

Country Brief: Mongolia

The Role of REDD+ in Achieving Goals of Nationally Determined Contributions and Delivering the Sustainable Development Goals



Introduction to Mongolia

Mongolia is a landlocked country located in the center of the Eurasian continent. The climate is characterized by high fluctuations and extremes in temperature and precipitation. The annual mean temperature ranges from -8°C to 6°C across regions and the annual precipitation varies from 50 mm in the Gobi desert to 400mm in the northern mountainous area. It is an immense area of 1.5 million km^2 , largely consisting of grasslands which have supported nomadic herding lifestyles for thousands of years.

The country includes two major forest biomes, boreal forests in the north accounting for 13.1 million hectares¹, dominated by pine, larch, and birch; and 3.6 million of saxual forests, a dryland ecosystem in the southern arid regions. Mongolia's forests are threatened primarily by forest fire, forest pests and drought. Dense forest stands which may compete for limited resources such as water also make the trees weakened and more susceptible to these threats. Initial assessments show that approximately 137,000 ha of forests are degraded each year². This is exacerbated by the unpredictable impacts of climate change, with increased fire risk during dry periods, uncertain growth and less water. Precipitation changes and permafrost melting reduce water availability, affected pest life cycles and the unknown impacts on germination,

phenology and growth. Drier conditions increase of the frequency of forest fires and forest insect and pest outbreaks.

Following an economic boom in the 1990's primarily linked to the country's mineral resources, a process of urbanisation followed with 50% of the country's 3.1 million population living in urban centres, with most living in Ulaanbaatar. The forest sector accounts for approximately 3% of the country's GDPs though this accounts only for direct income and taxation revenues. The country has recently been hit by economic destabilisation and weakening of the currency due to its high dependence upon minerals. It is widely regarded that the country needs to diversify its economy. The forest sector has potential for direct and indirect contribution to supporting this diversification of the economy.

Mongolia's large forest estate has ecological capacity and economic potential for supporting enterprises, community groups and socio-economic development. However, climate change assessments undertaken in Mongolia in 2014³, demonstrated that fragile ecosystems, a reliance on pastoral animal husbandry and rain-fed agriculture, and the growing urban population all combine to make Mongolia's socio-economic development vulnerable to climate change.

1 FRDC (2016). *Forests of Mongolia: Annual Update*. Ministry of Environment & Tourism, Mongolia.

2 UN-REDD (In Prep). *Forest Reference Level*. Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Mongolia.

3 MACC (2014). *Climate Change Assessment*. Department of Environment, Mongolia.





Photo Credit: Erdenebulgan - Baigaliin uzesgelen bidnii baylag

Mongolia's Approach to Sustainable Development and Climate Change

Mongolia's NDC has its conceptual roots in the Green Development Policy of Mongolia⁴, approved by the Parliament in 2014 and the Sustainable Development Vision⁵ (2015). Key indicators for measuring progress in the implementation of the Green Development Policy include, among others, efficient use of energy, GHG emissions and ecological footprint per unit of GDP. The National Action Programme on Climate Change (NAPCC) endorsed by the Parliament 2011 includes concrete measures covering all principal sectors of economy. These and other relevant national level policy documents served as a basis for the development of Mongolia's INDC, which was shaped and finalized through comprehensive consultation exercises with a broad range of stakeholders. The REDD+ strategy aims to contribute to Green Development and Sustainable Development Vision through policies and measures aimed at both mitigation and adaptation, and meeting sustainable development goals.

Mitigation

Mongolia has outlined a series of policies and measures in the energy, industry, agriculture and waste sectors. The expected mitigation impact of these policies and measures will be a 14% reduction in total national GHG emissions. Forest account for

removals in Mongolia, and the country's emissions would be higher if the forest resource is further affected by degradation. That, and other potentially more ambitious commitments, are contingent upon gaining access to new technologies and sources of finance through internationally agreed mechanisms and instruments under the auspices of the UNFCCC.

National Determined (NDC) Targets:

- Increasing forest area up to 9.0% by 2030 and reducing forest fire affected area by 30% would conserve ecosystems and increase carbon sink.
- To reduce forest degradation, and to implement re-forestation and sustainable forest management strategies.

Adaptation

The melting of permafrost and glaciers, surface water shortages, and soil and pasture degradation have been identified as particular challenges faced by Mongolia as a result of climate change. Due to a high degree of vulnerability to climate change, adaptation is particularly important for Mongolia, and a distinct adaptation component is therefore included in the country's NDC. The selection of priorities for the adaptation component is based on a

⁴ Mongolia (2014). *Green Development Policy*. Mongolia.
⁵ Mongolia (2015). *Sustainable Development Vision*. Mongolia.



detailed analysis of the expected impacts, potential solutions and challenges, and of possible synergies between adaptation and mitigation activities.

National Determined (NDC) Targets:

- Increasing protected areas up to 25-30% of the total territory will help maintain natural

ecosystems and preserve water resources with a certain synergy effects for emission reduction.

- Increased adaptive capacity of forest estate to overcome negative impacts of climate change, and to strengthen resilience of ecosystem and socio-economic sectors.

The linkages between Mitigation and Adaptation in the forest sector

Carbon sequestration through increases in forest areas:

- Expanded tree planting
- Increased tree cover in rural, cities and roads
- Enhancement through sustainable forest management

Forest Management and Conservation through reduction of deforestation and degradation:

- Sustainable forest utilization
- Fire management
- Management of forest health
- Reduction of illegal logging

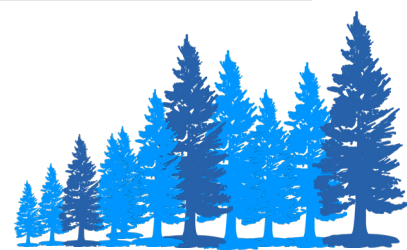


Strengthen Adaptive Capacity and resilience of trees and forests especially in fragile ecosystems:

- Improved forest health
- Increase stand diversity of species and ages
- Improved fire management systems
- Forest management and landscape planning

Strengthen adaptive capacity and resilience of local communities:

- Improved employment and livelihoods
- Disaster and CC planning
- Land Use Planning



The linkages between Mitigation and Adaptation in the forest sector



Mongolia and the on Sustainable Development Goals

REDD+ is inextricably linked to socio-economic development and poverty alleviation which are addressed in the country's NDC and Green Development Strategy.

- Animal husbandry aims to maintain ecosystem balance through improving pasture management, this will reduce impact on forest resources, especially forest edges, which are most vulnerable to drought;
- Community-based forest resource management

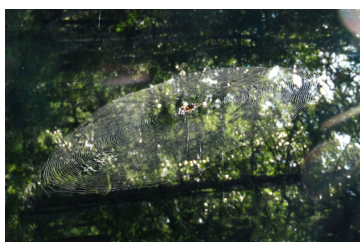
covers 3.1 million hectares of boreal forests, about 20% of the forest area, these should be managed effectively and livelihood opportunities enhanced to ensure resilience is developed in forest edge dependent communities; and

- Natural disaster management seeks to build effective disaster management to prevent environmental and socio-economic losses particularly related to forest fires, and making communities more resilient so as reducing impacts on forest areas in times of economic difficulty.

Mongolia's Approach to Green/Sustainable Development

The REDD+ process is linked to other national level strategies and policies the most important are:

- Green Development Policy of Mongolia (2014)
- National Action Plan for the Implementation of Goals and Objectives of the Green Development Policy of Mongolia (2015)
- Mongolia Sustainable Development Vision 2030 (2016)
- State Policy on Forest (2015)
- National Action Plan for the Implementation of Goals and Objectives of the State Forest Policy of Mongolia (2017)
- National Program of Climate Change 2011- 2021 (2011)
- National Biodiversity Program 2015-2025 (2015)



Status of REDD+ Readiness/Implementation in Mongolia

- The REDD+ Readiness process commenced in June 2011 when Mongolia became a partner country of UN-REDD Programme, and the development and implementation of its REDD+ Readiness Roadmap. A comprehensive process of engagement with stakeholders has been undertaken and will result in the four elements of the "Warsaw Framework" for REDD+.
- The Forest Reference Level is being developed, in conjunction with national GHG reporting, and will be submitted to the UNFCCC in January

2018. Initial assessments show that deforestation, resulting in permanent land use change is low in Mongolia, but with considerable degradation that may eventually lead to deforestation. The National GHG inventory shows that forests are an enormous carbon sink, largely offsetting the country's increasing GHG emissions.

- The program will support and enhance the country's existing National Forest Monitoring System and Safeguard Information Systems.





Lessons Learned: How REDD+ is Contributing to NDC Goals and Progress on SDGs

- REDD+ is not only focused on climate mitigation and results based potential but needs to take into account diverse objectives and goals of each country. In Mongolia's situation provides a unique perspective of REDD+, without large anthropogenic drivers, but with large forest estate that faces pressures of fire, pests, drought and these are exacerbated through poor management, increased fire risks from dry periods, drought from permafrost melting and soil water availability, and changes in precipitation levels rather than anthropogenic land use change. REDD+ needs to be framed in context of wider sustainable development and climate change objectives than mitigation alone.
- Policies and Measures will focus on REDD+ interventions not only to reduce net GHG emissions, but also to increase resilience to climate change.
- Mongolia has considerable potential for investment in the forest sector to attain SDG goals whilst maintaining and enhancing the forest stocks, the REDD+ strategy should help to galvanize support from international donors and private sector. The National Forest Monitoring System and Safeguard Information System will be linked to national reporting systems on the Sustainable Development Goals.

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