



Hello,
my name is
Sukhgerel.

EXPERIENCES WITH COMMUNITY-LED RESEARCH: MONGOLIA

Sukhgerel Dugersuren is the Executive Director of OT Watch, a Mongolian organization that monitors the Oyu Tolgoi copper mine in the Gobi Desert, which has taken the grazing lands and water of nomadic herders. See Sukhgerel's story depicted in a graphic novel by Front Line Defenders: [bit.ly/FrontLineSukhgerel]

I work for an organization that supports nomadic communities in Mongolia, and ensures development institutions respect human and environmental rights.

Over the last few years, I have been working with nomadic herding communities that have been displaced by the Oyu Tolgoi and Tayan Nuur mines in Mongolia. Together with a local organization, we conducted community-led research to understand what people thought about the mines, and shared this information with the development institutions funding the projects.

The communities identified the research topic themselves. We sat down with the community of affected herders and identified the issues that were the most important to them. Resettlement and compensation were at the top of the list as communities had already lost their land to the mines. Everyone agreed that they wanted adequate compensation, and this became the objective of our advocacy. However, agreeing on what "adequate" meant needed some discussion!

Our first step was to hold trainings for the entire community on human rights and

relevant international standards. After this, our research team came together naturally and included 5 herders from the affected communities.

We supported the team by guiding them through the research process and providing them with more information about the impacts of mines and the policies of the development banks that were involved. We explained the purpose of the survey and the rationale behind each question. Because we were using a general survey template, there were questions that needed further explanation or adaptation to fit the Mongolian context.

Since we were working with nomadic communities, it was difficult to gather the entire community together in one place. Instead, our researchers went door-to-door and spoke with different families. The distances we had to travel were very large - in the Gobi region, a herder family's closest neighbours can be 5 km away! We also asked the governor of the region to set up a meeting where we were able to survey 20 households.

We decided to also interview local administration employees to see how different

their answers were, compared to those given by the communities. In total, we interviewed 100 people.

When conducting the research, we read each question out loud, explained what it meant, and waited as families filled out their answers. Bringing people together in one room was an easy way to reach more community members, but we found that in this setting, participants tended to listen and agree with a group opinion. The responses we received from the door-to-door survey had the benefit of better showcasing individual opinions.

We had help in translating and analyzing the data from volunteer groups of students who spoke English. During the translation process, we were able to identify some key recommendations. We received funding to deliver the results of the research back to the community, however because of the large distances involved, it was difficult to reach everyone who had participated in the survey.

The community-led research process helped inform the community about the project and their rights, and reach a consensus about

their priorities. Today, members from these affected communities share their knowledge with others who are facing similar problems. Sharing the survey template with communities that are yet to be affected by projects has also been very useful in making sure they know what issues and questions are important to raise when speaking with project planners. The survey template has become an important tool in helping people think about these issues, and about what development means to them.



Sukhgerel is a part of IAP's **Global Advocacy Team**, an initiative which brings together community organizers who experience development projects firsthand to conduct community-led research and mobilize their communities to change how development is conceived and implemented. Read more at:

[bit.ly/IAP_GAT]

The survey used in Sukhgerel's research was created by the Global Advocacy Team, and can be accessed at

[bit.ly/CommLedRschSrvy]