

CLIMATE, ECONOMY, AND LAND POLICY: EFFECTS ON PASTORAL MOBILITY PATTERNS IN MONGOLIA

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For centuries, Mongolian pastoralists have managed their herds and rangelands according to the principles of mobility, flexibility in movement patterns and social organization, diversity of habitats and species, grazing reserves, and norms of reciprocity in pasture use and other social relations. Pastoral resources including seasonal grazing areas, campsites, water sources, and hay-cutting areas were subject to customary and formal tenure regimes enforced through both formal and informal means. These management principles withstood, with adaptations, several dramatic changes in Mongolia's political economy, including the most recent shift to a democracy and a free market economy. Fifteen years after the abrupt transition from state ownership of livestock and collectivization of herding to privatization of livestock and individual responsibility for management decisions, pastoralists continue to adapt to changing economic conditions and land policy, while facing the ongoing stresses of climate fluctuations and global change.

In this workshop presentation, we first provide a short overview of the history of pastoral mobility in relation to evolving land tenure and policy in Mongolia. We then present a case study of two herding communities in Jinst and Bayan-Ovoo Sum (districts), Bayankhongor Aimag (province), where we have documented changing household socio-economic status, pastoral land and water rights, and pasture management and mobility patterns since 1995. In our most recent household survey, conducted in 2006, we found that mobility is still a key strategy for many herders and that several metrics of mobility increased since our last survey in 1999. Climate and environmental conditions remained important drivers of herders' land use and mobility patterns. Global markets influenced herd composition via cashmere prices, and land and water conditions via increased and unregulated mining. Land policy in Mongolia remained dynamic and evolving, with a growing need for institutions to regulate inter-sum and inter-aimag mobility and pasture rights, and continuing opposition to pastureland privatization on the part of most herders.

Keywords: Common pool resources, Common property, Land tenure, Privatization, Transitional economy, Co-management