated how important it is for Mongolian civil society, after decades of communist command rule, to develop new ways of cooperation especially in business and public-private partnerships. I believe that no other industry is better than tourism to foster this kind of cooperation. This is why, from a development perspective, tourism may provide an additional unforeseen benefit. The Mongolian government stresses

³⁹ www.snowleopard.org based in Seattle, USA

⁴⁰ Normal attitudes to wildlife are very good. Check tourism entrepreneurs perceptions of presence of Argali Sheep in Bayan-Önjuul soum, Töv aimag.

⁴¹ Pratt, MacMillan & Gordon. Local community attitudes to wildlife utilisation in the changing economic and social context of Mongolia. 2004.

that development must be people-centered and the same also applies also to modern conservation work.

Tourism is an industry that, due to its seasonal character, will depend on a young workforce. Half the Mongolian population is under 21 years of age⁴²! Young people are learning more languages than generations in the past. Moreover, for Mongolian youth to be involved in tourism also develops their communication skills and ability to manage foreigners' expectations. It is more than learning to work in another language; it is to extend leadership to foreigners totally dependant on them in a travel situation. The know-how of rural Mongolians that is required to move equipment around is quite remarkable and sophisticated to the foreigner, and forms part of the Mongolian experience. Expeditionary travel requires coordination of work tasks between cooks, accommodation providers, drivers and nomads! Quite a challenge and a great personal leap forward for some individuals that acquire these skills. Environmental understanding is easy to convey in Mongolia.

GUIDELINE

Tourism is an important business in which to engage young people and it provides good management and leadership skills and fosters them to be proud of their heritage. Tourism employment also provides for revenue at home, rather than migrating to the excitement in Ulaanbaatar for good. Tourism is especially appealing to young people and suitable for both sexes.

It draws on the know-how skills of the older generations, why the intra-generational aspects are important. While managing trips draws on young people abilities; however, the core experience is nomadic life, which is the know-how of the older generations.

Each community in Mongolia consists at the soum level of a few state employees, a few public administrators, some small traders and the rest are herders.

In Mongolia national park staff⁴³, politicians⁴⁴ and teachers engage in tourism, and leave their jobs temporarily to work in tourism.

We met an environment state inspector in Manhan soum, that expressed an idea to create a tourist ger camp at the Gurvan Tsenkheriin Agui⁴⁵, the famous Neolithic cave with petroglyphs now partly destroyed. Be it a good or bad idea, it means, if he would go ahead, this person would need to vacate his job in the summer time in order to work in private sector. Who will be the environmental inspector for the camp performance? Hence, the first individuals to capture the opportunities of tourism revenue are the ones with contacts and sometimes have the undesired consequence that it very often bars other people from this opportunity. This is why information dissemination and transparency should be an integral part of our efforts. There are not enough people around to drive processes correctly. Rather, there needs to be an understanding of the collaborative roles of different sectors.

⁴² UNDP.

⁴³ Managers of Altai Tavanbogd National Park and Lake Hövsgöl National Park.

⁴⁴ Soum hural speaker at Chandman soum

⁴⁵ Three Blue Caves

GUIDELINE

It is important to spread information about the characteristics of tourism business before it arrives in order that community members can better recognize these opportunities. While it is acceptable to initiate tourism with whosoever few individuals that sees and extends ownership to bring about tourism development, it must be understood that its further development requires links to external partners within and outside the community. The concentration of monetary benefits to the few already privileged individuals in any community will create jealousy.

3.9 Definition of Roles

Mongolia is divided into 21 *aimags*. Each aimag is divided into districts, or *soums*, and each district is divided into sub-districts, or *bags*. Aimag, soum and bag legislatures, or *hurals*, are authorized to make decisions about economic and social development activities, as well as allocation of natural resources in their unit. The governors at all three levels have the authority to organize a sustainable use and rehabilitation of natural resources and control the implementation of relevant legislation. The national park is a state entity and is organized under the Bureau of Protected Areas of MNE. When development assistance projects come to a protected area, it is important to consider the needs of the soum entities and find a balance in the direct benefits to each. Both are under funded compared to many businesses.

The overlapping of these generally under funded authorities makes them sometimes compete to exercise authority over the other and its subjects. This reality is sometimes a problem for business development, and especially felt in tourism, which in Mongolia so much is based on people and nature. It is often hard to understand what level of authority is the relevant one for a specific topic, and many are not trained for the jobs they are doing. Mongolia is still a civil society in the making. The private sector should develop tour products and business ideas.

- Manhan soum attempted to establish and run a ger camp at Gurvan Tsenkheriin Agui. It failed, probably due to a lack of market contacts, appropriate communication and reservation procedures.
- Eco Gers have been put up in different Protected Areas in support of local families. Sales outlets in isolation of the normal business sector have to date not been successful. However, this effort was well intended .
- The national park administration should participate in order to create an enabling business environment⁴⁶. Ownership of the resources and management of the same may be divided. Some management issues may be done in partnership with businesses. The national park should charge fees for leases and concessions, and ideally not operate competitive businesses on their own.

⁴⁶ Facilitate an easy involvement of private sector, where desired.

GUIDELINE

It is the role of the private sector to extend ownership to tour products and reservation systems. Public officers may work with tourism in different ways, in which case, they need to separate these activities from their work, and run and develop these business ideas under the same circumstances as everyone else. Such ventures should not be isolated from linkages to Mongolian tourism industry.

An important part of training should be aimed at soum, aimag and national park administrators to understand the different roles and how they can and should earn revenue for their respective roles without competing with the emerging private sector.

3.10 Tenure and the primary resource users

Good governance is critical to achieving conservation and rural development objectives. Local people have the potential of being excluded from the benefits of tourism development even if there are market opportunities and if the soum land rights are in place. Examples from Tanzania⁴⁷ have shown that local people need to be actively empowered through knowledge of their rights to manage lands and resources in order to enter into contractual agreements to take advantage of the commercial interests in their resources. This knowledge would possibly avoid them being by-passed by outsiders. Skilled facilitation and information dissemination is important to primary resource users.

If the communities are to become partners in conservation, there needs to be a tenure system in place. The very basis of empowerment for community level people is to extend some kind of tenure of natural resources to the primary resource users⁴⁸. While the soum authorities are empowered to offer concessions⁴⁹ to private companies, this may not reflect tangible benefits at the community level. The likely reason for this is probably that soum level authorities are indebted to aimag and national level authorities to the extent that any revenue generated needs to be paid back to the aimag centers or Ulaanbaatar instantly. I do not know to what extent to which these problems still exist; there are likely many reasons for the disconnecting of the tangible benefits to the primary resource users of their natural resources.

However, if there are tangible benefits to primary resource users and clear “de jure” entities with who tour companies could engage in contractual business partnerships, the situation would be different. Such systems have been in place among Maasai pastoralists in Tanzania since 1992. The communities being identified as primary resource users would be the desired partners in the ecotourism equation which is consistent with the principle of benefiting local people. The soum administrative unit, or even bag unit, may not reflect a primary resource use group. Our project will possibly unfold a way forward during the herder group formation processes.

⁴⁷ Nelson, F.

⁴⁸ E.g. herders that primarily occupy a specific pasture. Whereas secondary resource users may be permitted, but comes for grazing only for short periods.

⁴⁹ Inside KUNNP in addition to the soum authority, both the national park administration and Bureau for Protected Area at MNE should be involved. Which is a three tier kind of permit and quite difficult to negotiate for a small local entrepreneur. This hurdle to central levels could be overcome by adjusting the Management Plan and point at desired private sector joint efforts.

Another hurdle in Mongolia compared to examples in Africa where there are ways for tour companies to pay a village for the low impact use (camping, trekking etc) of their village area. Technically, this would be possible in Mongolia too. However, a lease in Mongolia usually means some kind of exploitation. There are no provisions today to pay a community for just the use of an area but rather revenue is generated when something is built or extracted (e.g., gold mining) or building a ger camp at a specific place. A pristine environment actually has value for tourists, and their demand is a desire backed by money which is not always utilized in the current framework.

Ger camps are usually leased according to similar principles as deals with herding families have at their winter place. However the fees are higher. They may possess of the specific place, but not the wider territory around. This situation has created ger camps clustered too near each other.

GUIDELINE

There are more than 10 years of experience working with communities, tenure, wildlife utilization and tourism in Namibia and Tanzania. While donor intervention is desired in Mongolia on CBT, the same mistakes repeated unless some experienced practitioner can assist early on in the process.

I recommend the working group of CBT group to approach the current British ambassador to Mongolia, Richard Austen, and ask him to facilitate the contact with DFID or IIED [to hire experts in this field \(for example, from www.propoortourism.org.uk](http://www.propoortourism.org.uk) as Caroline Ashley or Harold Goodwin). A good first opportunity for parallel funding⁵⁰ which would make even a short trip to Mongolia affordable for all that struggle with CBT, and provide an internal briefing on these experiences to the working group. I believe this is a very important urgent step that should be taken.

4. Business Linkages to Community members

This report deals with tourism benefits for community residents, so that the economics of resident populations of the KUNNP and its buffer zones may become diversified and positively respond to their livelihoods. At KUNNP, it is evident that the livelihood systems of the dry lands favor mobility and livestock herding. There is low, but highly variable precipitation, and mobile pastoralism is a sophisticated way to make good use of such ecological variability. Mobility allows our target population to find productive pastures, sometimes over large distances, which in July and August – the peak tourism season - includes pastures at higher elevation away from KUNNP and its buffer zones.

- “It is now more widely understood that mobility is an ecological necessity, and that mobile pastoralism, is often the best way to manage dry environments sustainably.”⁵¹

The target population is moreover quite interconnected with the people in the soum centers as compared to the recent past. Some community members are also permanent or temporary residents of Hovd and Ulaanbaatar. The herding population has increased over the last 13 years, and the transition forced people to partially depopulate the soum and aimag centers and go into herding or to move to Ulaanbaatar or elsewhere. As a consequence, the

⁵⁰ Parallel funding is co-financing between several projects using the same resource.

⁵¹ Swift, J. (editor). UNDP 2003.

importance of the economics at soum centers and aimag centers decreased in favor for Ulaanbaatar⁵².

People at the soum centers keep animals with relatives in the countryside. It also means pastoral populations are higher when compared to historic levels. While the transition in Mongolia in the early 1990s increased pastoral populations, droughts, zuds⁵³ and other threats also lead to a regular exodus from pastoralism, usually by the poorest to urban areas. If economic opportunities existed locally in other sectors, it would absorb these migrants. A reduction in the human herding population will allow a reduction in the number of animals, and a greater possibility of greater productivity per animal. One such way to achieve this end is to enhance economic diversification locally. The soum centers are very much part of the equation of absorbing the overflow of people that in full or part wants to leave herding or reduce livestock. And any business, such as tourism, may be part of such solutions. Tourism is seasonal in Mongolia and will not be the single solution to mobile people's livelihoods. However, it is fully compatible with seasonality and continued mobility.

The soum centers, built to serve the pastoral communities in the 1950s, need to regain their role as such service centers which may develop once there are economic opportunities in the soum centers. Soum centers also face the dual challenge of a highly mobile population to serve and low population density.

Our approaches to CBT must reflect this pattern:

- The migratory pattern of herders to outside KUNNP buffer zones and higher elevation in July and August, which coincide with the peak tourism season. It means KUNNP zones are vacated⁵⁴ by people when most tourists are visiting Mongolia.
- The interface between herders and their relatives and partner contacts in the soum centers, Hovd and Ulaanbaatar. Especially the economic revival of soum centers will have a positive economic impact on the surrounding herding communities, since it will allow for development of services they need, as well as being an alternative revenue source for their produce or even alternative jobs.
- In tourism, partnerships between relatives or business friends in herding and in the urban settlements are a normal feature and should not pose a problem. We are dealing with a highly mobile population. Absorbing the overflow of herders that no longer want to remain in herding, or poorer herders that occupy peripheral and marginal pastures is desired. It is desired to absorb herders into other economic activities in times of droughts or other natural disasters. A more productive pastoral economy will need more outlets for its produce and services in soum and aimag center.

Tourism is also highly mobile, which is why there is little argument that a sedentary lifestyle would be a prerequisite for tourism specially since the mobiles peoples in open landscapes

⁵² When the countryside was made cashless in the early 1990s.

⁵³ Winter disaster where snow or the lack of snow prevents livestock from grazing or getting water.

⁵⁴ Except for Jargalant Hairhan Mountain to where there is summer pastures.

are at the core of the Mongolian tourism experience. The nomads themselves are the natural resource of Mongolian tourism and offer their lifestyle as a competitive advantage in the global tourism markets. But depending on each household livelihood strategy, they may choose to involve only partially renting animals every now and then which in turn provides supplemental cash. The survival of mobile pastoralism in Mongolia is, therefore, very much interconnected to the future competitiveness of Mongolian tourism.

Real herders will not be able to get mobile phones or e-mail any time soon and the way of making contact is not in favor of independent travel development. Tourism makes it possible that:

- Some may remain in herding and supplement their cash incomes by rental of animals to tourism companies, sales of produce such as meats and yogurts, and labor.
- Some may professionalize, leave herding, and start up ger camps and more advanced operations in season and let relatives take care of the animals if there are any.
- Herders may partner with other of their family members in towns and offer services jointly, based on the nomadic experience, thus strengthening the economy of families in the soum or aimag centers, even as distant as Ulaanbaatar, as well as generating some cash revenue for themselves.

Rather, a more organized form of tourism will be desired in KUNNP areas, where agents make advance arrangements to tourist arrivals, so that they are expected by locals.

GUIDELINE

Continued mobility is a prerequisite for the continued positive tourism interest in the lifestyles of the Mongolian countryside.

4.1 Migration patterns

Most herding communities of the soums migrate in July and August to summer pastures at higher elevation usually outside the park boundaries and its buffer zones. Only some Chandman and Manhan herders have their summer pastures inside the KUNNP, in Jargalant Hairhan Mountain. This is also a core zone as well as a zone with tourism interest. This is probably the area where we have most overlap: Visitation place for tourists, summer pasture at midlevel and foothills of the mountain as well as being a designated core area for having high level of biodiversity including rare wildlife and avifauna at high elevations.

Chandman soum: Herders migrate a short ways upwards to Jargalant Hairhan Mountain inside the park boundaries as well as to Bumbat Hairhan Mountain (2 bags) just outside the park. Jargalant Hairhan Mountain has summer midlevel pastures as well as foothills pastures divided by 2 bags.

Dörgön soum: Herders migrate to Argalant Uul and to Chargat Uul, which are nearby hills in two opposite directions from the soum center.

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Myangad soum: Herders migrate quite far to Altan Höhii Mountain, a beautiful area they share with other herders from other soums as well as snow leopards. Altan Höhii is being proposed as a protected area since it acts as a wildlife corridor, among other for snow leopards between Jargalant Hairhan Mountain via Altan Höhii to Tsambagarav Uul.

Buyant soum: Herders migrate to Duut soum mountains, 70km to the southwest.

Manhan soum: Herders migrate to Jargalant Hairhan Mountain as well as to Most Hairhan and Mönkh Hairhan, the latter two quite far away – 180km - towards the higher Altai Mountains. Mönkh Hairhan is the likely location for Hovd Safari hunting tourism trips, where trophy hunting for Argali Sheep (*Ovis ammon*) is going on, usually later in the tourism season, during the cold parts of fall.

Dorvoljin soum: We did not go to Hoomin Steppe, which is the buffer zone in Zavhan aimag, where the release project of Przewalskii Horses is taking place, a French effort with WWF Mongolia. It will certainly attract some French tourists. It was unclear how the migration patterns are among the few people that use this area.

GUIDELINE

For its conservation goals the tourism use of Jargalant Hairhan Mountain is the most important zone in KUNNP where all conservation goals and business development goals need to be integrated.

4.2 Herder Groups formation

The way the project will identify herder groups and identify them as primary resource users needs some consideration. Through such groupings we may unlock business ideas and if among them tourism, then this will be considered in the normal way.

Apart from doing the normal PRA in the bags, there may be a situation whereby people in Hovd or in the soums, will express interest in tourism the KUNNP area. If they already have partners or relatives among herders then a herders group may become identified. The project objective deals with the livelihoods of herder communities and the diversification of revenues from herding. Partnerships are crucial for the viability of herders level of involvement in tourism service provision (primarily in the beginning).

GUIDELINE

It should not be ruled out that a herder group could be initiated and formed through the mediation of individuals outside the herder groups themselves, being relatives or friends of primary resource users.

4.3 Two basic pathways of tourism development

- By way of independent travelers that arrive to the destination and create a demand backed by money for services on the spot. The development of tourism will then depend on how the community responds to the specific kind

of tourists that first arrive. Community members will compete with each other unless properly guided from the beginning.

- Or, to partner with tour operators that request services and products to re-sell on the distant markets. This approach adds diversity into the supply chains of grassroots companies and individuals.

Most often, both evolve at the same time however either of the two is always driving the development ahead of the other (e.g. at Lake Hövsgöl), the unguided independent travel approach is developing the destination. However because KUNNP is remote, it is likely to develop with the organized sector first.

From a development perspective, the main difference between the two development pathways above is that once travelers are going through independently, and source services locally themselves, they will come from various sources over time and then leave. In these cases, they are not repeat visitors and there are no in-country intermediaries.

Whereas if there are Mongolian mediators, be it tour organizers in Hovd or tour operators in Ulaanbaatar, these are Mongolian entities and as such attached to their country and destination. Hence, they represent people that stay in the area (or Mongolia) and who are possible to engage in future planning since they are potential repeat businesses. This opportunity is lost with development of independent tourism first since it is harder to involve communities in such planning as it develops. Easier when tourism is still small, but harder as development progresses because it involves more households competing with each other.

The first may be called an unguided approach. Community members are left to negotiate what benefits they might get as they go along in competition with others in the area.

The second approach is a collaborative effort within a supply chain whereby several entities collaborate in highly variable vertical layers, and re-sell services in a systemized way, so that any local enterprise may get several months notification of the arrival of guests. Often it is hard for community members to understand the needs of tourists and the companies that bring them. Moreover, community members do not understand the monetary benefits they could have if they offered something. This is often why tour operators bring their own guides and cooks to distant locations. It would be cheaper and easier for them, in particular in a country like Mongolia, if services that they require were safely available in the location.

The organized tourism sector work together in a vertical system of service exchange:

- community level
- local tour organizer
- inbound tour operator
- international tour operator

Community level: For example, a family starts out selling yogurt, meat and rents animals such as horses or camels to ride or for the use as pack-animals. In addition, they offer labor such as being trailfinders in their areas. Once they professionalize (start to understand the needs), individuals may increase their work and when overloaded, may bring in relatives or

friends to assist and manage. In one case at Bayan Önjuul soum (Töv aimag), where community members registered their own tour company and invested in a ger camp on their own. Hence, there is mobility up the ladder. A choice very much dictated by having some money or credit, and partner tour companies that have a demand backed by money and may provide the tourists sustainably.

Local tour organizer: In the case above, once the community member goes from being a staff person to actually register a tour company, he/she becomes a local tour organizer. Although a microenterprise, it starts to coordinate services provided by local people into solutions of transport, food provision, accommodation and guiding locally which adds value for the customer. It becomes a local tour operator that contracts with local people for service provision and are able to re-sell to tour operators in Ulaanbaatar (or abroad). To deal with Ulaanbaatar entities, cellphone communication is necessary, and to deal with international partners, an e-mail connection is necessary. The negotiation skills – oral and written – are needed to deal with businesses and also to understand the requirements and customer needs. Local people would be better engaged in tourism industry if there were more people in the aimags that had developed those particular skills. Distant regions of Mongolia that have succeeded opening up their area for tourism have one or more such microenterprises which is usually a person with relatives or close connections to the area but based in the aimag centre or in Ulaanbaatar. These entities restrict their service provision to the region in which he/she is well connected and trusted. The local tour organizer contracts with community members and provides dates when services are needed.

Inbound tour operator is usually based in Ulaanbaatar⁵⁵ and offer services all across the territory of Mongolia. They contract with local tour organizers, or if there is a lack of these, they request services from local people directly. The latter approach is harder with distance which is why this approach is used in locations within driving distance of Ulaanbaatar. The inbound tour operator contracts with international tour operators abroad or sell directly to tourists over internet or via their shop in Ulaanbaatar, which is the point of entry for the majority of visitors to Mongolia. A local tour organizer may contract with community members and in the future may become an inbound tour operator as well. At least one such example exists already, operating in Bayan Ölgii⁵⁶.

International tour operator resides in the tourist countries⁵⁷ and prints a brochure, maintains a website and is usually looking for a specific market. Hence, an inbound tour operator may contract with several international tour operators at the same time, thus providing market penetration to several countries. The international tour operator re-sells the combined services of several countries to citizens of the jurisdiction where they operate which means that consumers in that country may purchase local services in Mongolia covered by national consumer laws of the country of the tourist. The international tour operator sells its tour products via travel agencies or direct to the public.

The nature of the business linkages to community members is quite different in the above two approaches. The unguided pathway places much more emphasis on a wider understanding and capacity building in the community in order to be able to efficiently reap the benefits of tourism as a development tool. If not properly monitored it will result in

⁵⁵ E.g. Nomadic Journeys www.nomadicjourneys.com

⁵⁶ Canat Cheriyaadaa, Sher Blue Wolf. www.mongoliaaltaexpeditions.com

⁵⁷ E.g. Explore Worldwide, UK www.exploreworldwide.com, Atalante in France www.atalante.fr or SNP Naturreizen in Holland www.snp.nl

community competition rather than cooperation whereas the organized approach may better guide new entrants in remote areas gradually into tourism businesses.

GUIDELINE

In the fast development of market economy in Mongolia, tour companies and Mongolian private sector have not participated much in development efforts other than building their businesses. No doubt, everyone has had to learn how to develop a business in a market economy environment. Now that the pressure is higher on the resource base for tourism, I am confident that several important Mongolian tour operators would be and are motivated to also participate in environmental and rural development efforts, since their prime resource base has for some years now been challenged. Even more international tour operators have such keen interest. Needless to say, Mongolian tour operators have had no formal training on development or environmental objectives. While all of these entities may not participate several can offer appropriate business to communities if they are properly guided and engaged.

4.4 Experiences from similar arid and pastoral environments in Africa

While Africa and Mongolia support different cultures, the kinds of tourism infrastructure, weak governance and arid environments with pastoralists have apparent similarities⁵⁸. Southern Africa and especially Namibia have worked with CBNRM early which developed into many different approaches to CBT development. Probably the responses depended on the different livelihood strategies due to different socioeconomic realities in each location. Their findings are summarized as follows⁵⁹:

- The development impact of tourism will not be uniform; it will vary widely within and between communities.
- Enhancing the livelihood impacts of tourism does not mean simply maximizing the number of tourism developments, or maximizing wage income;
- A wide range of costs and benefits need to be taken into account. In particular, it is important to address negative impacts as to maximize positive ones. And to address impacts on people's assets and existing activities, not just direct contributions to household income and security;
- Careful planning and design, based on an understanding of local livelihoods, can greatly enhance the positive impacts of tourism;
- Maximizing livelihood benefits needs a good understanding of what people most need and want (their livelihood priorities) and of the complex ways in which tourism options affect livelihoods (direct and

⁵⁸ Africa has longer tourism seasons and is wildlife-based whereas Mongolia has a shorter tourism season and tour products are culture based.

⁵⁹ Ashley, C; Working Paper 128.

indirect livelihood impacts). Therefore, it requires *a considerable role for local people* in decision-making. This can be done either by devolving tourism rights to community level, and helping communities with participatory planning; or by ensuring that government planning processes are participatory and responsive to local needs; or by ensuring, through government incentives, that planning by private entrepreneurs is responsive to local needs.

- The *details* of how to enhance livelihood impacts are site-specific. The *principles* of recognizing that a range of livelihood concerns are important, and supporting systems that enable local people's priorities to be incorporated into tourism decisions, can be generally applied.

In many developing countries, including Mongolia, four different perspectives of tourism development rhetoric may be distinguished:

- Economists and governments generally see tourism as a route to macro-economic growth. In particular it is a means of generating foreign exchange. In Mongolia tourism business generate 11% of GDP.
- For tour companies, tourism is a commercial activity, which is why the main concerns are product development, competitiveness and commercial returns.
- Many conservationists now see tourism as a form of sustainable use of natural resources, and hence as a way to enhance incentives for conservation. – “If it pays, it stays”.
- For rural people, and the donors and development NGOs that support them, tourism is one component of rural development.

As Caroline Ashley points out on the experiences from CBT work in Namibia:

- “Each of the first three incorporates some recognition of the role of tourism in local development, because local development contributes to growth, protects the product, and generates conservation incentives. But none places the interests of the poor at the centre, as the livelihood approach does. The livelihoods approach is used to help develop the fourth perspective, to explore how development impacts can be expanded – while recognizing the continuing prevalence of the other three perspectives. Development impacts are often too equated with “jobs and cash” – particularly by planners, donors or conservationists coming from the other perspectives. A livelihoods approach helps broaden the scope of analysis to a wide range of livelihood impacts. In doing so it seeks to better reflect the more complex reality of poor people's concerns and aspirations”.

Namibia is, as is Mongolia, a very sparsely populated country, with arid environments and much dependence on livestock breeding, but also farming. For most households, livestock keeping or agriculture is a core activity, but virtually not the sole activity for anyone. The livelihood strategies of rural households vary enormously, as perhaps they should in Mongolia in order to decrease the dependence on maintaining high numbers of livestock. In fact, many community members from soum centers took to herding during

the transition from communism to democracy. A common strategy for household members is to undertake a range of activities which each in some way contributes to one or more household needs and they rely on off-land income from employment or remittances for cash needs. Diversified livelihood strategies are also necessary in Mongolia, because of the semi-arid and arid conditions in which drought occurs. Tourism is an opportunity to provide cash incomes, as well as extending markets to the area in order to support shops, transports and other entities.

THE WAY FORWARD

*It is a **WWF concern** to understand the basic mechanisms of tourism development in order to assist in early recognition to mitigate unsound development on the one hand and to promote positive partnerships between community members and formation of tour businesses on the other. The understanding and style of negotiation between the two are worlds apart, and it is beneficial for both if understanding is enhanced. Both community level entities and Mongolian tour operators are not businesses that are likely to move away to another place. Mongolia is a small community of travel enterprises and communities and these are entities to whom one may develop a relationship with over time. The closer tourism entrepreneurs are to the areas they are promoting, the easier it is to integrate tourism into local development. Teaching how to provide community level benefits is profitable for both in the long run.*

6. Capacity building and Training

The tourism industry is a kind of assembly industry that sets out to serve customers in location by providing services such as food, accommodation, transportation, activities and guiding. It takes time for all these services to be coordinating in their common location in an efficient way. It is more efficient to systemize efforts with persons and entities in location. Tourists come from far away and need to purchase all these services in order to have a seamless holiday. This is quite complicated in Mongolia because it is devoid of the most basic tourism infrastructure such as hotels with hot water, tarmac roads, restaurants, etc. The low population density and the size of the country very much favor Tour Operating which are SMMEs and SMEs that work together to provide one tour package and contract with the customer. This has already been shown by a number of small enterprises in nearby Ölgii.

There are constraints inhibiting development. While Mongolians are usually very flexible and quick learners, there has been little effort over the last 13 years to provide appropriate business advice for rural people, or even to people in aimag centers about tourism development. A weak point in Mongolian society is in its patterns of cooperation.

In order to enhance the development of increased community level benefits in rural tourism it is essential to provide information to rural people and their potential business partners in villages and towns as to what are the existing mechanisms for cooperation. Rural people and their potential urban partners need to learn more about how to partner efficiently with each other in different kinds of situations. The advantage of tourism partnerships is that it does not require cooperation as one would while working in the same company. Rather it favors

Mongolian patterns of cooperation in that each one can be the owner of his/her own entity and choose to cooperate with whosoever offer the services needed.

6.1 Training

In order to disseminate business information to herder levels it will be required to be implemented by Mongolians. Hence there is a need to train the trainers, in particular in supply chain management. These trainers should ideally be a mix of young Mongolians that have studied CBT and have gained work experience from WWF and national park, existing tour guides and people from Hovd areas.

There are a number of ways to achieve this:

- Pool financial resources with the national CBT effort and develop trainers that can be deployed in the field and extend training all across Mongolia.
- The Department of Geography at Hovd University is a potential partner with some possible local trainers⁶⁰. They offer a tourism course, and it is the sole tourism education at postgraduate level in western Mongolia. In order to leave a footprint after our project it is essential to use the project time to assist this department to gain knowledge of the issues concerning Environmental Education, Tourism Development and how it relates to KUNNP.
- I met with two students the Center for Development Research at the National University of Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar. They conducted interviews on CBT in October in Chandman soum and Hovd soum, thus they⁶¹ already have some training.
- A local workshop involving soum and aimag administrators, as well as national park administration and local WWF would be required on definition of roles in tourism development, and what benefits there might be, and how it comes to them and others.

6.2 A handbook for the community

There is a need to develop an easy handbook that explains why tourists are coming to Mongolia, how one may prepare for tourists and what benefits there are. A good example is the handbook developed by Nunavut Tourism⁶² for Inuit communities in the Canadian Arctic. It could be adapted to Mongolian conditions. I believe the development of such written material would facilitate the work of Mongolian trainers. Mongolian nomads are literate and often have the time to read, should the desire to learn be there. It could first be developed in English, since it is only good if foreigners also understand in which way communities have prepared and then translated and slightly modified into the Mongolian .

⁶⁰ Mr. Oktyabri Ph 01432 22670 at home or mobile 99434190 in Hovd. His sister Khishgee in Ulaanbaatar Ph. 99788005.

⁶¹ Ms. Nyamjargal. Ph 99194262. Mn_nyamka@yahoo.com and Ms Bazankhuu Ph. 99694082 in Ulaanbaatar.

⁶² Maureen Bundgard, Nunavut Tourism, Canada.

Such a handbook could also be used by the EE team, and their network, for a wide distribution.

THE WAY FORWARD

The development of such a handbook may be commissioned together with other rural development projects, since the issues across Mongolia will be the same. I recommend it moreover for the consideration for the EE component of our overall project.

WWF responsibility: *To develop this idea with the CBT group in Ulaanbaatar. If not, proceed to develop one of our own.*

Ramboll: *Cofund the Training of Trainers and a handbook with the involvement of experts.*

6.3 Department of Geography at Hovd University

This department already has a course in tourism, and gets students from all over Mongolia, since they offer Japanese language courses as well. There was a Japanese teacher working there. The Japanese teacher in Hovd believed it may be awhile before Japanese tourism will come to Hovd. Ms Bayarhuu works as a teacher at the department. She also operates a ger camp in the summer as well as she has a major in Tourism from Russia. Mr Oktyabri Vasha is passionately interested in tourism and visitor sites in Hovd aimag. He is also a teacher at the same department. He has already started working as a guide in the summers.

6.4 Center for Development Research, National University at Ulaanbaatar

This center is headed by Professor Jörg Janzen, a German honorary professor also to Hovd University. Ms Nyamjargal studied in Chandman and Ms Bazanhuu studied in Hovd soum and they did research on CBT with extensive interviews with herders. Hence, here are two students that selected the CBT subject for their dissertation and acquired some field experience. One of the other students at the Center also had her parents as herders in Chandman soum. They have now graduated.

GUIDELINE

The above two institutions could be effective partners in an effort to train the trainers. If some of these individuals could be trained to be trainers in rural tourism development, they could possibly work in tandem with national park staff in order to learn from each other and KUNNP staff is not kept outside of these processes. This awareness? is appropriate to develop even outside herder groups.

THE WAY FORWARD

WWF: *Establish a relation with the Geography Department of Hovd University and consider engaging young Mongolians, especially locals, in future work towards tourism development and community benefits.*

Swedish team: *A Mongolian person to work to modify the contents of Nunavut Tourism handbook to Mongolian conditions and Jan Wigsten to assist in drafting it. The report should be sent out for critical review the production of this manual could possibly be co-financed by other donors.*

7. Community Based Tourism – national level

There are currently several donor interventions and projects working with rural development around Mongolia. Tourism is one activity identified as having potential for rural development. A working group of donors met in Ulaanbaatar in early November 2004 on the initiative of Hustai National Park buffer zone project. The opportunities for parallel financing were explored. The initial idea is to pool resources in order to:

- Hire a senior Mongolian to coordinate CBT issues based in Ulaanbaatar and supported by students from the university
- Train the trainers. Facilitator discussed.
- Later on create an Umbrella Organization which should represent communities on policy at the national level, fill the role of tour operator for marketing and logistics and finally provide training and capacity building.

CBT is now part of the agenda in Mongolian rural development among donor programs which is very much welcome and needed. Our project should support and participate in the efforts to training of the trainers.

I am, however, afraid any effort to replace and compete with the potential business links with Mongolian tour operators will leave the effort in isolation of realities and add to the CBT donor interventions failures worldwide⁶³.

GUIDELINE

I recommend our project continues to dialogue and possibly co-finance actions since it is pooling resources for the same ends as other entities. We can participate in the Training of Trainers, development of Guidelines for visits to nomadic families. I firmly believe one needs to first explore the opportunities of working alongside existing Mongolian businesses, since leaving them outside of the dialogue, will not be fruitful.

A study of current supply chain mechanisms in Mongolia would reveal the weaknesses. I am confident there are several unknown good practices around the country as well as bad. A better understanding of what works in the community level and what does not is needed. There is a need for a better understanding of the livelihood options of community members and Mongolian tour business alike before any interventions could be recommended.

In addition, there is a need for a coordinated effort on some guidelines distributed to tour operators, guest houses, guides and tourists on ger family visits. There is currently no

⁶³ Consensus of GTZ funded Tourism Forum-International at ReisePavillon trade fair in Hanover February 2005. Workshop provided by TIES “CBT: Between self-determination and market realities.” Nicole Häusler, working with GTZ for Protected Areas in Bolivia moreover recommended to avoid any interventions shorter than 5 years.

consensus how to best benefit herding families to compensate for the resources they possess and share.

7.1 Ger family visits

Herdsmen and their lifestyle are an integral part of the Mongolian tourism product so to speak. This means that most visitors to Mongolia are curious and want to learn about the nomadic lifestyle and visit ger families. To date, there are no guidelines to follow. It is not useful for herdsmen, tourists and tour operators alike that the desire to visit ger families, and to develop guidelines continues to be absent.

I am not sure how to detail appropriate visitation; however, I feel there is a need to develop guidelines through a consensus building process at a national level. There is certainly a fragile balance as tourism grows. There is no Mongolian consensus on this issue.

The traditional hospitality is part of an ancient reciprocal system of information exchange and rest against a cup of tea. It is an integral part of life in a countryside that is devoid of people and communications. This hospitality is similar to Europe during the 1700s, when the Swedish botanist Carl von Linneaus traveled the countryside. He stayed with local families in very much the same way

Independent travelers, Mongolian unlicensed tour guides and tour operators use nomadic families as a support system for running trips around the Mongolian countryside. It means price levels are suppressed by using these apparently free support systems. While this may be income for some, it is only good if there is a fair trade component involved and that these operators pay tax in Mongolia.

The use of traditional hospitality as service for tourists is opposed to the use as an integral part of the survival strategies of the steppes. It has a lower carrying capacity than has tourism growth. Some tour operators use this hospitality to deliver tours at cheaper prices, and ask tourists to stay overnight with families without any payment. Even introducing payment causes change, since it means that foreigners will pay and increasingly this vital support system will not be open to rural Mongolians with little money. Moreover, when monetary benefits is introduced given as perceived hand outs, poor herdsmen will move towards tourist roads and places and bring some livestock with them potentially disrupting mobility.

Personally, my experience is that one should not overnight with families with tourists and offering money in exchange of hospitality that was not charged for earlier. A monetary benefit for such service should not be introduced by tourists. Rather, tourists should be self-sufficient when they travel out of Ulaanbaatar or keep to ger camp routes.

THE WAY FORWARD

WWF responsibility: *Participate to lobby the working group for CBT to address the issue of ger visits and develop guidelines for such visits. There is no consensus between Mongolians and between foreign partners, as to the appropriateness of the above nor are there any clear solutions currently on the table.*

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