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Mongolia

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SUMMARY

Mongolia's Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan (NBAP) was prepared between 1993 and 1996 by the newly formed Ministry for Nature and the Environment, with assistance from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). A wide range of people and institutions participated in preparation of the plan, which was adopted by The Government of Mongolia in July 1996. Widely admired and consulted, the NBAP was reprinted in 1997 due to popular demand. Unfortunately, although the NBAP is used extensively by officials in the Ministry for Nature and the Environment and many of its actions have been carried out, there has been no coherent implementation or monitoring of implementation. The NBAP has been overlooked by other sectors and by some important environmental papers and strategies. The committee to oversee implementation should be reactivated immediately to review progress, revise the plan, and assign responsibilities for completing outstanding actions within the next five years.

Key issues

- Mongolia is a large, sparsely populated country with ecosystems which are mostly intact but fragile and vulnerable to many forms of economic exploitation;
- Mongolia's NBAP addresses a wide range of issues across many sectors;
- the NBAP's strengths are its adherence to ecological principles, time allowed for preparation, and contributions from a wide range of people and institutions;
- the NBAP follows the principles that development must be ecologically and economically sustainable, that biodiversity is best conserved in natural rather than artificial settings, and that conservation planning requires broad public participation;
- although the NBAP is widely accepted, its completion was not followed up in any systematic way by government or by UNDP/GEF.

Introduction

Mongolia, with an area of 1.567 million sq. km, lies in a transitional zone at 42 to 52 degrees North, between the boreal forests of Siberia and the Gobi desert. It spans the southernmost border of the permafrost and the northernmost deserts of Central Asia. The country is far inland and has an extreme continental climate, with marked ranges of seasonal and diurnal temperatures and low precipitation. Altitude ranges from 560 m in the far east to 4374 m in the Altai Mountains.

The country's wide range of relatively intact ecosystems provides habitat for a variety of plant and animal species, some of which are globally endangered. Situated at the convergence of the great Siberian taiga, the Central Asian steppe and the Central Asian desert, Mongolia is rich in ecosystems found nowhere else in the world and in a unique assemblage of species. Because human influence on the environment has been relatively minimal, ecosystems have been less threatened than those in countries that share Mongolia's border. The Gobi desert ecosystem has global significance; it is the least changed part of the Gobi area and supports processes and species or subspecies that are either extinct or nearly so in neighbouring China.

Similarly, the eastern steppe ecosystem is still home to hundreds of thousands of migratory Mongolian gazelles. Their mass migration rivals the spectacle of the Serengeti wildebeest, but severe hunting and habitat destruction in China and Russia have reduced species distribution and the length of the migration. Habitat is under threat in Mongolia as well, but without the Mongolian steppes there would be no migration and the gazelles would be reduced to semi-wild populations.

The country also supports a large number of migratory birds. Falcons, reed parrotbill (*Paradoxornis heudei*), and relict gull (*Larus relictus*) are of particular interest or rarity. Mongolia is rich in waterfowl and shorebirds in summer, and the cranes *Grus vipio*, *Grus grus* and *Grus leucogeranus* and *Grus virgo* are important breeding birds.

Species endemism in Mongolia is generally low: 9.4 per cent in plants, 7.6 per cent in fish and 0.7 per cent for all vertebrates. This is normal in a country at this latitude which shares its main ecosystems with neighbouring countries. It is, however, an important population base for many Central Asian desert, steppe and taiga species.

Population density is low as well; there are an estimated 2.5 million people in Mongolia, 55 per cent of whom live in urban areas. The country does face the

problems of limited renewable natural resources and fragile ecosystems, which are extremely vulnerable to economic exploitation.

A nation of herdsmen who have always lived close to nature, Mongolians pride themselves on the care they give to wild habitats. There are increasing pressures on the environment, however. The country's population doubled between 1970 and 1995 and the annual growth rate is now 1.8 per cent. With the breakdown of collectives in 1990 and the privatisation of livestock, grazing pressures have increased, particularly near population centres. Topsoil is thin, with low fertility; this, with permafrost, limits crop production and leads to soil loss and desertification after cultivation of unsuitable land. Uncontrolled off-road driving has caused soil erosion, loss of land resources and unsightly scars on the land. The increased availability of private motorized transport has led to greater hunting pressure on wild species. Mining and industrialisation are also threatening wild species.

The Ministry for Nature and the Environment (MNE) was formed in 1993; its precursor, a collection of organizations (for meteorology, agriculture and forestry), was established in 1988. The MNE implements policies and programs relating to the environment and conservation. Shortly after its formation the new Ministry obtained funds from GEF for the Mongolian Biodiversity Project, which included a component for preparation of the National Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan (NBAP).

Preparation of the NBAP took place in the aftermath of the weakening of Russian influence and the rise of democracy. After the first elections in 1992, people had to think and act for themselves, instead of relying on a centrally planned economy. In some ways this was good for biodiversity; for example, much of the unsustainable cultivation of hay on poor land ceased. But there were negative effects as well. It became easier for individuals to use natural resources in uncontrolled ways. There was no effective inspection or management under the new regime; the inspectors were mostly interested in profit, and there was little supervision of their activities. Severe financial constraints limited the government's ability to protect and effectively manage biodiversity.

During recent decades government policy has favoured industrialisation and economic development, paying little attention to environmental impact. The political and economic transition slowed some of these initiatives (for example, the intensification of agriculture and mineral exploration) and reduced the negative impacts on the environment, but industrialisation and energy development continue to move ahead.

Between 1994 and 1995, however, Parliament passed far-reaching environmental laws, established a protected area network and prepared a protected area master plan. The NBAP set out a detailed action program to ensure that conservation of biodiversity was achieved along with the economic development of the country.

Important features of the NBAP process in Mongolia include the following:

- extensive participation;
- a long preparatory phase (two and a half years), allowing time to consult, plan and review (although most of the work was done during the final eight months); and
- a firm adherence to ecological principles in the plan's structure, its arguments and the actions proposed.

The plan has a wide influence on views and opinions. Implementation has been slow, however, and monitoring and evaluation of implementation have been poor. Implementation is proceeding, but not in a coherent way. Many of the actions are being carried out independently and without reference to the NBAP, and there is no systematic monitoring of progress in achieving the plan's objectives.

NBAP origin and background

Mongolia signed the Convention on Biological Diversity at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It ratified the Convention on 30 September 1993, the 30th country to do so (30 ratifications were needed for the Convention to come into force).

The MEF was the lead agency in preparing the NBAP, under the GEF-funded UNDP Mongolian Biodiversity Project initiated in June 1993. The National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) was approved by Parliament in April 1995. Other related plans were also being prepared at this time, including the Mongolian Action Plan for the 21st Century (MAP21) completed in 1998, and specific initiatives addressing protected areas, desertification, and climate change. These provided the context for the NBAP. The NBAP predated the National Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (NPACD), and both the national and regional MAP 21 plans.

Preparation of the NBAP enjoyed strong political backing. The initiative came from MEF, with advice and support from foreign environmentalists who were visiting Mongolia at the time. The Government of Mongolia, with the assist-

ance of the UNDP country office, then applied to GEF for funds. Work on the NBAP started in 1993, with a seminar to collect scientific data about Mongolia's biological resources. The NBAP process took two and a half years and was complete in April 1996.

Cabinet approved the NBAP in July 1996 and a National Committee was appointed later that year to oversee implementation. Most members of the committee are from the environmental field and do not represent diverse government sectors.

The main actions in implementation relate to protected areas. The NBAP proposed 85 new protected areas; 22 of these have now been established (see Table 1). The stated goal is to give 30 per cent of the country protected area status.

Table 1. Protected Areas in Mongolia

year	number	land area (sq. km)	% of country
1996	26	126,300	8
2000	48	205,300	13

The other main advances have been in the fields of public awareness, environmental legislation and regulation, ecotourism, and funds for conservation activities.

NBAP development

A draft of part of the NBAP was prepared in 1994. This followed a scientific workshop in 1993, which was attended by 17 Mongolian scientists and two MNE staff and moderated by a consultant from UNDP. The 1994 draft was poorly structured but contained some useful data. The GEF project funded field workers and other researchers to collect basic information on the status of biodiversity and carry out basic ecological training. The work took place between 1994 and 1995.

In 1995, further information needs were assessed and the Ministry's Information and Computer Centre (ICC), with assistance from scientists and the GEF project, collected information and carried out analysis. The NBAP process was picked up again in mid-1995 with an enhanced information base. A preliminary NBAP outline, lists of data needs and mapping needs, a schedule for meetings and writing assignments, revisions and printing, and plans for two

formal workshops were developed with the close involvement of the Minister and the Vice Minister for Nature and the Environment.

A diverse group of 56 people participated in the preparation of the NBAP. They included members of Parliament and local government, representatives from five ministries, the National Development Board, the National Academy of Science, universities and other institutes of higher education, secondary schools and NGOs, as well as foreign experts from Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States. Most of the Mongolian participants were from Ulaanbaatar but representatives from six different provinces, or aimags, also attended. Mongolian and foreign businesspeople took part in the workshops and provided comments on drafts of the plan.

The results of the research carried out over the previous two years and the data and analysis undertaken by the ICC were made available to the group. In addition, the Centre's staff was able to provide working groups with further analysis of data from their GIS and other databases. Participants worked intensively on the NBAP for three weeks in September 1995. Two workshops were held during the first and last weeks of this period. They were held in Terelj National Park, 50 km from the capital, so that participants could avoid distraction and work collaboratively. In the intervening week participants gathered additional data, discussed issues with colleagues and continued with writing assignments. A brief meeting was held between the workshops to review progress and distribute maps, results of data analysis, and translations of written work submitted earlier.

The participants were organized into 15 work groups according to their expertise and NBAP preparation needs, and were given writing assignments corresponding to specific sections of the NBAP. Writing assignments were completed in English, Russian and Mongolian. This created a great deal of work for the translators in the secretariat, who had to translate material written in English and Russian into Mongolian for return to the working group chairpeople and translate the work group reports into English.

Following the workshops, work group reports were arranged by chapter and section in both English and Mongolian. A core group then wrote the initial draft of the NBAP in Mongolian, containing the following elements:

- work group reports;
- comments on reports from the Minister for Nature and the Environment;
- comments from workshop members on work group reports other than their own;

- results of research and analysis triggered by questions raised at the workshop.

Many of the working group papers were weak and had to be rewritten. Some were discarded and replaced by sections written in English by the GEF project staff. The second draft was written in both Mongolian and English and distributed for review and comment to key officials, workshop participants, NGOs, selected foreign experts and interested members of the public. Comments on drafts of the plan were solicited from a number of acknowledged experts in specific fields.

The third draft incorporated these reviews and comments. It was prepared in English, translated into Mongolian and then reviewed by the Minister and Vice Minister before being finalized in both languages.

Since completion of the NBAP and approval by Cabinet in 1996, monitoring and evaluation have been minimal, and no revisions have been made. The plan was reprinted unchanged in 1997. A number of aimag conferences were held to publicize the plan but no biodiversity action plans (BAPs) have been prepared at regional or local levels.

A proposal for a second-phase national-level GEF project to implement the BAP was rejected by UNDP in favour of a regional project in the Eastern Steppe that is only linked loosely to the BAP.

Relationship to development planning

The NBAP was prepared at the same time as a number of other environmental plans. Although the processes for preparing these plans were not closely coordinated, there was some consultation with the people who had prepared the NBAP.

The National Environmental Action Plan was completed during the third year of the NBAP process. NEAP preparation was carried out quickly with a limited number of people and less participation than the NBAP. The NEAP has a wide scope and was important in drawing attention to the environment and sustainability at that time. The NBAP expanded the part of the NEAP related to wildlife conservation and protected areas and proposed additional, more comprehensive measures to be taken in the wider development field.

The **Mongolian Action Plan for the 21st Century** (MAP21), completed in 1998, used a standard economic development approach and included many elements that were not sustainable. It did, however, have one important

positive quality: widespread and effective participation by aimag governments. Each government drafted an individual Aimag Action Plan; some, the Sukhbaatar aimag plan, for example, contain sound approaches to sustainable development.

The **National Plan of Action to Combat Desertification** (NPACD) underwent several extensive revisions and changes of authors over a long period but drew substantially on the NBAP. Preparation was slow due to long intervals between drafts.

Although many the actions proposed in the NBAP are being implemented the plan has failed to have much impact, and is referred to only rarely in official documents or government resolutions. It is a particular concern that MAP21 makes no reference to the NBAP and mixes conventional development with environmental actions under the banner of sustainable development. The 1997 **Government Policy on Ecology** incorporates principles from the NBAP and has the worthy goal of placing Mongolia in harmony with the environment, but is basically an economic policy intended to be “environmentally friendly”. It provides little direction as to how ecological science might assist in achieving sustainable development, even though the NBAP provides guidance.

GEF and the government funded NBAP preparation; various government agencies, along with bilateral and multilateral sources, have supported projects to implement it. Actions relating to protected area management have been included in government budgets, and additional funds are available through external sources. Development planners in government don't always refer to the NBAP but are highly aware of its basic principles. Many of these principles have been included in annual and long-term development plans but the NBAP is seldom referred to and not widely discussed. Some development plans and proposals, in fact, run counter to the NBAP. There is widespread acceptance of the NBAP within the MNE but outside the ministry there is little use of the plan as a policy framework or operational instrument.

This attitude continues even though the NBAP incorporates many sectors in its approach. It proposes a wide range of actions covering protected areas, population control, environmental impact assessment and land-use planning, research and monitoring, education and training, public awareness, agriculture, forestry, industry, transport, mining and oil exploitation, tourism, land reclamation, energy and ex-situ management for conservation. Although the NBAP received extremely significant political backing when it was launched, and many of its proposed actions have been given a high priority for implementation, most implementation is carried out by the MNE itself.

NBAP scope and objectives

The analysis undertaken by the ICC in preparation for the NBAP drew upon studies of the flora and fauna which, together with climatic and geographic data, resulted in the classification of six broad ecological regions, sixteen ecological provinces and 47 biogeographical zones. The research included a GIS gap analysis of vertebrate species distribution data and protected area boundaries and a determination of the area and the percentage of each biogeographical zone under protection.

The NBAP identified the Gobi (Desert and Desert Steppe) and the Steppe as having global significance in terms of biodiversity. Some of Mongolia's wetlands were also identified as globally important because they provide significant breeding and migration staging areas for large numbers of waterfowl and shorebirds.

The NBAP presented a clear account of the threats to biodiversity and the problems facing biodiversity conservation and formulated a program of actions necessary to ensure biodiversity conservation. But while it addressed issues in all sectors it did not establish priorities for proposed actions. A distinction was made between specific objectives (for example, "control hunting and fishing") which were supported by a number of specific actions, and the legal and institutional measures necessary to ensure implementation of these actions. Institutional responsibilities were only loosely defined, however, and no budget for proposed actions was provided.

Traditions of sustainable use evolved over thousands of years in Mongolia. Longstanding Mongolian waste-free technologies (such as natural packaging for food and water) relating to energy and material consumption have great advantages over modern technologies and it may be possible to develop an ecologically integrated model of sustainable development based on the best of nomadic traditions and modern science and technology.

The hope is that the actions proposed in the NBAP will conserve the country's magnificent biodiversity and culture for future generations. The guiding principles on which this vision is based include the following:

- all Mongolians depend on biodiversity and have a responsibility to contribute to its conservation;
- an ecological approach to resource management is essential to achieve conservation and sustainable development;
- development must be ecologically and economically sustainable;

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- activities under Mongolia's control should not cause damage to the environment of other states;
- cooperation with other nations for the conservation of biodiversity is essential;
- biodiversity is best conserved in natural rather than artificial settings;
- broad public participation in conservation planning is required;
- the knowledge of local people, such as nomadic herders, should be preserved, respected and utilized.

The biodiversity of Mongolia faces increasing threats, including rapid increases in population and industrialization. The main objective of the NBAP is to put in place measures to protect existing biodiversity and restore damaged areas. The NBAP aims to ensure that consciousness of biodiversity is integrated into economic and social programs. It advocates 17 specific objectives and four legal and institutional measures, each with a detailed action program (Box 1).

Box 1. Specific objectives of the NBAP

1. Establish a complete protected area system representative of all ecosystems and protecting endangered species, including joint actions with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China
2. Establish effective population control measures to limit human impact on the nation's biodiversity
3. Implement an effective environmental impact assessment program to understand the effects of proposed actions on biodiversity
4. Establish a research program that improves knowledge of biodiversity and relevant threats
5. Establish a nationwide information and monitoring system for biodiversity conservation
6. Establish national education and training programs for biodiversity conservation
7. Establish a public information program to improve people's knowledge of biodiversity and the importance of conserving it
8. Control pollution of air, water and soil
9. Control hunting and fishing
10. Prevent pasture deterioration through overgrazing
11. Establish effective land-use planning control and transportation planning to protect biodiversity

12. Develop strong regulations to protect biodiversity from effects of mining
13. Support tourism while developing sensible regulations to protect biodiversity
14. Ensure that agriculture and forestry are carried out in ways compatible with biodiversity conservation
15. Identify and restore damaged lands
16. Develop renewable, clean energy sources and ensure environmentally safe transport of fossil fuels
17. Improve ex-situ management for species conservation and conserving genetic resources

Legal and institutional measures

1. Adopt legislation and policies to ensure the conservation of biological diversity that require the integration of conservation and environmental protection into sustainable development
2. Strengthen institutional arrangements needed to implement the Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan for Mongolia
3. Seek finances from all possible sources in order to implement the Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan for Mongolia
4. Properly value biodiversity in the national accounting system

Implementation of the NBAP

MNE is the lead agency in the implementation of the NBAP, but a number of other government and non-government agencies and institutions are involved in specific actions. Priorities set out in the NBAP have led to a number of long-term international conservation projects with funding from GEF, UNDP, GTZ, WWF, WCS, Denver Zoo, NCI, and Wetlands International. Collaborative conservation projects have also been established with Raleigh International and a number of overseas researchers. There is no active coordinating body for implementation and day-to-day management, however.

The National Committee to oversee implementation of the NBAP was established in 1996 but has met only twice. An NBAP implementation donor conference was postponed several times between 1996 and 1997; eventually, funds set aside for the conference by UNDP were diverted for other purposes.

Despite these drawbacks and a lack of detailed awareness of the NBAP, many NBAP actions are being implemented. The principles of the NBAP are generally accepted by government agencies and private businesses even though the

NBAP is not widely quoted in publications. Its acceptance is reflected in the considerable progress made in the fields of protected areas, public awareness, legislation, and training for biodiversity conservation.

Protected areas

The protected area network has increased more than 50 per cent, and there is now a recognized professional training for protected area rangers and a new standard training course for them. Admirable caution has been evident in determining quotas for commercial hunting. A three-year Environmental and Public Awareness Project has equipped and trained a number of NGOs to inform the public about environmental and biodiversity issues. A large number of environmental laws and regulations have been passed. Many of these initiatives have stemmed directly from the NBAP and its preparatory process.

Mongolia Environmental Trust Fund

One important initiative stemming from the NBAP was the Mongolia Environmental Trust Fund (METF). This was established in 1997 under the GEF Mongolia Biodiversity Project to provide long-term resources for conserving land and wildlife. The aim was to establish capital of US\$10 million in an endowment fund based in the Netherlands, but since its establishment the METF has made little progress. GEF has pledged matching contributions of two million dollars on a 1:1 basis, but so far no funds have been raised.

Much in the NBAP has not yet been achieved, partly because of a lack of capacity. The scientific field has been slow to adapt to the relatively new concepts of ecological science, although the new generation of scientists is more willing to change. A major constraint is in enforcement of laws and regulations; capacity is very limited, mechanisms are lacking, and in many cases the legislation requires review because of conflicts with other laws or impractical provisions (i.e. for banning activities or collecting fines).

Support for the NBAP

Members of the public have shown great enthusiasm for biodiversity issues. There is a long tradition of natural environment values; unfortunately, these are not always translated into action because of other priorities in peoples' lives. In the field of education there is great enthusiasm and growing capacity. A new university course in ecology is producing competent graduates, and secondary school teachers have an almost insatiable appetite for materials on the environment. Rangers have been trained through a series of courses arranged by MNE with bilateral and multilateral assistance (from GTZ, the

Smithsonian Institution, and UNDP/GEF). Training in environmental assessment and incorporation of biodiversity considerations into land-use decisions is also taking place. Government officials, university lecturers and Academy of Science researchers regularly travel abroad to conferences and are building a growing network of contacts. This in turn is leading to more collaborative projects, some of which support biodiversity conservation.

There is a lack of coherence, however, in the activities undertaken in the name of biodiversity conservation. Monitoring NBAP implementation more closely, beginning with a review of what has been achieved, would help clarify priorities. There are several obstacles to implementing the NBAP in a coherent manner, all of which are addressed in the NBAP itself (Box 2).

Box 2. Obstacles to NBAP implementation

a) Inadequate mechanisms in law and in law enforcement perpetrate misuse by resource users and regulators. Even though there are many good laws and regulations, they are blatantly ignored, with the knowledge of inspectors, and enforcement mechanisms are inadequate. The laws and regulations related to land-use, particularly with regard to mining licences, are not being obeyed. There are also large loopholes in the legislation; for example, the sale of skins obviously collected during the closed season is permitted. Inspectors are powerless to arrest poachers who are selling fresh, blood-spattered marmot skins in the market during the breeding season, when hunting is prohibited. Inspectors have an encyclopaedic knowledge of the laws, but when they do, rarely, arrest people penalties are either not imposed or not enforced.

b) With a few exceptions, there is still an outdated view of natural processes and how to manage natural ecosystems. Decision-makers do not consider the fact that Mongolia's ecosystems are fragile and finite. Many responses to problems address symptoms rather than causes; for example, mass killing of voles on pasture land using secondary poisons continues despite evidence that the method is ineffective, and dangerous to other species; and the voles are not the cause of the pasture land degradation for which they are blamed. Actions like these can exacerbate the problems they are designed to solve. The desire — an understandable one — to do something to satisfy the immediate needs of herders lies behind many of the actions related to pasture management that are not ecologically sound in the long term.

c) Cross-sector collaboration and institutional arrangements are inadequate to implement the plan and for development in general. Although the NBAP is a comprehensive guide to what should be done to ensure the conservation of biodiversity in parallel with economic development, detailed institutional responsibilities (government and non-government) and mechanisms have not been elaborated, and there is no timetable, budgets or list of priorities.

Monitoring and follow-up

Monitoring of the state of natural resources is carried out by various institutions and statistics are published regularly. The MNE publishes periodic reports on the environment, which, although lacking official indicators, provide information on trends in the state of the environment, particularly for forests, protected areas, degraded grazing land, stocking densities and air and water quality. No monitoring has been undertaken of NBAP implementation. In Mongolia's First National Report to the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity in Bratislava in 1998 the NBAP was given little attention, and there was no evaluation of progress in NBAP implementation.

Lessons learned

Although it took a long time, development of the NBAP was a relatively smooth and effective process that culminated in what is widely regarded as a sound plan. Implementation was not given sufficient attention, however, and cannot be regarded as a success so far.

Development

The participatory approach was successful and earned wide acceptance for the plan. Involving a wide range of institutions and individuals contributed greatly to the ideas in the plan and ensured government acceptance.

An ecological approach is essential. Without such an approach to biodiversity, to threats and current conservation measures, and to the formulation of specific objectives and the design of actions, the plan would have been yet another conventional development plan dressed up as an environmental plan.

Accurate and up-to-date information allowed for effective priority setting. GIS analysis was very valuable in analysing data. A lack of information on distribution of plant and animal species, however, meant that definition of biodiversity hot spots was in some cases selective, and relied on personal knowledge of sites rather than a systematic analysis of comprehensive data.

Government agreed to include controversial issues in the NBAP even though policies were defined which conflicted with prevailing views. But while some legislators viewed the plan as an ideal, ecologically sound document, necessary to satisfy commitments under an international convention, it was not to be taken seriously in areas such as population control, a particularly sensitive issue in Mongolia (the plan recommended review of government policies which encourage a rapid population growth rate).

Preparation of a NBAP in more than one language is an extremely complex undertaking that requires well qualified and experienced translators and a great deal of time. Work was held up for long periods because of slow or poor translations. When working in more than one language, the importance of making careful provision for experienced and knowledgeable translators from the start of NBAP preparation cannot be overemphasised.

Implementation

Support for implementation was inadequate. The failure to link completion of the plan and implementation was a fundamental flaw. The plan also suffered two setbacks shortly after its approval by Cabinet in July 1996; the first being the change of government; and the second the winding down of the GEF/UNDP project. The GEF/UNDP project established a committee to oversee implementation and a trust fund to provide money for some of the actions, but again, no realistic provision was made to support the committee's work or raise funds. UNDP did not approach GEF for funds to support implementation of the NBAP at the national level, which contributed to the loss of momentum. UNDP provided bridging grants in anticipation of a second phase, but project staff gradually left and the focus shifted from the NBAP to the regional project.

The most successful implementation occurred in those sectors most involved in NBAP development. The expansion of the protected area network was the only case in which the NBAP was used effectively as a guide to action. There were three reasons for this:

- the project had worked closely with the Protected Areas Bureau (PAB) for many years, much more so than with any other sector, and the PAB Director stayed on after the election;
- the NBAP featured a detailed guide to action with maps and lists of established and proposed protected areas that formed the basis for additions to the protected area system over the following years; and
- the government had pledged to expand the protected area system prior to the NBAP.

The NBAP was viewed largely as an MNE publication and failed to gain recognition and authority as a working document in other sectors, although it was used extensively by MNE personnel and there was great demand for it in other sectors, among the general public and among foreign consultants (so much so that it was reprinted in 1997). It appears, however, that most people used it simply as an authoritative reference rather than as a policy guide. Some of the actions, even in the protected area sector, required new policy or cross-sector cooperation, and so have not been achieved. It is particularly surprising that MAP21 makes no reference to a document as important as the NBAP.

Recommendations

These recommendations focus mainly on implementation and the need to use the NBAP as a guide to action. Much of what needs to be done has already been agreed to but there is no impetus to drive the process forward.

The committee to oversee implementation should be reactivated immediately. Members should include representatives from the main government sectors, academic institutions and NGOs. The committee should carry out or commission a review of progress, make necessary revisions to the plan (including assigning priorities to actions) and continue to monitor progress. The committee should sit regularly, and will require a budget for administration and meetings. If the committee is given sufficient official backing it should be able to preside over a continuous process of NBAP implementation, evaluation, revision, reformulation and refinement and gradually bring in many institutions which at present are barely aware of the plan.

Details of schedules, budgets, sources of funds and responsibility for actions should be included in a revised plan. The committee should assign responsibilities for outstanding actions according to a five-year schedule and should indicate the cost of actions as well as sources or potential sources of funds. Regular, possibly twice yearly, updates are recommended.

Close links should be forged with the Mongolian Environmental Trust Fund. Appropriate high priority actions from the NBAP should be developed into projects for funding by the METF. The establishment of a Biodiversity Conservation Training Centre, for example, would be a good candidate. The long-planned NBAP/METF donor conference should be held to solicit funding for a number of long-term projects with recurrent costs that cannot be met by government.

The NBAP should be officially integrated into development planning. This is a big undertaking, but government approval for it already exists. The National Council for Sustainable Development should take on some of the tasks and responsibilities of the plan.

The cover and copyright date of the second printing of the plan should be changed. The date "June 1997" appears on the cover and in the copyright information of the second printing. This is a small point but is causing confusion and should be rectified. To date, there is only one version of the NBAP: the April 1996 document.

Regional plans based on the national plan should be elaborated. The MAP21 exercise, which established committees in each aimag, was an opportunity to establish the NBAP as a guide to decision-makers. Although this was not accomplished, it is not too late. The same committees should now be used in NBAP implementation. Close collaboration with the MAP21 program can assure results and correct some of the imbalances in the MAP21 approach to sustainable development.

Chronology

June 1992	Mongolia signs the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)
June 1993	GEF/UNDP/Government of Mongolia Biodiversity Project begins
Sept 1993	Mongolia ratifies the CBD, the 30th ratification and the last one needed for the Convention to come into force
Oct 1993	Initial workshop in Ulaanbaatar to collect data for NBAP preparation, leading to partial draft of NBAP
1993–94	Data collected; increasing awareness of the importance of good data for planning, but still relatively sketchy understanding of the importance of ecological principles in decision-making
1994–95	Parliament passes far-reaching environmental laws, establishes a protected area network and prepares a protected area master plan
June 1995	Analysis of data and reinitiation of NBAP preparation; concentration on GIS and relational database work; maps prepared, based on the analyses, for presentations and for inclusion in the NBAP
Sept 1995	NBAP Drafting workshop in Terelj. Minister for Nature and the Environment attend one evening; enthusiasm high and progress fast; ecological understanding increasing

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Nov 1995	First draft in both Mongolian and English completed
Dec 1995	Second drafts completed after review process
Feb 1996	Third drafts completed after further review and comments
Mar 1996	Full review by Minister for Nature and the Environment and three weekly meetings with him to discuss problems
Apr 1996	Publication and wide distribution
July 1996	Approval of NBAP by Government
Oct 1996	Appointment of committee to oversee implementation of NBAP (unfortunately this committee has met only twice)
June 1997	NBAP reprinted without changes; widely distributed again.
Nov 1997	Mongolian Environmental Trust Fund (METF) registered as a non-profit foundation in The Netherlands
1996–2000	NBAP used and quoted in various policy documents but reference to it barely made, if at all, in some key documents, such as MAP21; NBAP not used in a coherent way as an action plan for biodiversity conservation, but widely read and used by government officials as a source-book
May 2000	International Conference on Human Security in a Globalized World (held in Ulaanbaatar); approaches of many of the speakers to the ecological problems of overgrazing and to pasture management reflect increasing understanding of the principles expressed in the NBAP; the NBAP quoted, among other plans, in final conference recommendations.
Jan 2001	Mongolian Environmental Trust Fund receives first substantial donation, from UNDP. Selection criteria and procedures for projects to be funded by the METF need further elaboration. Official decision that response to pasture management problems and widespread deaths of livestock in two consecutive winters will include a nationwide assessment of rangeland capacity, one of the recommended actions of the NBAP.

Suggested reading

Ministry of Nature and Environment. 1996. *Mongolia's National Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan*. MNE/GEF/UNDP/UNOPS, Ulaanbaatar.

MAP21, 1998. *Mongolian Action Program of 21st Century: Executive Summary and Strategic Analysis*. UNDP/MNE

Government of Mongolia, 1997. *National Policy on Ecology*.MNE

Concept of the Development of Mongolia, Resolution Number 26 of State Great Khural, 3 May 1996. Government of Mongolia (GOM)

MNE, UNDP, GEF, 1998. *Biological Diversity in Mongolia*. First National Report on Biodiversity.MNE.

Government of Mongolia, 1995. *Mongolian Environmental Action Plan*. World Bank/MNE.

MNE, 1997. *National Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in Mongolia*.

National Program on Protected Areas, Resolution Number 29 of State Great Khural, April 1988. Government of Mongolia (GOM)

Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment (Mongolia's Country Studies Report on Climate Change), US Country Studies Program, Mongolia's Study Team, 1996.

