



Newsletter  
September 2019 | Issue 02

## Welcome to the Gobi Framework Newsletter No. 2

The Gobi Framework project has had a busy six months. We launched the Central Asia phase of the project in Bishkek in April, completed fieldwork in five mining fieldsites – two in Mongolia and three in Kyrgyzstan – during the spring, have run training and capacity building sessions, and have presented our initial findings at international conferences. We have also had two papers accepted for publication. The summer has been spent transcribing, translating and analysing the fieldwork data and members of the Mongolian, Kyrgyz and Oxford teams will meet in September in Kyrgyzstan to discuss fieldwork findings from both countries. This will give us the chance to start developing the content and format of the mediation framework, which will be our priority for the months ahead. Here we share some of the events, photos and findings from the past six months.



Sukhbaatar, Mongolia



Naryn, Kyrgyzstan



Gurvantes, Mongolia

*'Our interviewees had similar issues and were eager to know about the next steps of the Gobi Framework project . . . They want us to return and assist the community with dispute resolution.'* -Almaz Tchoreev, Researcher, Kyrgyzstan

The **Gobi Framework** for sustainable infrastructure partnerships promotes inclusive economic development and social welfare in the context of Chinese mega infrastructure initiatives in Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Please see the website for more details:

<https://gobiframework.ouce.ox.ac.uk/>



## Central Asia Launch | April 2019

The launch of the Kyrgyzstan phase of the project was held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan in April 2019. This gave an opportunity for the Oxford team and our Kyrgyz Partner the University of Central Asia (UCA) to present the Gobi Framework to NGOs, government agencies, academics, businesses and embassy staff. Organised by Co-I Kemel Toktomushev the event drew 60+ people.



*'Community-level resource conflicts in mining-affected localities stall existing projects, deter potential new investments and exacerbate the political situation in the country. It is very important to build relationships of trust and cooperation between all engaged stakeholders'* Kemel Toktomushev

## Fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan | June-July 2019

Fieldwork in Kyrgyzstan took place in June and July 2019. Our research team of Nazgul Aksarieva, Almaz Tchorev and Baimat Niiazaliev conducted >150 interviews at three field sites – Solton-Sary, Naryn; Kichi-Chaarat, Chatkal; and Ishtamberdy, Ala-Buka. The process required extensive planning and permissions. The timeliness was essential as the Solton-Sary site has been now been closed due to local protests (<https://youtu.be/wjpb33l2df4>) followed by strong condemnation by the Chinese government. The events reflect the immediacy of the project themes of conflict resolution and clear communication between stakeholders, exemplifying the need for an effective mediation model.



Full Gold mine site, Ala-Buka. Kg.



3 Kyrgyz sites. Naryn on right.

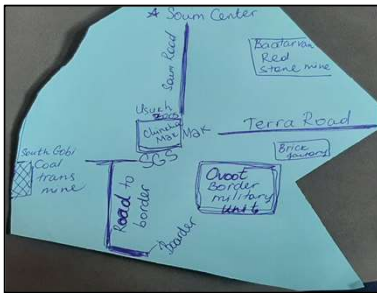


Interviewing – Naryn, Kg.



## Fieldwork in Mongolia | April to May 2019

Extensive fieldwork was conducted in two sites in Mongolia in spring 2019. Byamba Ichinkhorloo, Tsesu Purevsuren and Nadia Mijiddorj focused on Gurvantes Soum which has experienced a dramatic increase in large mines. The district has Mongolian, Chinese and Korean investment and includes mining operations owned by Mongolian Members of Parliament. As home to 9+ significant mines, Gurvantes is a contentious region where several protests have occurred, with one against Coal Trans taking place in the capital Ulaanbaatar. The AGM mine for copper, gold and zinc, is 10 times larger than the Oyu Tolgoi site. Compensation is often discussed with each mine using different standards.



Mapping mining



Gurvantes soum governor



The Guvantes landscape

*Tsendsuren Purevsuren participated in a major Press Conference in Gurvantes. Covered by 20 media outlets, the Gobi Framework project was explained and Tsesu answered questions from the journalists present.*



*'... Gurvantes was totally different than other Gobi areas. It is very hilly. And there are many mining companies operating. The fieldwork was very interesting because each household in the corners of the mountains have different issues depending on the different mining. We had a chance to observe one press conference in Gurvantes called Responsible mining which was against South Gobi Coal Trans Company.'* -Tsendsuren Purevsuren

Sukhbaatar in the eastern Gobi was chosen as the second Mongolian fieldsite. The dynamics were different to Gurvantes with TSAIRT, the largest mine, having good relations with the community and local government. However, small mines near the Chinese border had poor reputations and bad environmental records. The province has cooperation agreements with TSAIRT and most mines; these promote openness and provide funds for Aimag development. In rural areas of the Aimag mining politics and protest are contentious issues.



Tsairt mine from the inside (l) and outside (r).





## Conferences, Exchange, Training

The European Society for Central Asian Studies (ESCAS) held its biannual conference in June at Exeter University in June 2019. Project Co-I's Byambabaatar Ichinkhorloo (pictured) and Kemel Toktomushev presented their research in the 'Central Asian Encounters with China's Belt and Road Initiative' organised by Troy Sternberg. 243 scholars took part in what is one of the most influential international Central Asian conferences.

In August 2019, the Mongolia team organized a Knowledge Exchange with local NGOs (pictured right). Ariell Ahearn presented findings from the Mongolia research at the IUAES conference in Poznan, Poland and Troy Sternberg gave a talk on conflict mediation to Chinese Supreme Court Judges in Oxford.

Training on research methods was provided to staff at UCA students at AUCA and Afghan civil servants (right) in Bishkek.



## Looking Ahead | Autumn 2020

October sees the launch of the Oxford Central Asian Network, the Life in Kyrgyzstan conference hosted by UCA, development of the project book and discussion with animators and web specialists about the model platform. Two workshop on compensation and community development agreements will be held in Mongolia in collaboration with Steppes without Borders. Continued interview analysis linking Kyrgyz and Mongolian findings, paper writing by Co-Is and researchers and planning our American Association of Geography 2020 session and Oxford Desert Conference and will take place in autumn.

*'We hope that this project will help infrastructure stakeholders communicate effectively with each other on conflicts . . . and contribute to academic discussions about its fundamental issues'.*

-I. Byambabaatar

## New Project Publications:

- ❖ Sternberg, T., Ahearn, A. and McConnell, F., (forthcoming 2019). 'From conflict to a Community Development Agreement: A South Gobi Solution'. *Community Development Journal*. [10.1093/cdj/bsz018](https://doi.org/10.1093/cdj/bsz018)
- ❖ Lezak, S., Ahearn, A., McConnell, F., Sternberg, T. (2019) 'Frameworks for conflict mediation in international infrastructure development: A comparative overview and critical appraisal', *Journal of Cleaner Production*, [doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.118099](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jclepro.2019.118099).

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