TERMINAL EVALUATION

Project ID:	9389
Project Name:	Ensuring Sustainability and Resilience (ENSURE) of Green Landscapes in Mongolia
Countr(ies):	Mongolia
Implementing Agency:	UNDP

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I. Overview

A. Description

Project name Ensuring Sustainability and Resilience (ENSURE) of Green Landscapes in Mongolia	
Country Mongolia	
GEF ID 9389	Implementing Agency UNDP
Executing Entity Ministry of Environment and Green Development and Tourism, Ministry of Food and Agriculture	
Trust Fund GET	Project Type FSP
Objective To enhance ecosystem services in multiple landscapes of the Sayan and Khangai mountains and southern Gobi by reducing rangeland and forest degradation and conserving biodiversity through sustainable livelihoods.	

B. Key Dates

CEO Endorsement/Approval 10/18/2018	Agency Approval 12/18/2018
Implementation Start 12/18/2018	First Disbursement 12/20/2018
Expected MTR 6/18/2022	MTR Submission 6/30/2026
Actual MTR 7/31/2022	Expected Completion 12/18/2025
Actual Completion 5/6/2026	Actual TE 8/28/2025
TE Submission 6/30/2026	Final Disbursement

C. Disbursements

Project Financing	Cumulative Disbursement
8,720,857.00	7,950,160.01

II. PROGRESS STATUS AND ISSUES

A. Main Terminal Evaluation Findings

The M&E plan aligned with UNDP-GEF standards; implementation was timely, but tool updates and analytical depth were inconsistent. The M&E plan detailed mandatory activities, responsibilities, budget, and timelines, and included standard tools (e.g., PIRs, APRs, audits, GEF-TTs), stakeholder engagement, and field visits. The Project Results Framework showed a few shortcomings, including uneven indicator distribution across outcomes. While half the indicators fully met SMART criteria, the rest were only partially compliant. Project M&E implementation followed the plan with structured inception, timely reporting, audits, and active Project Board oversight. However, inconsistent updates of key tools like CD Scorecards and METT hindered coherent reporting. APRs and PIRs were comprehensive in describing project activities and progress but were uneven and lacked depth in some areassuch as lessons learned, implementation challenges, and linkages and synergies with other relevant projects and initiatives.

UNDP and MECC ensured strong oversight, coordination, and alignment with national priorities and GEF standards. UNDP provided quality assurance and oversight as the GEF implementing agency, supporting audits, monitoring, strategic guidance, and coordination. It facilitated staffing, financial management, and capacity building of the PIU, while maintaining consistent communication with stakeholders. Through active participation, evaluations, and backstopping, UNDP upheld high standards of accountability and performance. As IP, MECC provided strong institutional leadership, aligning project execution with national policies and priorities. It chaired the PB, ensured stakeholder engagement and coordination, and timely guidance and decision-making. MECC also contributed significant co-financing, hosted the PIU, and upheld financial and technical standards.

The project demonstrated strong national and global relevance, aligning with Mongolia's constitutional and policy mandates on environment and sustainable development. It effectively supported several strategic national plans and priorities, and contributed to international frameworks including the SDGs, UNDP strategies, GEF focal areas, and the GBF.

The project was effectively implemented, achieving most targets with strong results in species conservation and PA expansion, legal reform, community-based rangeland and forest management, and livelihood improvements. The project, though complex and multi-dimensional, has been effectively implemented. It successfully achieved majority of its planned activities and yielded substantial results in some key areas. Of the 16 indicators, targets of 11 have been fully achieved including five that surpassed their respective targets, while two have been nearly achieved, and one partially achieved. Assessment of two indicators are pending due to non-availability of final data. Notable achievements were made in strengthening the legal framework, conserving endangered/ indicator species and their habitats, expanding protected areas, and promoting community-based PA management. Significant achievements were also observed in reducing rangeland and forest degradation, alongside improving and diversifying local livelihoods of herder groups and FUGs.

The project demonstrated a notable level of adaptability and resourcefulness in its implementation strategy and progressive implementation improvements leading to achievement of most of the planned activities despite initial delays and operational challenges. It responded to evolving challenges – including COVID-19 – by revising targets, refining institutional strategies, and increasing communication and outreach. Strategic shifts, such as replacing PUGs with smaller herder groups and pursuing alternative legislation, strengthening staffing and stakeholder engagement, progressively improved implementation and delivery of results overcoming initial disruptions and delays.

Project sustainability is moderately likely across financial, socio-economic, institutional, and environmental dimensions. Strong government co-financing, community-based investments, and promising livelihood outcomes -- such as job creation and income growth -- support long-term viability. Institutional alignment with national policies and capacity-building efforts further reinforce sustainability. However, challenges persist in maintaining technical interventions, scaling private sector engagement and strengthening market linkages, and achieving financial self-reliance of Local Protected Areas within the projected timeframe. Ecological risks related to wildlife translocation require rigorous monitoring and expert guidance.

B. Stakeholder Engagement

The project demonstrated a very high level of stakeholder engagement across national and local levels, fostering broad-based partnerships to achieve the project objectives and outcomes. Through inclusive structures and locally embedded coordination, stakeholders particularly at the local level showed a strong sense of ownership and active involvement in project implementation.

The project was executed by MECC as the Implementing Partner in accordance with the National Implementation Modality, based on the Standard Basic Assistance Agreement between the Government of Mongolia and UNDP. As the IP, MECC was responsible and accountable for managing the project, including monitoring and evaluating project interventions, achieving project outcomes, and ensuring the effective use of GEF/UNDP resources.

The PIU was established with its office at the Freshwater Resources and Nature Conservation Center under MECC for the day-to-day management of project operations and funds, programmatic oversight and backstopping, work planning and budgeting, monitoring and reporting of project progress, and coordination and liaison with project partners and other key stakeholders.

The project was officially launched through a national-level multi-stakeholder inception workshop that brought together 83 participants representing various national-level stakeholders, as well as key stakeholders from aimags and soums within the project area. The workshop offered stakeholders the opportunity to understand the project's strategic approach and plans, review key project information, provide input, and lay the foundation for further stakeholder engagement. Following the national-level launch, aimag-level inception workshops were held in each of the four project aimags to introduce project plans and activities locally and to establish aimag-level Project Cooperation Teams (PCTs) and soum-level Sustainable Development Councils (SDCs). The local inception workshops engaged a total of 193 participants.

At the upstream management level, the PB involved senior representatives from MECC, MOFALI, relevant line departments, aimag governments within the project area, and cofinancing partners. For technical oversight and guidance, the project established a Technical Committee (TC) that initially comprised a wide group of experts from multiple agencies and was later streamlined for efficiency and coordination to a core team of 8 or 9 specialists drawn from key departments within MECC and MoFALI, as well as from UNDP and the PIU.

At the aimag level, the local project coordinators closely engaged with the Aimag Governor’s Offices and relevant line departments and agencies. The aimag-level PCTs were composed of representatives from all relevant aimag departments and agencies to oversee, review, and provide guidance and decisions related to project work plans and budgets for their respective landscapes.

At the local level, the project worked in close coordination with soum governors, bag governors, and relevant soum officials – particularly those from the environment and agriculture divisions, as well as inter-soum forestry units – to implement project activities. The soum-level SDCs, established to oversee, review, and provide guidance and decisions related to project work plans and budgets for the respective soums, were composed of representatives from relevant soum divisions and units. With the active support of local government institutions, the project engaged herder groups and FUGs in a broad range of activities, including livelihood improvement and diversification, sustainable pasture and forest management, community awareness and skills development training, and wildlife conservation and monitoring. In total, the project directly supported 225 herders' groups and 15 forest users' groups across the four project landscapes. Implementation of field activities was managed and coordinated by locally recruited field staff, comprising aimag-level local project coordinators and soum facilitators, providing a locally rooted structure for active stakeholder engagement.

With respect to central-level stakeholders, the project coordinated with MOFALI on livestock husbandry, value chain development, and income-generating activities. Collaboration with ALMGAC and NAMEM focused on rangeland monitoring, carrying capacity assessments, and environmental database enhancement.

Through contractual arrangements, the project engaged leading scientific and technical institutions, including the Institute of Biology, the Institute of Geography and Geology of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, the Training Institute of Forestry under the Mongolian University of Science and Technology, and the National University of Mongolia, for conservation research, training, and studies relevant to project components 2 and 3.

National NGOs such as the Society of Mammalogy, Ranger Association, NFPUG, and the Center for Policy Research, as well as international NGOs including Share Mongolia and the Zoological Society of London, collaborated with the project on shared priorities related to biodiversity conservation, green development, sustainable livelihoods, and capacity building of herders and local stakeholders.

In the private sector, a few partnerships were formed to link conservation, sustainable financing and livelihood improvement. These included partnership with Look Mongolia LLC – a private ecotourism company – to reinvest profits into LPA management, and partnership with Tselmeg Orkhon Cooperative to advance meat value chain development.

The project also supported the MSCP in piloting a collaborative sustainable value chain project, which included the introduction of modern traceability systems and sustainable production practices to enhance market access. Key partners in this initiative included the Mongolian Wool and Cashmere Association, NFPUG, and the Sustainable Fiber Alliance.

While overall stakeholder engagement was strong, a key gap was identified in the limited engagement of non-government co-financing partners and the insufficient strategic synergies with their respective projects and initiatives.

C. Gender Equality

The project was recognized as a GEN2 gender marker initiative for its potential to generate outputs that significantly advance gender equality. During the design phase, a gender analysis was conducted and a Gender Action Plan (GAP) was developed. The analysis explored gender dynamics across project landscapes in terms of labor division and decision-making within households, access and control over natural resources, community-level decision-making, leadership and participation in community activities, and prevalence of single-headed households.

The GAP proposed clear gender-responsive actions, indicators, and targets to promote equal opportunity and participation in all project activities including training, consultation processes, and livelihood interventions. It also emphasized the application of gender-sensitive approaches in planning and engagement efforts to ensure that project design and implementation were inclusive and responsive to the distinct needs and contributions of both women and men. The GAP also recommended institutional measures to support gender mainstreaming in the project. This included appointment of a gender focal point within the PIU to lead, oversee, and report on gender integration efforts at the national level, designating aimag-level local coordinators to monitor and report gender mainstreaming progress at the local level, recruitment of a gender specialist to deliver targeted gender training to PIU staff, field teams, and local stakeholders, while also providing technical support for integrating gender issues in project implementation plans.

In parallel, the PRF integrated gender-disaggregated targets across both objective and outcome level indicators, reflecting a strategic commitment to gender equality although the full potential of gender integration was not realized (see subsection 3.1.1, PRF analysis). Gender-integrated indicators/targets included: equal number of women and men direct beneficiaries (Indicator 1); equal number of job creation for women and men (Indicator 14a); improvement of annual incomes of both women- and men-headed households (Indicator 14b).

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Guided by the GAP, the project carried out gender mainstreaming throughout implementation. The M&E specialist was designated as the gender focal point within the PIU, while a gender specialist was hired to deliver gender mainstreaming training to PIU staff, field teams, and local stakeholders, and to provide technical support for integrating gender aspects into planning. Additionally, aimag-level local coordinators were assigned to lead gender mainstreaming efforts at the local level.

To build stakeholder capacity, gender training was provided to community workers, pastureland and livestock specialists, rangers and other local stakeholders. PIU and field staff also progressively received targeted gender training. Project institutional mechanisms gradually improved gender representation: in 2024, women accounted for 52% of PIU and local staff, 15% of PB members, 36% of the TC, 38.9% of aimag-level PCT members, and 41% of soum-level SDC members13 .

A participatory and inclusive approach was maintained across all trainings, meetings, and consultations. To break participation barriers, the project created conducive conditions – for instance, accommodation of children at consultation events – to ensure that women can actively participate in and contribute to planning and implementation of project activities.

In conformity with the PRF, the APRs and PIRs consistently reported gender-disaggregated data against targets for relevant indicators. As of June 2025, the project directly benefitted 9,270 women, i.e. 43.7% of the total 21,225 direct beneficiaries14 -- falling short of the 50% target set in the PRF, the gap reflecting local demographic realities. Although the PRF included gender income equality as a key indicator, mid-term household income surveys revealed marked disparities. While women-headed households experienced a 9% increase in annual income compared to baseline figures – surpassing the mid-term target of 3% -- the gains were significantly lower than those of men-headed households, which saw a 24% increase during the same period. This disproportionate growth reflects socio-economic challenges limiting the ability of households headed by women (unmarried/ widowed) to fully benefit from livelihood interventions. Such households require more targeted and gender-transformative support.

Nonetheless, within the scope and demographic realities of the project, the TE noted that the project delivered meaningful benefits to women. Field interviews highlighted that the reduction in livestock numbers through project interventions has significantly eased the lives of women who are involved in herding and processing dairy whilst also carrying out household tasks, freeing up time for other activities such as alternative livelihoods. The evaluators also observed high female engagement in income-generating activities, such as agroforestry nursery and probiotic dairy processing, underscoring the project's positive impact on women's lives and economic opportunities.

On the UN Gender Results Effectiveness Scale, the project is rated as gender-targeted, indicating a clear commitment to gender equality in its design and delivery. This rating is based on the observation that the emphasis of the project was on equal opportunity and participation, and equal number of women and men beneficiaries from training and livelihood interventions.

D. Knowledge Management

Progress in knowledge management and communication has been strong, marked by a wide portfolio of activities that disseminated best practices, amplified public awareness, and elevated the project's visibility at national and international levels. Following is the assessment of the progress of this outcome:

▪ The project implemented an extensive set of communication and knowledge management activities to raise awareness and disseminate best practices. It produced 150 news and informational pieces, 12 interviews, 63 video contents, 20 manuals and books, 8 feature stories and 11 editions of the project newspaper to create awareness about the project activities and highlight best practices and successes in biodiversity conservation, sustainable rangeland and forest management, and green development interventions.

▪ As part of the national 'Green Mongolia' campaign, the project contributed radio programs, showcasing best practices in lamb fattening and the implementation of an eco-friendly herdsman award system.

▪ The project also strategically leveraged annual environmental events, including World Wildlife Day and the International Day of Biodiversity, to showcase its initiatives. Participation in key national events, such as the 2nd National Forum of Rangers and the international forum on Climate Change and Children and Youth, amplified its outreach.

▪ To increase international visibility and awareness, the project contributed information and insights to the Global Land Outlook report and the UNCCD-COP16 newsletter. It also shared video content through the official UNCCD-COP16 YouTube Channel, showcasing project activities and achievements on the ground.

III. Core Indicators

Indicator 1 Terrestrial protected areas created or under improved management

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
	2081646	1524574.17	1200000

Indicator 1.1 Terrestrial Protected Areas Newly created

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
	940000	1096604.57	1200000

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Total Ha (Expected at PIF)	Total Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
				940,000.00	1,096,604.57	1,200,000.00

Indicator 1.2 Terrestrial Protected Areas Under improved Management effectiveness

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)
	1141646	427969.6	

Name of the Protected Area	WDPA ID	IUCN Category	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Total Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Total Ha (Achieved at TE)	METT score (Baseline at CEO Endorsement)	METT score (Achieved at MTR)	METT score (Achieved at TE)
				1,141,646.00	427,969.60				

Indicator 3 Area of land and ecosystems under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
	345000	733569	1130000

Indicator 3.1 Area of degraded agricultural lands under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
Rangeland and pasture		300,000.00	653,069.00	610,000.00

Indicator 3.2 Area of forest and forest land under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)
	45,000.00	80,500.00	520,000.00

Indicator 3.3 Area of natural grass and woodland under restoration

Disaggregation Type	Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 3.4 Area of wetlands (including estuaries, mangroves) under restoration

Ha (Expected at PIF)	Ha (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Ha (Achieved at MTR)	Ha (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 6 Greenhouse Gas Emissions Mitigated

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (direct)			2176925	6255800
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (indirect)				

Indicator 6.1 Carbon Sequestered or Emissions Avoided in the AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (direct)			2,176,925	6,255,800
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting				
Duration of accounting				

Indicator 6.2 Emissions Avoided Outside AFOLU (Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use) Sector

Total Target Benefit	(At PIF)	(At CEO Endorsement)	(Achieved at MTR)	(Achieved at TE)
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (direct)				
Expected metric tons of CO_2e (indirect)				
Anticipated start year of accounting				
Duration of accounting				

Indicator 6.3 Energy Saved (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Total Target Benefit	Energy (MJ) (At PIF)	Energy (MJ) (At CEO Endorsement)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at MTR)	Energy (MJ) (Achieved at TE)
Target Energy Saved (MJ)				

Indicator 6.4 Increase in Installed Renewable Energy Capacity per Technology (Use this sub-indicator in addition to the sub-indicator 6.2 if applicable)

Technology	Capacity (MW) (Expected at PIF)	Capacity (MW) (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at MTR)	Capacity (MW) (Achieved at TE)

Indicator 11 People benefiting from GEF-financed investments

	Number (Expected at PIF)	Number (Expected at CEO Endorsement)	Number (Achieved at MTR)	Number (Achieved at TE)
Female		12,807	2,953	9,270
Male		12,806	4,535	11,985
Total	**0**	**25,613**	7,488	**21,255**

IV: Co Financing

Sources of Co-financing	Name of Co-financier	Type of Co-financing	Investment Mobilized	Anticipated at CEO($)	Materialized at MTR($)	Materialized at TE($)
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Environment and Tourism	Grant		28,000,000.00	5,852,563.20	30,405,407.00
Recipient Country Government	Ministry of Food Agriculture and Light Industry	Grant		8,000,000.00	2,104,144.69	8,627,342.00
Recipient Country Government	Zavkhan aimag Governor's Office	Grant		212,700.00	168,091.30	496,451.00
Recipient Country Government	Gobi-Altai aimag Governor's Office	Grant		288,750.00	400,886.52	660,475.00
Recipient Country Government	Arkhangai aimag Governor's Office	Grant		291,910.00	374,357.83	701,688.00
Recipient Country Government	Bayankhongor aimag Governor's Office	Grant		30,000.00	56,200.76	288,755.00
Other	World Wildlife Fund	Grant		500,000.00	491,166.00	491,166.00
Other	Wildlife Conservation Society Mongolia	Grant		500,000.00		
Other	The Nature Conservancy	Grant		350,000.00	45,756.00	
Donor Agency	KfW - Kreditanstalt fuer Wiederaufbau	Grant		336,357.00	307,756.00	
Private Sector	Arig Bank	In-kind		420,000.00		
GEF Agency	UNDP	Grant		150,000.00		

GEF Agency	UNDP	In-kind			123,000.00	
Total Co-financing				**39,079,717.00**	**123,000.00**	**41,671,284.00**

Comments

V: ENVIRONMENTAL AND SOCIAL SAFEGUARDS

Overall Project/Program Risk Classification

PIF	CEO Endorsement/Approval	MTR	TE
		Medium/Moderate	Medium/Moderate

Measures to address identified risks and impacts
See Table 8 in the TE

VI. ANNEX

Uploaded Document

Document Category	Prefix	Title
M and E Document	Terminal Evaluation (TE)	GEF9389_UNDP5784_FY26_TE_UNDP_Mongolia_MFA_FSP