

Final Report

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Sustainable tourism development

Mongolia, Huvsgul Aimag, Murun

July 2011 – September 2011

Huvsgul Association of Tourism & Information (HATI)

SUMMARY

2011 GLEN Internship Project "Sustainable tourism development" was performed in a Mongolian NGO called Huvsgul Association of Tourism & Information (HATI) and took place between July 2011 and September 2011. GLEN tandem consisted of 2 participants from Germany (Christin Strehl) and Czech Republic (Tereza Swadoschová). 2011 GLEN tandem performed the 4th GLEN Internship within the Huvsgul Association of Tourism & Information NGO in Murun.

The **Huvsgul Association of Tourism & Information** NGO was founded in 2005 as a Tourist Information and Training Centre by Tseepil Gombojav. The aim of the organization is to provide services to local and international people, to develop a sustainable tourism strategy, to create cooperation for a sustainable tourism development within the community, to advertise and provide information, to give methodological advice related to tourism activities and to protect the interests of all entrepreneurs involved in tourism in the whole Huvsgul Aimag.

HATI is based in *Murun*, the capital city of **Huvsgul Aimag** (Huvsgul Region). Huvsgul Aimag can be found in the very north of Mongolia and is named after its landmark Lake Huvsgul. The whole Aimag is quite mountainous and waterful. The population of Murun city and its suburbs is to be said up to 36 000 inhabitants, due to the high fluctuation the number is changing everyday. The Murun city is truly the economic, logistic and cultural center of the Aimag.

MAIN REPORT

The project took place in **Murun** /Mörön/, Huvsgul Aimaig /Khövsgöl Aimag/ in the North of Mongolia. The Murun city is with the population between 30 000 - 40 000 inhabitants the fifth biggest town in Mongolia and it is the capital of Huvsgul Aimag. The main part of the *economy* in this town and its surroundings is based on small businesses, animal husbandry and agriculture and during high season also tourism related businesses. The *political situation* is stable. General *problems* in Mongolia, as well as in Murun, are lack of infrastructure, unemployment, economical and environmental problems as well as alcoholism. In general and according to my personal opinion, Murun is a *safe place*, usual awareness is required as in any other country.

Tourism plays an important role in development of the Huvsgul Region, **HATI - Huvsgul Association of Tourism & Information** /Khövsgöl ayalal medeel kholboo/contributes to this significantly. The **Tourist Information Center** (TIC) managed by HATI arranges and negotiates the contact between English speaking people visiting Mongolia and local entrepreneurs. HATI is supporting small businesses, networking small businesses and local freelancers (translators, guides etc.). In the future, HATI is planning to train and raise the qualification of local people related to tourism industry and assist in developing a strategy of sustainable tourism in Huvsgul Region. In 2011 the establishment of the Training Center has been planned in cooperation with another local NGO. Therefore, from the next year, two sections will be operated by HATI – Tourist and Training Centre. Last mentioned intention is, in my opinion, rather a dream than reality.

The Tourist Information Centre opens during the high season (from June/July – September) and provides

- information to tourists
- English courses
- conducts research on tourism in the region (accommodation, restaurants, drivers, private guides) and updates information
- designs and publishes tourist information materials
- develops and promotes a sustainable tourism vision for the region among businesses and local organizations as well as in the regional government

The main focus of the **2011 internship** was to actually create TIC for the time of the stay. For this, we could develop our own strategy, work plan and could come up with our own ideas, how to improve the Centre.

After the first meeting with Tseepil Gombojav in we designed an detailed internship work plan. We started with opening TIC (caused a lot of funny situation as we just arrived to Murun and did not have a wide knowledge about the area required for working in TIC and helping tourists), therefore we learned quite fast from the materials in the office about

the region, local habits and customs to answer various questions of incoming tourists. We also provided help with organizing the tours and trips or transport. The first challenging task was to manage this season TIC expenses including internet, office equipment and everyday expenses. Therefore, two levels of English Courses – Beginners (ELCB) and Intermediate (ELCI) were organized. In total 8 lessons (1,5 hour) per week. Our work tasks consisted of everyday work in TIC independently, teaching English Courses, conducting new researches and updating information, printing brochures and gathering material for webpages. We translated materials for local government (Flower Book). An important part was organizing permissions for tourists at the local government, support them in transport issues (organizing bus tickets, booking flights, etc.). The creation of HATI webpages was planned, but due to several problems (internet connection, electricity cut offs) was not finished. We took part as TIC at official meetings with members of international organisations such as UNDP and local government.

Working in TIC was an everyday learning process as well as interesting, due to the old technology office equipment required a little bit of patience. The atmosphere of the working place was relaxed and inspiring, we worked very independently. New ideas and improvements were always welcomed in HATI.

The accomodation for GLEN tandem was set up with a host family and it was a great possibility to understand the everyday life of local people and peoples habits.

Few **challenges** were faced during the 2011 GLEN Internship in Mongolia. Firstly, the visa problem occurred. We did not manage to organise the three month visa due to Mongolian visa policy. Working invitation and working permission is required for three month working visa, neither of those was received by 2011 GLEN participants. The only solution was found through two month tourist visa. A lack of funds of the organization was a challenge as well, therefore the English Course was set up and became a big part of the daily work.

CONCLUSION AND PERSPECTIVE

The GLEN Internship was a great experience for me and it definitely widened my perspectives. I see a great benefit in experiencing *mongolian life*, its rhythm and slowly becoming a part of it. The internship gave me many possibilities to get in touch with local people and culture. The local population very much welcomes the participants according to my personal experiences. Local people start to recognize the interns as long-term visible English speaking people, welcome them warmly and get easily in contact with them.

Working in the tourist office put me into a role of half foreigner and half local, which was definitely an interesting role. I also appreciate very much the new experience such as *tandem partnership*.

Concerning the **GE activity**, I have organized a photography exhibition followed by a discussion on several topics such as volunteering, Mongolia, etc. in a local theatre. Together with other 2011 GLEN participants a common GE activity is being planned. The GLEN Cycle definitely widened my own horizons, put me into a completely new environment of people and opened new topics for me. It has also an important educational impact on me. The preparation seminars were very informationally enriching and during them I learned and practised many new methods and skills. I would even more appreciate to deepen some of the preparatory seminar topics. The whole GLEN Cycle was an unforgettable enriching experience for me.