

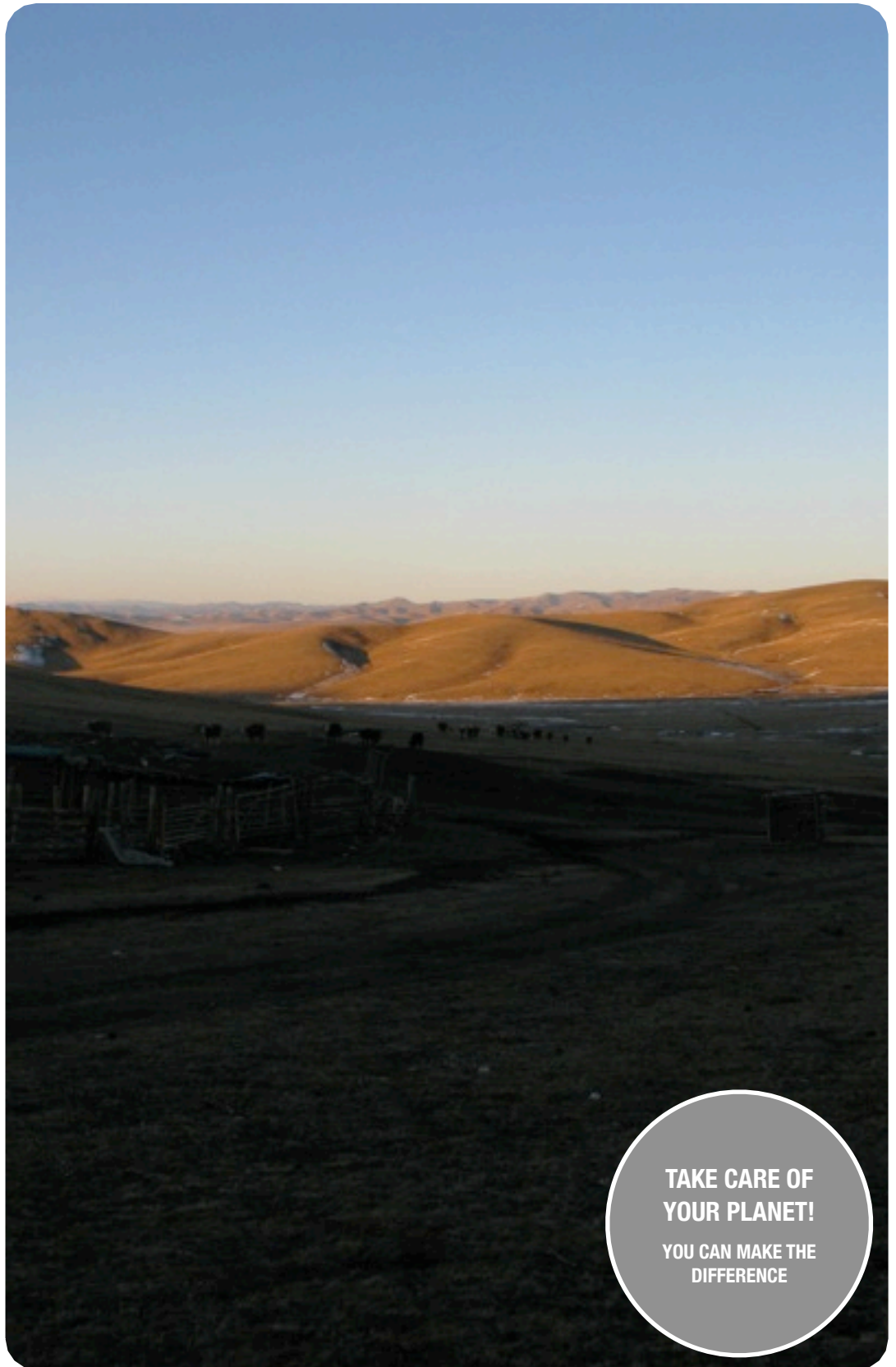
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WORLD
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TAKE CARE OF
YOUR PLANET!

YOU CAN MAKE THE
DIFFERENCE

URBAN SPRAWL OF MONGOLIA'S CAPITAL

The capital city of Mongolia, Ulan Batar, used to be surrounded by forest. Forests that still play an important role in keeping it a liveable

city. It keeps the desert away and protects the surrounding grasslands from the strong winds. The disappearing forests are a cause of urban sprawl and the use of fire wood.

As the population keeps on increasing; pressure on the surrounding habitat grows. The effects are large scale erosion, desertification, and loss off valuable grassland.

EROSION



WHAT IS EROSION?

Erosion is the decline of soil quality. It is a natural phenomenon in which wind and water play an important role. An example of this is a river that creates a gorge after millions of years. Deforestation, overgrazing, salination, and acidification are all examples of our impact.

Mongolia is one of the countries in the world with an almost untouched amount of nature. A small population on a large surface has had a low impact on the country's resources. The traditional life style of the nomadic families (50% of the population) has kept numbers of live stock reasonable under control.

Urban sprawl

Ulan Batar is growing, since many nomadic families search for work. The rapid growth of the population goes along with the expansion of the city. Suburbs are built on the forested hills around the capital. Most people use coals and fire wood which they harvest from the forests. The deforested hills are vulnerable for land slides in the raining season. With these land slides arable soil disappears.

Changing the resource

In order to reduce the amount of fire woods that is used in homes, the government will launch a project to promote the use of gas. In rural areas this could be natural gas from waste of live stock. The Saxaul tree (*Haloxylon persicum*) is one of the best burning woods of Mongolia, but the species is threatened. With this project the species could be saved. In the cities natural gas would be a solution for

deforestation and air pollution in Ulan Batar. The remaining threat will be the ongoing urban sprawl. So far the Mongolian government has not been successful in reducing migration to the capital.

Amount of cattle got out of control

Before the communist party took over control in Mongolia; the number of live stock was sustainable for the steppe. Overgrazing became a problem when production became more important during communist times. This resulted in large areas becoming desert. Desertification still is a problem, since deserts always tend to grow. Some areas of the steppe are closed for grazing animals, so that the steppe can recover. Also there is an annual count of live stock. Nomadic families are only allowed to have a specific amount of live stock per square kilometer. With this measure the government hopes to get a sustainable live stock population back in Mongolia.

The battle against erosion continues

Reducing the area of the desert and stopping desertification is very difficult. Wind and rain are strong and only are suitable for special grass species. The good news is that these areas are still manageable. Large areas still are in good condition and are kept this way.



Once valuable
grassland