Welcome to the Gobi Framework Newsletter No. 3

The Gobi Framework project began its second year with a joint team meeting at Lake Issyk Kul, Kyrgyzstan. This provided an opportunity for the Mongolian and Kyrgyz teams to come together to discuss field work and research, compare analysis and to develop future plans. Both teams have been working with governments to improve mining legislation and community engagement (see page 2). Recognition has come from the Kyrgyzstan Office of the President and the Mongolian Cabinet Secretariat. In seeking to further collaboration between Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan on sustainable mining Ariell was awarded a £24,000 Open Fellowship to bring Mongolian and Kyrgyz officials to Oxford for a week of talks and intensive training. Given the ongoing pandemic this event, which was scheduled for late March and which will contribute to strengthening national governance as a key project legacy, will be postponed. The team has also been busy developing a project book proposal for an edited volume on Mining lifecycles in Central Asia and Mongolia, and continuing to develop content and design for the project’s mobile app.

The Gobi Framework constitutes three research teams working in Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Please see the website for more details: https://gobiframework.ouce.ox.ac.uk/
Mongolia Updates

Writing Research Grant Proposals Training Workshop

January 2020, National University of Mongolia
Over 130 people attended a workshop run by Ariell Ahearn that covered developing a research idea and current funding opportunities in the UK. 100+ streamed on Facebook.

Mining Compensation Workshop
December 3, 2019. Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

This workshop, organised by Bayarsaikhan N. of Steppes without Borders and the Gobi Framework project aimed to find common ground between mining stakeholders. The workshop featured stakeholder presentations and round-table discussions. As a result of the event, participants achieved mutual understanding on compensation issues and were encouraged to collaborate further. Our team is working on a documentary based on the workshop discussions to raise awareness on mining compensation and resettlement and clarify public misconceptions.

Mongolian Government Working Group

The project team is working with the Mongolian Government to initiate a new Policy Impact Group. The group is led by S. Munkhsuren, Chief of Strategic Management and Coordination in the Cabinet Secretariat. Group members include the Chiefs of Mining and Geology Strategic Management, Natural Resource Management, Environment, Geology and Mining Inspection; advisor of Strategic Management and coordination. Bayarsaikhan, Head of Steppes Without Borders NGO and Nomondalai are supporting from Gobi Framework team. The focus of the group’s activities will be to support developing and reflecting Social and Health Impact Assessment, compensation and resettlement issues in relevant regulations. Oxford’s School of Geography will serve as an advisor.
Kyrgyzstan Updates

Designing App Content in Central Asia

Team members from Oxford, Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan met for a project research retreat in Chon Sary-Oi, Kyrgyzstan in September 2019. The Mongolian and Kyrgyz team presented key findings from field research in six mining sites and the team pooled ideas to develop the content and format of our progressive app. This work has continued in the months since, with the teams working with designers to establish a user friendly format to share findings.

Whilst participating In University of Central Asia’s ‘Art of Neighborhoods: Border Dynamics, Natural Resources, and Mobility in Central Asia’ conference (February 2020) Troy spoke on how positive experiences from Mongolia’s mining sector could be applied to Kyrgyzstan. Additional engagement with the government’s policy think tank provided new ideas for both conceptual and outreach efforts during 2020.

KYRGYZSTAN – Office of the President

The University of Central Asia (UCA) was recognised by the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on December 20th 2019 for its significant contribution to the implementation of the Open Government Partnership in the Kyrgyzstan, specifically related to the disclosure of mining industry data. The project team’s findings determined that local communities and employees of mining companies need more information on the volume of reserves, extraction, processing and exportation of minerals, employment opportunities, and environmental and health impacts. The team will continue to work closely with the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic on this initiative.

FUNDING ALERT: The UK’s research funding body UKRI held a special workshop in Bishkek to encourage Central Asian institutions to apply for its new ‘Conflict Intersections’ call. Gobi Framework was identified by UKRI as a successful GCRF case study. Call information: ahrc.ukri.org/funding/apply-for-funding/current-opportunities/gcrf-conflict-intersections/gcrf-conflict-intersections-pre-call-v2docx/
Looking ahead: spring/summer 2020

• BOOK: The team has developed a project book proposal for an edited volume on *Mining lifecycles in Central Asia and Mongolia* that will include 12 academic chapters, each matched with ‘Notes from the Field’ that gives voice to community experts and herders. The book sections will cover: 1) Exploring mining - initiating mining infrastructure 2) Extracting information - Community engagement with mining, and; 3) Rehabilitating land and society.

Mobile App Development for Information Sharing

The team is in the midst of planning and developing a mobile app. Local Mongolian and Kyrgyz residents who are affected by mining in their home regions will be the core audience of the app. It will include information on laws, how to make complaints, and e-training. We are working with our partner researchers and NGOs in Mongolia including People Centered Conservation and Steppes without Borders to produce content. App trialling is planned for the summer months. We are happy to hear from you with any ideas or suggestions!

Kemel and Troy speaking on Citizen Science at UCA. Kyrgyz Ex-President Roza Otunbayeva (front) listens.

The current Coronavirus means that travel plans for the months ahead are on hold. We wish our team members, collaborators and friends well during this difficult time.

Ariell Ahearn, MNB World Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia