

## MONGOLIA: SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD PROJECT

## ETHNIC MINORITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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**Introduction**

This report sets out the **Ethnic Minority Development Strategy** for the **Sustainable Livelihood Project** (the Project). A Social Assessment undertaken during project preparation has concluded that the Project will have negligible negative impacts and more significant positive impacts for all poor beneficiaries, including the ethnic minority communities. It argues that the Project does not create conditions in which the ethnic minorities are disadvantaged in the development process. Nor do they meet other criteria that would trigger the need for an Indigenous People's Development Plan for the Project. While the extent and severity of poverty is of great concern across the country, there is no suggestion it is driven by ethnic differences. Ethnic minorities as social groups are not found to engage on economic activities that are less lucrative than those of the ethnic majority. In law, there are no differences in the entitlement of the different ethnic groups to natural resources, and there do not appear to be any differences in practice in access to natural resources.

For this Project, therefore, rather than an IPDP, an Ethnic Minority Development Strategy will be a more appropriate instrument for the ethnic minority beneficiaries. The Development Strategy provides the guidance and directions for the participation of ethnic minorities in the Project.

**Project Objective**

This is the first phase of a three phased program to support the shift in Mongolia's national anti-poverty strategy away from welfarist measures towards those that promote secure and sustainable livelihoods for all. The objective of the proposed Project is to identify and pilot-test institutional innovations that will enhance the capabilities of community groups and poor and vulnerable households and individuals to better manage risk, build up income-generating assets, and participate in the rehabilitation and maintenance of community-level infrastructure and basic services. To realize this development objective, four components will be implemented in eight selected aimags (provinces). These are: a) Pastoral Risk Management; b) Rural Micro-Finance Services; c) Local Initiative Fund; and d) Project Management.

**Social Information<sup>1</sup>**

There are over 30 different ethnic groups in the country. They are either the descendants of Mongolian nomadic tribes, or groups of Turkic origin who have become Mongolized over time. Khalkh Mongols are the national majority (90%) and also the ethnic majority in six of the eight project *aimags*. Refer to Table 1. Kazakh form the majority (89%) in Bayan Olgi *aimag* and

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<sup>1</sup> The information is taken from a social assessment report prepared for the project preparation. Please refer to the full report in the project files for further details—Social Assessment of the Mongolia Sustainable Livelihood Project, December 2001.

Buriad are in the majority in five *sums* of Dornod *aimag*. Uvs is the most ethnically diverse of the project *aimags*; Dorvod and Bayad are the main groups in the province.

Cultural differences among the different ethnic groups are relatively minor. Mobile pastoralism has traditionally been practiced within Mongolia, and indeed across the inner Asian region (extending into Tuva, Buryatia and South Chita in the Russian Republic, and Inner Mongolia and some parts of Xinjiang in China). This common nomadic way of life has fostered a relatively uniform Mongol culture over extensive areas, with large groups of people sharing similar livelihoods, having frequent contacts with speakers of other dialects, and developing related social and cultural practices over the centuries.

Ethnic distinctions among the Mongol subgroups are relatively minor, although some may have a stronger sense of their own identity than others. Ethnicity is revealed in distinct styles of dress and ways of preparing food, and in musical and oral traditions. Minor variations in pastoral techniques may be adaptations to different environments as much as they are markers of ethnicity. While language differences and their Islamic beliefs may make ethnic distinctions appear to be more marked between the Kazakh and the Mongol subgroups, Kazakh livelihoods are not significantly different from those of the Mongol subgroups. Overall, however, language or tribal differences have not become significant political or social issues in Mongolia.

In *aimags* that are ethnically homogeneous, the Khalkh make up the majority and a small number of people of other ethnic groups are either intermarried or otherwise socially and economically assimilated to the majority. The recent influx of migrants into the central *aimags* has resulted in a greater ethnic mix in these provinces than was the case several years ago. A local government official in Tov commented that people tend to disperse in the province when they arrive from more remote provinces, and do not noticeably congregate along ethnic lines. Common economic goals override ethnic distinctions and the influx of immigrants has not resulted in such distinctions becoming more acute, he claimed.

All groups speak mutually comprehensible Mongolian dialects except for the Kazakh. The Kazakh are Islamic while other groups practice a mixture of Buddhism and shamanism. Despite this, Kazakh livelihoods are not significantly different from those of other ethnic groups. Khalkh Mongolian is the official national language and the language of instruction in schools except in those areas with high numbers of Kazakh speakers. Language or tribal differences have not become significant political or social issues in Mongolia.

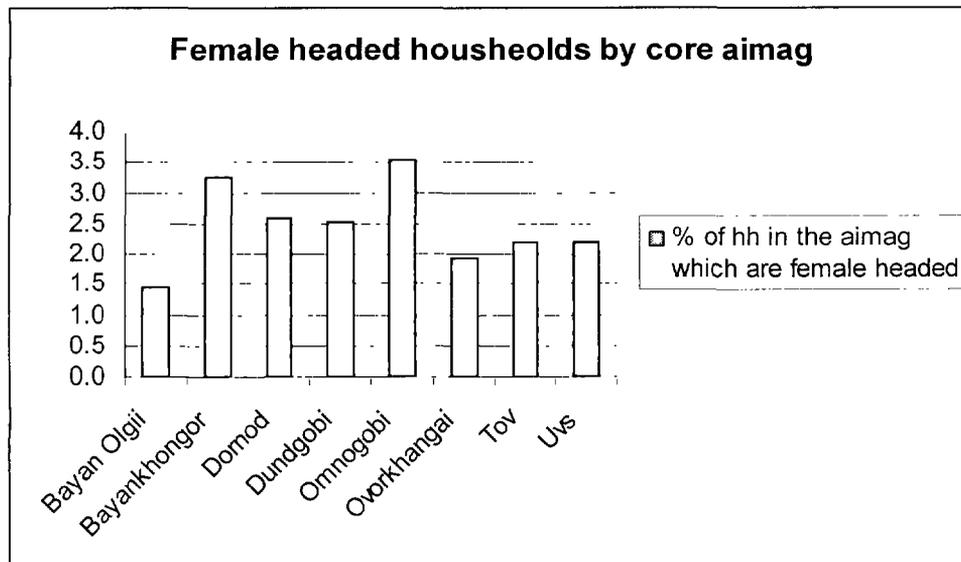
The SA findings indicate that it is doubtful that the moderate Islamic practices of the Kazakh in Bayan Olgii would limit Kazakh women from participating in the project as fully as women of other ethnicities.

**Table 1: Population by Project Aimag and Ethnic Group (2000)**

<b>Population by Project Aimag and Ethnic Group, 2000</b>																
<i>Project aimags</i>	Total	Khalkh	Kazakh	Dorvod	Buriad	Bayad	Oold	Darkhad	Dari-ganga	Zakhchin	Myangad	Khoton	Torguud	Tuva	Uriankhai	Other
Bayan Olgii	<b>91,068</b>	403	80776	1397										1626	6528	338
Bayankhongor	<b>84,779</b>	84509					202									68
Domod	<b>75,373</b>	50922		502	17196	150		255	1595	152			117		134	4350
Dundgobi	<b>51,517</b>	51375														142
Ovorkhangai	<b>111,420</b>	111193					104									123
Omnogobi	<b>46,858</b>	46795														63
Tov	<b>99,268</b>	93604	1065	770	856	745	171	110		202			130	500	524	591
Uvs	<b>90,037</b>	13784	115	36201		31717	103			109	200	6352			138	1318
<b>Country totals</b>	<b>2,373,493</b>	<b>1934674</b>	<b>102663</b>	<b>66537</b>	<b>40447</b>	<b>50481</b>	<b>14359</b>	<b>18853</b>	<b>31545</b>	<b>29468</b>	<b>5872</b>	<b>8800</b>	<b>12296</b>	<b>4619</b>	<b>24976</b>	<b>20941</b>

*Source: Ddata provided by Mongolia National Statistics Office*

**Chart 1: Female Headed Households by Project Aimag (2000)**



Source: Mongolia Statistical Yearbook 2000, NSO

Maternity rates which are higher in Bayan Olgii than the national average might suggest Kazakh women are more hesitant than other women to visit medical facilities, (although this would need to be substantiated through more in depth research) and claims of lower divorce rates and low levels of intermarriage might also imply that the Kazakh community, more than other ethnic communities, exerts more control over women to stay within traditional social structures, and within their own communities. That said, in the SA team's interactions with Kazakh women in Bayan Olgii, there were many indications that Islam is interpreted quite moderately among Kazakh in the *aimag*. Roles and behaviors acceptable for women appear to be much less the subject of debate than they are in some other Islamic countries. Older and middle aged women often appear in public wearing headscarves, but younger women generally do not. Nor do women appear to be overly restricted in their interactions with male strangers, (as is sometimes the case in other Islamic cultures); for example, when the team was invited to eat lunch with a *sum* governor at his house, they were joined by his wife who sat down to eat with them and actively joined in the discussion.

Land tenure arrangements vary according to ecological, locational, and livestock rearing practices. Land remains the property of the state but herders – in groups or as individuals – may be granted long term exclusive use rights over grazing land for a period of up to 60 years. *Customary arrangements* are still the norm. Customary agreements between herders for the use of camps and pasture are based upon shared expectations built up over time by herders with longstanding relationships with one another. While there is an obligation to respect the territory others have marked out for their camps and, in particular their winter pastures, there is also an obligation to come to the assistance of other herders in bad weather in that customary use rights are to be respected, but the risks of bad weather must be shared.

There are other arrangements in various areas, such as, *yearly pasture use agreements* where local authorities attempt to allocate and control the use of grazing resources; *shared use of pasture* where pastures are usually shared between households with herds large enough to justify

separating herds, and with the appropriate household labor and relationships to enable them to organize herding in this way. In more remote and less populated aimags it is clear that levels of security over tenure are higher. In aimags in the central part of the country and closer to the capital city, changing land use patterns have begun to result in increased conflicts over pasture.

### **Legal Framework**

The national legal framework which forms the basis of the Ethnic Minority Development Strategy is the *Constitution of Mongolia*. The Constitution of Mongolia upholds the principles that all citizens have equal rights and that they have rights to the resources of the country:

- “No person should be discriminated against on the basis of ethnic origin, language, race, age, sex, social origin and status, property, occupation and post, religion, opinion or education. Everyone should have the right to act as a legal person” (Article 14, sub-article 2);
- “Right to fair acquisition, possession and inheritance of moveable and immovable property” (Article 16, sub-article 3).

It also protects ethnic minorities’ right to practice their own culture and use their own language:

- “...the right of national minorities of other tongues to use their native languages in education and communication and in the pursuit of cultural, artistic and scientific activities” (Article 8, sub-article 2).

### **Development Principles and Procedures**

The principles in the development strategy for the ethnic minority groups in the Project are based on the policies of the Government and the World Bank Operational Directive 4.20 on Indigenous Peoples. These principles are:

- a. To promote unity and equality among all ethnic groups;
- b. To improve the living conditions of the ethnic minorities;
- c. To identify any potentially adverse impacts and determine mechanisms to avoid, or minimize and mitigate them; and
- d. To ensure that intended benefits are culturally compatible with, and tailored to, the needs and priorities of ethnic minority groups

In areas inhabited by ethnic minority communities, project implementation will be based on the following procedures:

- a. there will be informed participation of the ethnic minority people themselves;
- b. local preferences will be identified through direct consultation;
- c. indigenous knowledge will be incorporated into project approaches; and

- d. sub-project proposals will be determined and prioritized by the ethnic minority communities themselves.

## **Development Approaches**

Several specific actions to implement the above strategy are indicated below.

Project approach. The overall design of the Project emphasizes participatory approaches, such as briefly described here for the main project components: a) Pastoral Risk Management--based on initial experience under the earlier Poverty Alleviation credit, restocking will follow the process-orientated approach piloted successfully during 2000, in which beneficiaries are selected through open discussion in *bag khural* meetings, based on initial applications according to transparent criteria as set out in a project implementation manual. Attention will also be paid to issues of social inclusion, ethnicity and accountability within grazing associations; and b) Local Initiative Fund--the key issues concern equity within and between communities, and the adjudication of competing priorities within communities. Participation will be achieved primarily through *bag khural* meetings, following the precedent of recent restocking initiatives, with public posting of all decisions and budgets for approved sub-projects. The approach allows for decision-making on component details to be made at more local levels, which should allow for the preferences of different ethnic groups to be met.

Under the Local Initiative Fund Component (LIF), more flexibility in the choice of sub-projects within the project menu will be allowed for ethnic minorities, especially as strongly requested by the people themselves and as identified in the Social Assessment. Among the Kazakhs, a number of such preferences were mentioned including efforts to address the living conditions of very poor households, such as rehabilitation of housing; and support for cultural centers and libraries. It would be possible for Kazakh groups to choose to address these issues using funding from LIF.

A second possible area for support is in women's health. Aimag level data show high maternal mortality in Bayan Olgii province where the Kazakhs are a majority of the population. It is not clear whether the higher incidence of maternal mortality is caused by birth practices distinct to the Kazakhs. However, Bayan Olgii has one of the lower infant mortality rates, suggesting the situation may be more complex than it appears. This, however, is an issue that can be explored if LIF funding is to go towards health projects in that *aimag*.

A third possible area for LIF support is in education and the medium of instruction. While the national language is used within government offices in Bayan Olgii as it is elsewhere, Kazakh is the medium of instruction up to secondary level in most schools in the *aimag*. However, without strong Mongolian language skills, it is difficult for Kazakh students to enter, or excel, in higher education. This problem is recognized by the government and efforts are being made within the education system to address it. Under LIF and should the Kazakh communities demand it, the Project could provide support for the development of Kazakh textbooks and the establishment of local printing presses (rather than presses located in Ulaan Baatar as is currently the case) to reduce the costs of Kazakh as well as Mongolian text books.

A strong information dissemination program will be established for the Project to provide project information as well as to promote transparency in available resources and costs of various sub-projects. Additional information dissemination and community outreach will be made to ethnic minority communities. Many Kazakh people do not speak or read Mongolian and thus their

access to project information would be restricted if it were only distributed in Mongolian. Thus, in Kazakh areas and other ethnic minority areas where needed, the local language will be used in print, media and in consultation. In addition to text and speech, alternative medium such as pictures, visual aids, video and other appropriate methods will be used.

Capacity building, training and appropriate staffing will be essential components for the success of the Project. The provision of services targeted to the poor and those in the remote areas has to go hand-in-hand with carefully thought out approaches for training the local leadership, skills training for local people and provision of information and training material in a multi-lingual context. Ethnic minority staff should be included in the project implementation team. Project staff and community mobilizers in aimags such as Bayan Olgii, Uvs, and parts of Dornod will be of the same ethnic group as the ethnic minority beneficiaries themselves.

### **Implementation Arrangements**

For the first year, the Project will begin in one sum in each of the eight project aimags. The sums in two of the eight provinces where there are concentrations of ethnic minority groups will be the testing ground for the Ethnic Minority Development Strategy. After the testing period is over, improvements will be made in the Project Implementation Manual at the end of the year. There will be a Central project staff in Ulaan Baatar who will be responsible for the environment and social development aspects of the project, including the ethnic minority strategy. There will be similar staff at the aimag and sum levels; they will be provided guidance and training by the Central project staff. These staff will monitor the screening for ethnic minority issues which is part of the integrated environmental and social screening process and guide the necessary actions required for the respective sub-projects.

Implementation of the Ethnic Minority Development Strategy will be regularly supervised and monitored by the Central project office. The findings will be recorded in biannual reports to be furnished to World Bank.