

# Gobi Framework

Mediation model for sustainable infrastructure development



## Gobi Framework update: Research in the time of COVID-19

Newsletter 4  
September 2020

The COVID-19 pandemic rearranged our project from a summer of fieldwork to home-based research and writing. Adapting to solitary work, Skype meetings and Zoom conferences has made for a most unusual year with no end in sight. We hope our team, researchers, collaborators and readers are well.

The highlight of the last 6 months has been Ariell's OPEN Fellowship grant from the University of Oxford that established a Joint Working Group with the Cabinet Secretariat of Mongolia to design a policy proposal and methodology for Social Impact Assessment (SIA) that is currently absent in Mongolia. Originally scheduled to bring a team of 11 policymakers and researchers to Oxford in late March, the process was instead successfully conducted in Mongolia. A major workshop held in June in Mongolia with online participation from the UK presented ideas to the government, with the work continuing after the country's summer election hiatus. The Working Group's official support and civil society contributions are key to the SIA development and implementation in Mongolia.

### **Social Impact Assessment in the Mongolian Minerals Sector Training Workshop**

8-9 June 2020. Hosts: Gobi Framework, Steps Without Borders NGO.

In the last decade, the expansion of artisanal and large-scale mining in Mongolia has transformed the economy, patterns of land use, livelihoods and labour, and politics on multiple scales. Given these rapid changes, this workshop shared knowledge of best practices and developments related to the social impacts of mining; shared evidence on the social impacts of mining from field sites in Mongolia; and built sustainable partnerships between UK experts and policymakers in Mongolia.



Awarding  
workshop  
certificates

Workshop live:  
Jill Shankleman,  
Ariell Ahearn and  
Bayarsaikhan



The **Gobi Framework** constitutes research teams working in Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan. Please see the website for more details:

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

## Participants included:

Sector Management and Coordination - Cabinet Secretariat \* Geology and Mining Policy \*  
Ministries of: Mining and Heavy Industry \* Health \* Nature, Environment and Tourism\* Labour  
Departments: Environment & Natural Resources Management \* Population & Social Protection  
*Thanks to presenters:* Maral Bayaraa, Alastair Lees, Emma Wilson, Liz Fisher, Dawn Chatty, Jill Shankleman, Christian Rossi and Marc Tasse.



Herders meeting with  
Working Group in animal  
winter shelter

Mapping local  
mining impact



In July the Working Group and Steps Without Border NGO visited Dalanjargalan and Airag soums, Dornogovi Province to determine the social impact of mining and related infrastructure. The sites have a large number of mining exploitation and exploration licenses with local people being severely affected. Meetings with herders and local government representatives contributed to developing a management assessment methodology. The main goal was to present the process of developing such methodology and its brief content to the stakeholders, receive their feedback, and discover the social impact caused by mining and determine the countermeasure.

**Kyrgyzstan** – Kemel Toktomushev & Luke Grenfell-Shaw (UCA Visiting Lecturer) wrote a chapter for *Social License and Dispute Resolution in the Extractive Industries* based on 2019's fieldwork. Kemel then presented on BRI's 'decentred transnational practice and centred national discourse' in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan at the Global BRI workshop with Prof Heathershaw and S. Tokubayev.

The Kyrgyz team analyzed all existing legislation on mining in Kyrgyzstan for dissemination

## Other News:

Fiona and Ariell presented at the Royal Anthropological Institute and Royal Geographical Society's **virtual conference 'Anthropology and Geography: Dialogues Past, Present and Future'** in September 2020.

Their paper, titled 'Filling a state-shaped gap? The governance role of mining companies in Mongolia's southern Gobi' examines the extent to which mining companies fill a (perceived or real) governance gap in rural Mongolia.

**Gobi Framework Book** - *'The Impact of Mining Lifecycles in Mongolia and Kyrgyzstan: Political, Social, Environmental and Cultural Contexts'* will be published by Routledge with a 2021 target date. The edited volume prominently features Kyrgyz and Mongolian authors.

**Fostering Adaptive Governance and Resilience in Local Communities of Central Eurasia** – Ariell is leading Oxford's collaboration with Durham and Kent Universities on a project that examines the discrepancies between state-led infrastructures and locally imagined futures with the New Silk Roads.

**Mobile APP** – development work has started on the Gobi Framework's mobile phone app. After a series of meetings to communicate our ideas and audience, the technical side of the app is being built. We are adding information to trial the app in Kyrgyzstan and Mongolia this autumn.

**Funding Awards:** Oxford International Seed Fund: *Central Asian UK-EU Networking Forum* (£2670). This grant brings together researchers from Oxford, UK and EU to discuss ideas and funding collaboration.

Research England: *Upscaling community mediation from Central to Southeast Asia* (£9,300). Presents a series of project workshops on mining and Belt and Road Initiative impact in Myanmar, Cambodia and Malaysia. Both awards have been suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic

