



GAGGA GLOBAL ALLIANCE
FOR GREEN AND
GENDER ACTION

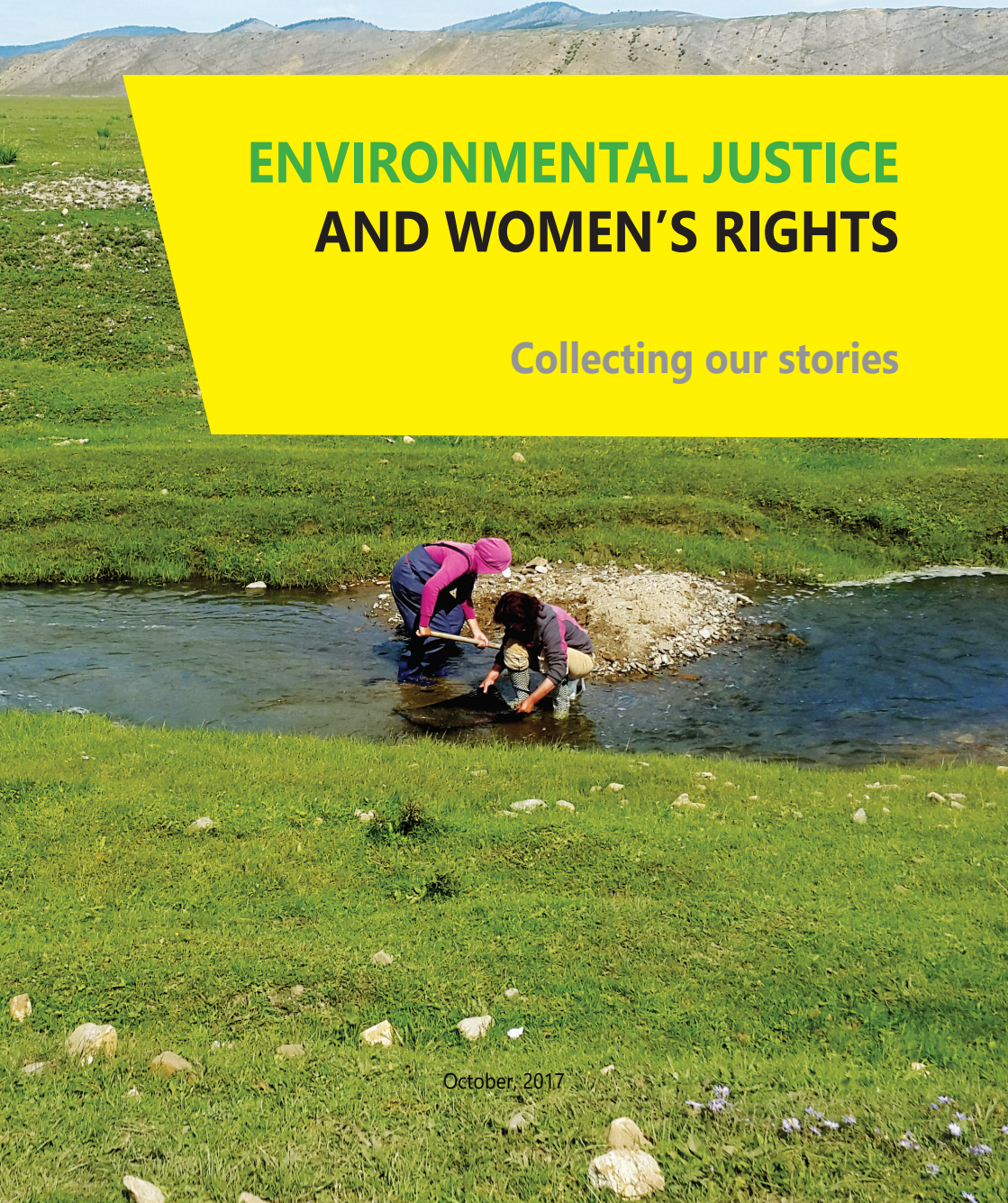


Both ENDS
Connecting people for change

The Ash
Water changes the world

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND WOMEN'S RIGHTS

Collecting our stories



October, 2017



Herder, Durvuljin soum, Zavkhan province

INTRODUCTION

Today there are many questions facing us: "What impacts does the environment have on our lives and our work?" "Is the Constitutional provision of enjoying 'the right to a healthy and safe environment, and to be protected against environmental pollution and ecological imbalance' properly enforced?" Furthermore, "Is people's right to life adequately ensured?"

In 2016, we joined **Global Alliance for Gender and Green Action (GAGGA)** to catalyze the collective power of the women's rights and environmental justice movements in about 30 countries of the world.

During this alliance, Mongolian Women's Fund (MONES) has been working on ensuring women's rights to live in a healthy and safe environment by solving and integrating women's rights and gender equality with environmental justice issues since last year. Why did the women's rights organizations start tackling these issues? The reason is that people's right to life is directly violated as the healthy and safe environment is slowly but gradually disappearing and drinking water is being polluted and in shortage. Their negative impacts are adversely affecting women and children in the first place.

What kind of strategies has guided our work?

Capacity Building: In November 2016, about 100 women's rights organizations gathered and organized a forum entitled "New Challenges, New Opportunities." During this forum, the women's organizations and groups discussed issues on how to develop themselves, to end gender-based violence, to foster the women's movement, and, to collaborate with other movements. As a result of the forum, it is concluded that the movement should collaborate with other movements rather than working within itself and that the funding on environmental and climate change issues should be accessible to women in general.

After this forum, we held a consultation meeting on "Environmental Justice and Women's Rights." The meeting attracted over 60 women from women's non-governmental organizations (NGO) and groups and they talked about and reached consensus on how to analyze issues from the women's rights-based perspectives and how environmental issues are related to women's rights issues.

We announced a project competition among the organizations participating in the consultative meeting. One of the criteria for the women's NGOs was to participate in the project selection process collectively. As a result of the competition, we selected 13 projects to be implemented by 30 organizations. The two mentors with rich experience on environmental issues worked on the implementing projects by advising and facilitating on how to holistically address the issues of environment, human and women's rights. In August 2017, we announced another competition among the project-implementing organizations and supported 8 projects to be jointly implemented by 21 organizations.

Resource Mobilization: We explored possibilities of accessing the Green Climate Fund designed to reduce the effects of climate change with the support of the FILIA fund for the Mongolian women and subsequently defined ways to increase this accessibility.

Bankwatch CEE and Oyu Tolgoi Watch NGO jointly held training on "Coal", "Radioactive Substances", and gender policy issues of development banks and their engagement with civil society organizations and enhanced knowledge on how to analyze issues with human rights-based and gender-sensitive approaches.

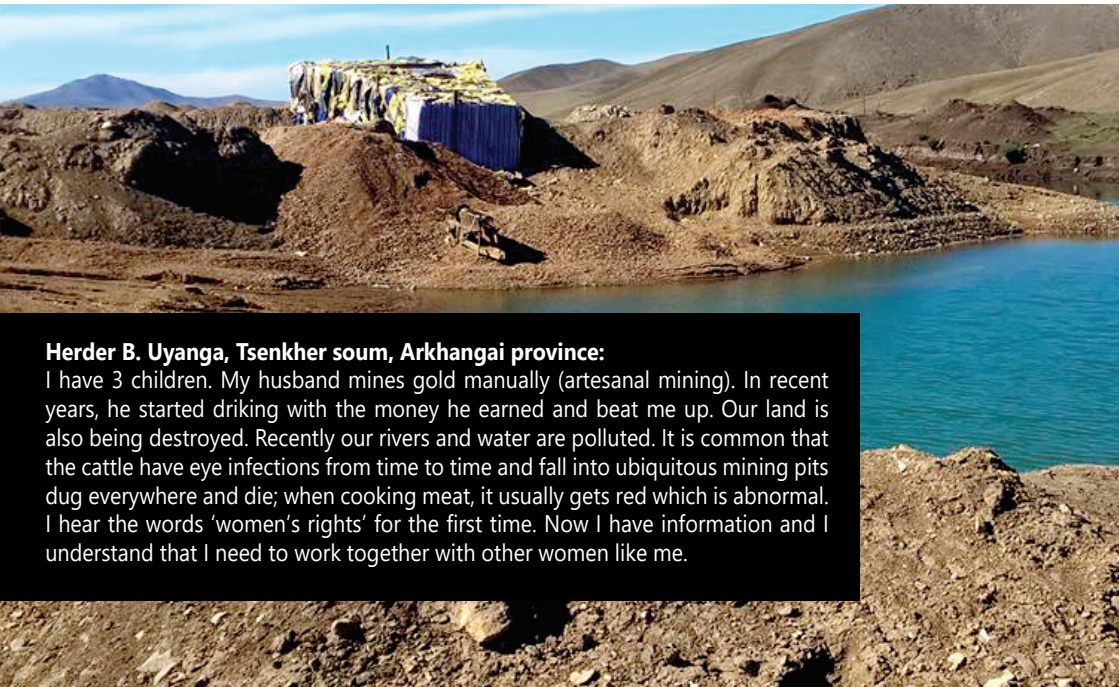
HOW MINING AFFECTS WOMEN'S LIVES

Gold mining increases violence against women and poverty

Tsenkher soum of Arkhangai province is a beautiful landscape in Mongolia, home to prominent springs and mineral resources. The land is also rich with gold reserves. Out of 17 special licenses for gold mining approved for Arkhangai province, 16 of them are in Orkhon bag of Tsenkher soum. Besides the above-mentioned mining sites with licenses, there are over 30 artisanal mines operating. As the goldmines use vast amount of water in order to purify gold, not only amount of drinking water for bag citizens decreased, but also is polluted, resulting in a shortage of clean drinking water for the citizens. In addition, herders do not have clean water for their cattle and lack the pastureland for cattle due to the mining operation on the majority of the land, emerging issues of which the soum administrative authorities have not paid attention.

Five women's NGOs of Arkhangai province conducted a joint study on the water pollution and its effects in Orkhon bag. The research found out that the water and soil pollution increased. The project team also proved that the amount of a pollutant substance weighed in drinking water was 1-1.5 times higher than the permitted level.

Over 70 households living in this area get drinking water through water trucks of ULZ River Co Ltd, which does not use standardized containers and special vehicles. As water transport service stops in winter, the citizens of the area consume river, snow and ice water, suffering from a shortage of water, as well as a high risk of negative effects on their health due to drinking contaminated water. These women's NGOs raised this issue to the soum authorities, mining cooperative members and citizens as a whole and further established local community groups to mobilize them to defend their rights.



Herder B. Uyanga, Tsenkher soum, Arkhangai province:

I have 3 children. My husband mines gold manually (artisanal mining). In recent years, he started drinking with the money he earned and beat me up. Our land is also being destroyed. Recently our rivers and water are polluted. It is common that the cattle have eye infections from time to time and fall into ubiquitous mining pits dug everywhere and die; when cooking meat, it usually gets red which is abnormal. I hear the words 'women's rights' for the first time. Now I have information and I understand that I need to work together with other women like me.

HOW MINING AFFECTS WOMEN'S LIVES

Gold mining deprives herders of drinking water and living space

Shariin Gol soum of Darkhan-Uul province has a small territory. As the goldmine is prevalent, mountain foot and valley areas are dug out everywhere; gold mining companies create artificial reservoirs and wash their gold in them, from which herders water their cattle. When meeting with the herders, they told us that “the pressing issue is that we can’t live herding our cattle anymore; there is no pasture land for the cattle and no water for them.” When a survey from herders asked, “Have you observed any negative effects on your cattle caused by river water contamination?”, 70% of them answered “yes”. They said that internal organs of the cattle are damaged; cattle suffer from hair loss; birth defect and premature birth increased; and cattle suffer from diarrhea and vomiting. Furthermore, the women who earn their living and survive by growing vegetables are also negatively affected by water shortages.

Women’s NGOs of Darkhan-Uul province, in collaboration with government organizations, conducted dialogues and advocacy meetings with the Governor, Soum Governor’s Office, state-owned companies and mining companies. They surveyed approximately 100 women living near the mining areas of Shariin Gol soum on their consumption of healthy, safe and accessible drinking water or lack thereof and about 60 herder families on water quality and accessibility for livestock; the conclusions of the studies along with the recommendations were developed and sent out to the citizens and the general public. 50 women from Shariin Gol soum participated in knowledge-gaining training and skills-building workshops, further being organized into group structures, forming three groups such as entrepreneur women’s group, herder women’s group and artisanal miners’ group with their leaders selected having determined their challenges and mobilized into active communities.



Gardener U. Narantsetseg, Sanjint bag:

It was a river with a spring, but now there is no water spurting out. Artisanal gold miners (‘ninja miners’) blocked the river stream in order to dig gold. Natural flows of Shaazgait and Khongor rivers are interrupted and blocked. I water my vegetables with rain water. It is becoming increasingly challenging, because we are experiencing droughts this year.

HOW MINING AFFECTS WOMEN'S LIVES

Gold and women's right to know

Compared with other provinces, the mining explorations in Zavkhan province started quite recently. Durvuljin soum, located 150 km away from the center of the province, has 2,156 people, 1,063 of whom are women. The first-ever mining extraction company in Zavkhan province started its operation in this soum in 2014. In addition, a number of uncontrolled, mobile miners of mineral resources has increased since 2016.

Livestock of the households living in the major zones affected by the mining production has symptoms of damaged lungs with spots. Local herder women suffer from allergies and respiratory diseases caused by dust pollution. In addition, their right to live in a healthy and safe environment and right to be protected against environmental pollution and ecological imbalance are constantly violated, because the families do not know how to engage in social negotiations in order to defend their right to land; do not have sufficient information; and, do not know how to participate in the process.

Even though the gold-mining company made compensation payment to herder families living in the major zones affected by the mining operation prior to starting their exploration for using the pasture land, the herders said that "they made a contract with us and paid a few million tugrugs, but we have not seen the contract, do not know where it is and was forced to do it. We do not know what the contract says and do not know how to evaluate it." Two women's groups of the soum started working to make the contract with the mining company transparent and to reveal the information on using the land and water.

Coal mining and the right to live in a healthy environment

Baganuur district is one of 9 districts of the capital city of Mongolia and a major source of coal supply of the country. The coal mine of Baganuur is located 3 km away from Baganuur city and extracts 4 million tons of coal each year. It has been about 40 years since the coal mine started its operation. Although the coal mining played an important role in providing the region with energy during this period of time, the prevalence rate of communicable diseases among district residents is higher than the national average and the temporary loss of labor capability in the mining sector is 75-100 per year.

According to the conclusion of the 2015 study entitled "Assessment of Regional Cumulative Impacts of Baganuur Coal Mining", *it is concluded that "Average uranium content is 3,7 ng/t which is 1.5-1.9 times higher than the global average; the average rate of radioactive dose power reaching the height of human respiratory sphere from the gamma ray of natural radioactive elements is 83 ngr/hr, which is 1.9 times higher than the global average, will negatively affect human health."*

Given the amount of the radioactive substance emitted from the mining site is as high as mentioned in the study, they plan to build a 700 MW power plant with the Chinese investment

worth USD 3.5 billion. However, what kind of information do the citizens have on this matter? As far as the project team has found out, there is no information known on the side of the public. Therefore, they held a couple of training for the local citizens and women affected by the mining activities to give knowledge, to expose them to information dissemination methods and to build capacities on causes of environmental pollution; they also could enhance the knowledge and understanding of 96 citizens on how mining activities affect human health, as well as on air pollution and its harmful effects by organizing 2-time discussions to exchange views and opinions.

Additionally, having understood the negative effects of mining as contributing factors to women's rights violations and thus measuring the level of the radioactivity by using the equipment RADEX RD1212, the women's NGOs started informing the citizens about the amount of radioactive substances.

Will the government keep implementing its cruel policies, which do not take its citizens into account, in order to only increase the quantity of coal mining?



Group of artisanal miners, Shariin gol soum, Darkhan-Uul province

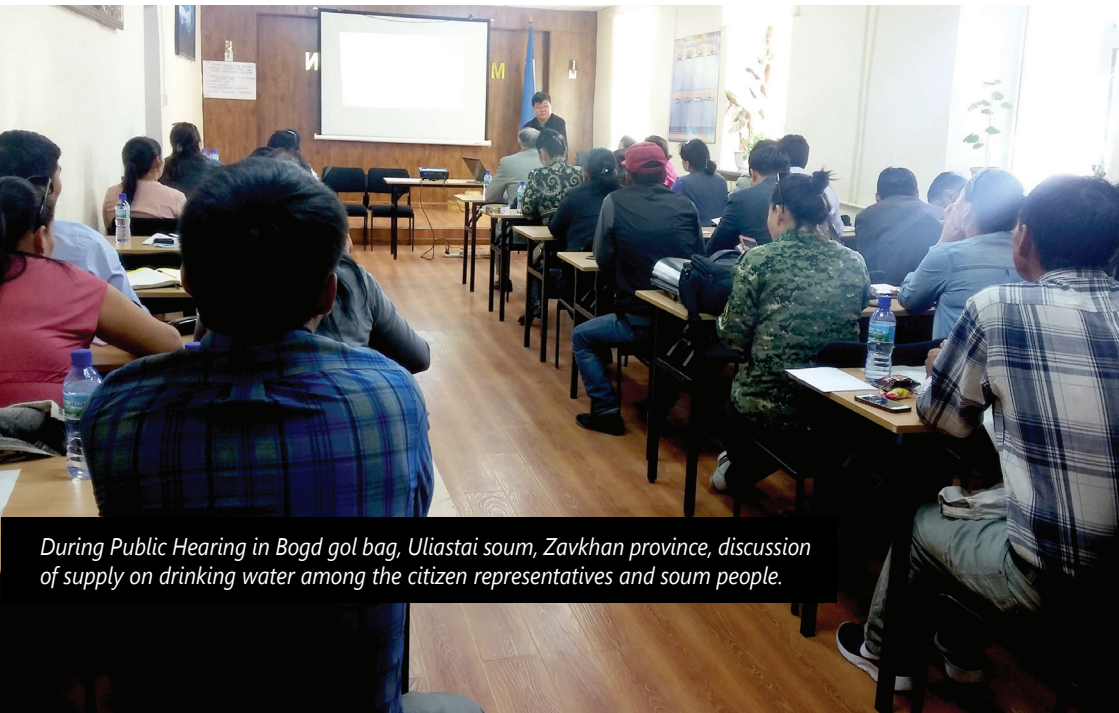
HOW WOMEN'S RIGHT TO LIVE HEALTHY AND SAFE ENVIRONMENTS IS REALIZED

Initial steps to provide clean drinking water have been taken.

Bogdiin Gol bag citizens of Uliastai soum of Zavkhan province consume water from Bogd and Chigestei rivers. In recent years, they have talked about the polluted drinking water, but could not walk the talk. A network of women's NGOs has paid attention to this issue since 2015 and started their work focusing on where the source of water pollution is and what kind of containers citizens are using to carry water. After that, they proved that there was bacterial pollution in these two rivers by testing.

It is also discovered that the citizens and women use river water as their drinking water and risk their health by doing so, due to the fact that relevant authorities do not inform the public about water monitoring results and statistics. When the water testing started, it was a matter of supplying 4,000 people with clean drinking water, whereas in the project implementation process it became a major issue related to all citizens of Zavkhan province. The issue of clean drinking water was introduced to the Citizens' Representative Assembly and debated during the public hearing according to the Law on Public Hearing, resulting in the relevant government organizations discussing how to solve this issue to provide safe drinking water for the citizens.

As a result of making the general public understand that water safety is indispensably linked to human rights of all people, submitting a letter of demand to the Water Safety Commission of the province and organizing several advocacy meetings, consensus has been reached to build a mobile water reservoir in Bogdiin Gol bag and to solve the safety issues of drinking water for the citizens of the bag.



During Public Hearing in Bogd gol bag, Uliastai soum, Zavkhan province, discussion of supply on drinking water among the citizen representatives and soum people.

HOW WOMEN'S RIGHT TO LIVE HEALTHY AND SAFE ENVIRONMENTS IS REALIZED

Air pollution and women's and children's health

You will definitely feel what air pollution is all about, if you walk the streets of Ulaanbaatar in the morning or at night in winter. The city is entirely covered by black smog. In the *ger* district, one will not be able to see anything beyond the radius of 5 meters. It is hard to breathe. Smell of smoke will reek of everyone's clothes. According to the WHO study, the size of poisonous smoke PM10 per one square meter of air in Ulaanbaatar is 279 micro gram, whereas in Washington DC it is 18 micro gram. On the other hand, in Avhaz of Iran, where air pollution is worst, it is 372 micro gram. In Ulaanbaatar, the air pollution is relatively low in summer, but in some locations in winter the amount of smoke per square meter is 2000 micro gram. Mongolia ranks No. 5 out of 10 most polluted countries of the world.

Ulaanbaatar is home to about half of 3 million citizens of Mongolia. Over 60% of the residents lives in the *ger* district and 80% of air pollution is caused by coal burned in the *ger* district.

Cold and influenza break out tremendously in winter because of the air pollution. This causes setting quarantines in schools and kindergarten in recent years. As no new hospital was built since 1990, the work loads of hospitals are beyond imagination in winter time.



INDICATORS TO ASSESS THE EFFECTS OF AIR POLLUTION HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED.

The first-ever gender assessment was conducted on the impacts of air pollution on vulnerable women of reproductive ages and the accessibility and quality of health services targeting the two remote *ger* district *khoroos* of Songinokhairkhan and Chingeltei districts where most people live in *ger* district. Organizations which worked on this issue developed these gender assessment indicators for the organizations to work on air pollution and environmental issues in the future.

HOW WOMEN'S RIGHT TO LIVE HEALTHY AND SAFE ENVIRONMENTS IS REALIZED

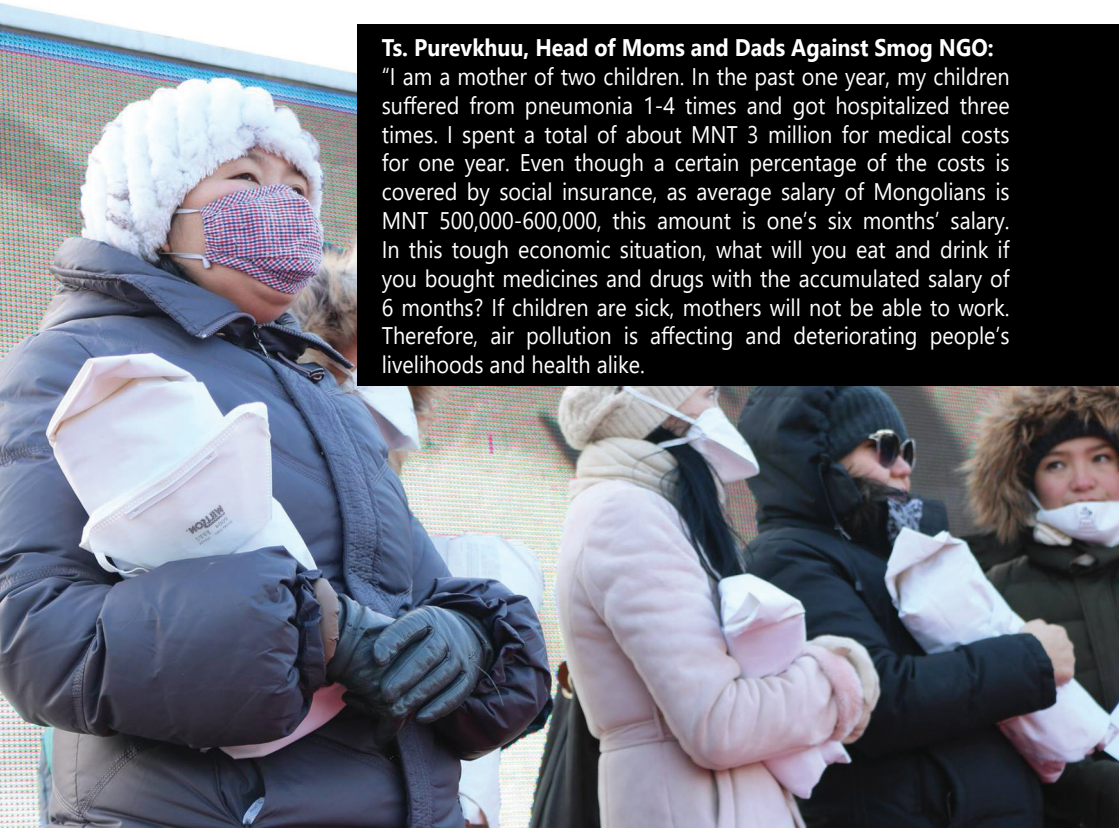
Voices of the parents against air pollution started to reach relevant policymakers.

A movement started ever since a young mother posted photos on her Facebook timeline in which authority figures are partying and at the same time her child is lying on the floor of a hospital in the midst of the flu outbreak and simply the hospital capacity could not deal with the situation. This movement expanded enormously within a few days with thousands of people expressing their opinions on the issue in the social network arena and writing posts within a day. Association of Moms & Dads Against Smog staged a demonstration in December 2016 uniting and engaging the parents against air pollution of Ulaanbaatar and started its far-reaching activities since then.

Moms and dads united against smog organized a series of public gatherings. In addition, they did advocacy successfully and united the public force by broadcasting TV programs, news and information demanding the commitments and responsibilities of decision-makers and could show the importance of participation of citizens, especially of women in terms of influencing the decision-makers. Even though the government allowed the representatives of the movement to sit in the working group of the National Program to Combat Air Pollution, they hardly hear their voices and this engagement is not meaningful. Follow-up activities are to be seen to be able to influence the decision-makers in the future...

Ts. Purevkhuu, Head of Moms and Dads Against Smog NGO:

"I am a mother of two children. In the past one year, my children suffered from pneumonia 1-4 times and got hospitalized three times. I spent a total of about MNT 3 million for medical costs for one year. Even though a certain percentage of the costs is covered by social insurance, as average salary of Mongolians is MNT 500,000-600,000, this amount is one's six months' salary. In this tough economic situation, what will you eat and drink if you bought medicines and drugs with the accumulated salary of 6 months? If children are sick, mothers will not be able to work. Therefore, air pollution is affecting and deteriorating people's livelihoods and health alike.



HOW WOMEN'S RIGHT TO LIVE HEALTHY AND SAFE ENVIRONMENTS IS REALIZED

Whose interest does it serve to make citizens live on garbage points?

Since 1990, many people increasingly started relying on surviving by collecting garbage due to unemployment. There is a whole army of people who live on collecting garbage. There are 2 major points for garbage thrown in Ulaanbaatar. These points are located in the west and east. The government does not reclassify and recycle garbage at these points. However, this becomes a source of livelihood for these citizens, especially children and women. About 30-40 trucks of garbage are dumped at these points on a daily basis and people living on and off the points pick plastic bottles and sell them, find clothes and food off the garbage coming their way. They work and live on the garbage together with their children.

Two organizations which studied the situations of citizens on the garbage points found out that there are over 200 citizens sustaining their livelihoods on the Tsagaan Davaa garbage point located in the east of the city. The study on these people discovered that 67% of 94 individuals were women. Also 42.6 % are extremely poor, 42.9% are homeless, 39.4 % do not visit family hospitals, and 46.8 % have not been to medical examinations in the past 3 years. 47.9 % of these citizens do not live in the registered addresses. 28.7 % do not have official documents, making them unable to enjoy public services. Each year millions of tugrugs are spent to dispose of and classify garbage. In reality, does this money go to the planned actions? Or do the city authorities pretend that they did it whereas it was those who live on the garbage doing all the reclassification and recycling? The project team will work on these questions next.



Woman's ger (traditional mongolian house), who works in garbage point

GRANTEE ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS:

- “Thriving Development” NGO, Province Women’s Council and Elder Doctors’ Association of Zavkhan province;
- Zavkhan branch of Mongolian National Network, “CEDAW-WATCH” NGO, Zavkhan branch of Mongolian Journalists’ Union, “Tsets Bilegt Uils” NGO;
- Women Leaders Fund, Association of Female Lawyers, Association of Mid-Wives and Gynecologists;
- “Moms and Dads Against Smog” NGO;
- Mongolian Women’s Employment Support Federation NGO, “Khugjilin Khelkhee” NGO;
- Darkhan-Uul branch of National Center Against Violence (NCAV), Darkhan-Uul branch of Rural Women’s Development Support Fund;
- Baganuur branch of LEOS (Liberal Women Brain Pool) Fund, Baganuur branch of NCAV;
- “We Help You” NGO, Arkhangai branch of LEOS, Arkhangai branch of Social Progress Women’s Movement, “Crystal Soul” NGO, “Orgil Tus” NGO;
- “Nar Khur Shim” NGO, Legal Studies Development Center NGO;
- Friendly Good Neighbor Fund, Mongolian Volunteers’ Center;
- Association of CSOs of Dornogovi province, “Leader Citizens” NGO, “Gal Golomt” NGO;
- Bulgan branch of LEOS, Rural Women’s Development Support Fund, Bulkhan Green Development;
- Mongolian Entrepreneur Mothers’ Association NGO.

Mentor organizations for the granted projects:

N.Bayarsaikhan, Steps Without Borders NGO
D.Erdene, Green Focus NGO