

**DRAFT AGENDA TO ORGANIZE A PROMOTION CAMPAIGN ‘PROTECTING WILD CAMEL GENETIC
DISTINCTIVENESS’
IN THE GREAT GOBI ‘A’ STRICTLY PROTECTED AREA AS PART OF
“MY GREEN MONGOLIA” (MGM)**

BACKGROUND

The ZSL has been working for almost two decades in Mongolia to conserve endangered species and their habitats that are not only of global conservation importance but also underpin the livelihoods and cultural identities of Mongolia’s nomadic communities, particularly the young generation. A team of the ZSL does this through strong partnerships with public and private sector organizations, local communities, conservation experts, and fellow national and international NGOs.

In this regard, ZSL Mongolia supported the nationwide campaign on Environmental Education and Communication (EEC) from its beginning. It became one of the first member organizations when the “My Green Mongolia” (MGM) campaign officially launched on October 18, 2022, by signing in the MOU among other organizations active in the field of environment. Since its establishment, the ZSL team has actively participated in every intervention run by the MGM campaign, namely a series of EEC trainings, annual and quarterly stakeholders’ meetings, and workshops, and has been contributing to the improvement and promotion of the campaign at the national level.

This agenda is a follow-up to the training ‘Community Theatre for EEC’ organized on August 21-23, 2023. During the training, a joint team composed of representatives from the ZSL Country Office in Mongolia, the Ecological Education Center of the National University of Mongolia, and the Hanns Seidel Foundation in Mongolia initiated a long-run promotion of ‘Wild camel conservation in the Great Gobi’ based on the group work through the EEC tool - ‘10 steps to organize environmental campaign/events’.

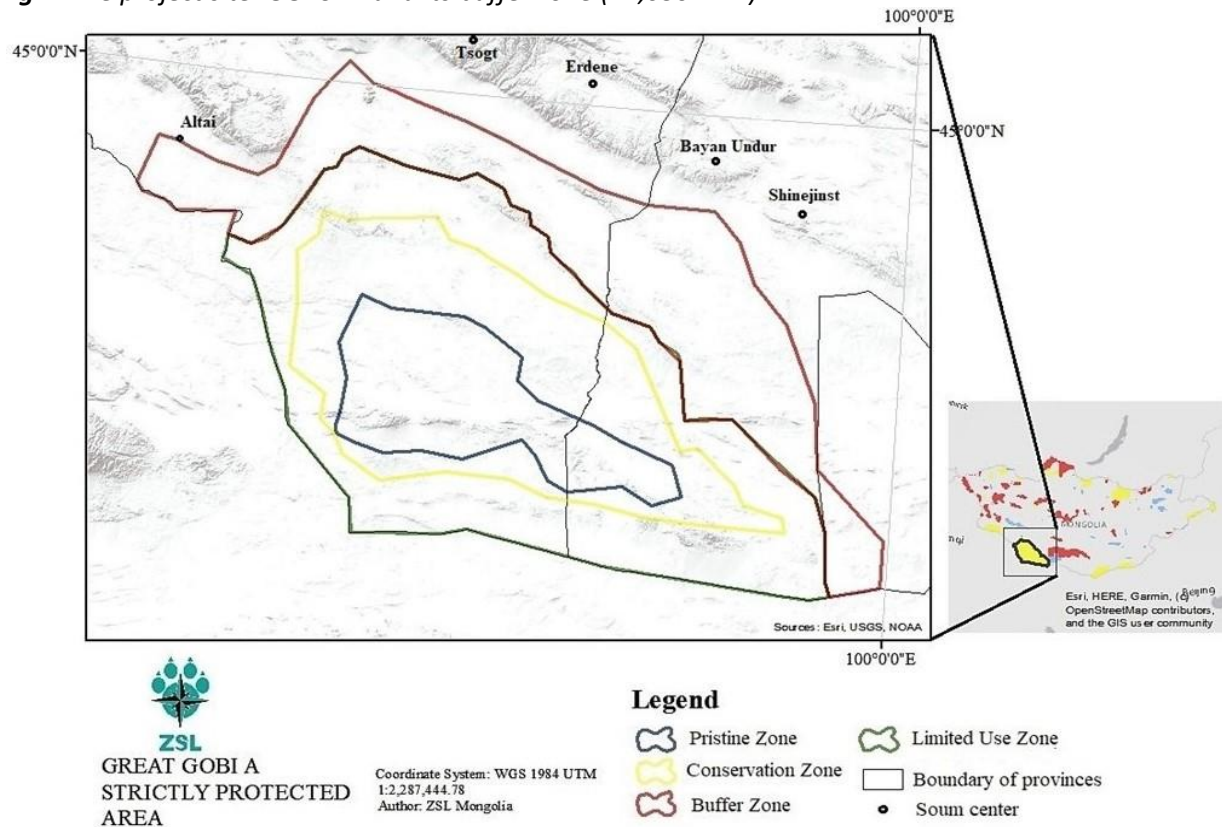
PURPOSE & CHALLENGE

The main purpose of the proposed campaign ‘Protecting wild camel genetic distinctiveness’ in the Great Gobi is to increase awareness of the communities in Buffer Zone of the Great Gobi A Strictly Protected Area (GGASPA) as well as general public of the threat to the wild camel gene pool by hybridizing wild camels with domestic camels in order to produce racing camels.

Since 2018, the ZSL Mongolia has been working in the GGASPA for wild camel conservation, the last remaining habitat for this EDGE¹-listed species. Along the wild camels, the GGASPA’s 44,630 km² desert steppe hosts critically endangered wild species like Asiatic ass, Eurasian lynx, Siberian ibex, and the Gobi bear, to name a few. The Great Gobi is also home to pastoral communities that carry Mongolian nomadic traditions and cultures, but much disadvantaged in accessing information and learning due to their remoteness and isolation. Thus, the ZSL Mongolia aims to support Gobi herder communities and other stakeholders as critical partners for conserving precious Gobi species, including wild camel.

¹ Evolutionarily Distinct, Globally Endangered Species

Fig 1. The project site: GGASPA and its buffer zone (44,630 km²)



A recent wild camel study (Jemmett et al., 2022) highlighted the declined wild camel population (**454 individuals**) in Mongolia. Besides, the wild camel is not a descendant of the domestic bactrian camels as commonly believed. Anna Jemmett, one of the few wild camel researchers clarified the difference between these two species: *Camelus ferus* versus and *Camelus bactrianus*. She clarified that the **Wild camel** (Mongolian: хавтгай, khavtgai – ‘flat head’; Chinese: 野骆驼, ye luo tuo – ‘wild camel’) is a **separate camel species different from the domestic camels**, and warned that such name confusion risks masking the plight of the few remaining wild camels with the visible abundance of the domesticated species. Wild camel is also an **umbrella species of the Great Gobi wildlife**; thus, the conservation of wild camel is benefitted by other species in its habitat range, including Asiatic wild ass, Black-tailed gazelle, Argali sheep, Gobi bear, Snow Leopard, etc.,

The Wild Camel Protection Foundation (WCPF) started a captive wild camel breeding programme in 2003 with the establishment of the **Wild Camel Breeding Centre at Zakhyn Us (water point)** in the Buffer Zone of the GGASPA. The center **with 34 wild camels** is now a unique opportunity for researchers to study this charismatic species but, it may also pause a **risk of endangering the genetic purity of wild camels**.



Wild camels in the Atas Inges Valley, Great Gobi in Sep, 22



Wild camels in the breeding center, Zahuin Us in Apr, 22

There are over **572 herder households with 9027 domestic camels** (totally **183'176 livestock** of 5 types) in the Buffer Zone, that can easily assimilate over 400 wild camels. In addition, the local herders with poor understanding and knowledge of threats to wild camels, make efforts for hybridizing their domestic camels with wild camels to get faster, stronger and good-looking camels.



Domestic camel in the Zahuin Us in Apr, 22

Therefore, the ZSL Mongolia is committed to work with Gobi Eco-club children, pastoral communities, government officers as well as public piloting the newly learned strategic EEC tools: **'10 steps to organize environmental campaign/events'** and **'theatrical performances for environmental campaign/events'** under the **'My Green Mongolia'** framework. This is our passion for nature and wildlife that drive us to contribute to the vision to create a **"world where wildlife thrives,"** which also includes Mongolia's precious wild species, such as wild camel. The team will undertake the campaign collaboratively with other partners, including GIZ, HZF, EC/NUM and local stakeholders.

TEN STEPS OF THE PROPOSED CAMPAIGN

Theme	Wild Camel Conservation (gene pool) in the Great Gobi		
Step	Question	Answer	What to do
1	What is a problem facing?	Cross breeding Camel racing	Survey: KAP etc.,
2	Who are the target groups?	Herders PA Administration Researchers Buffer Zone Council Soum Administration Eco-clubs	Training for the eco-clubs (7) and VSLKA groups (7) Survey among herders (572 HHs) Cooperation with PA Administration, researchers and donors Promotion for public (nationwide)

		VSLA groups	
3	What are the objectives?	To change KAP of the herders in regarding to the hybridization	Increase knowledge of 50-60% of total herders; Improve attitude of 30% of total herders; Improve 15% of total herders practice
4	What source need to do this?	Budget Duration Human resource	Estimated 10,000 euro. School year: (Sep, 23 to Jun, 24) Joint team of ZSL, GiZ, HZF, EC/NUM Trained eco-clubs (200 kids with 14 teachers) VSLA groups (201 herders) GGASPA Administration and researchers (42+) Collaborative Management Council of the Buffer Zone (13) 5 Soums Buffer Zone Council (in total 50)
5	Who are the donors/partners?	ZSL Mongolia MGM/SPACE/GiZ HZF EEC/NUM PA Administration/CMC Local Governments BZ soums' school (7) VSLA groups (7)	Initiator/Co-financer Main supporter/Co-financer Supporter to provide trainings, propaganda on nature conservation laws including ABS etc., Survey, training tool and trainings Logistics in the Great Gobi Promoters at the ground
6	What is a plan?	Give a main message	'Save the wild camels gene pool' Survey among the herders Training for eco-clubs One day event on Wild Camel during the Herders' Forum in Oct, 23 Photo poster of the public figure with a message Video content development and distribution via social and mass media Podcast etc.,

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