

Report on MOR2 Study Results Discussion organized in Bayankhongor in June, 2015

Workshop Date: 2015. 06.17-18

The purpose

We introduced the results of the MOR2 study to the representatives of Bayankhongor soums that were involved in the research. We intended to have their feedback on the study results as well as to guide their future decisions for local development. This workshop was the third local discussion organized following prior forums in the Gobi and Central regions in 2014.

Organizers

- Nutag Partners
- Colorado State University (CSU)
- Department of Food and Agriculture, Bayankhongor aimag

Supporting organizations

- National Science Foundation, USA
- Governor Office, Bayankhongor aimag

Participants

Representatives of the following eight soums located in two ecological zones participated in the discussion:

Desert steppe: Bayan-Undur, Bayangovi, Bayantsahgaan, Jinst;

Mountain steppe: Bayan-Ovoo, Erdenetsogt, Gurvanbulag, Jargalant.

A group consisting of the Soum Governor, Chairman of the Resident Representative Khural, Environmental Inspector, Rangeland Officer of the Soum Extension Center, and herders represented each study soum. Also, officers from different departments of the Aimag Government including Food and Agriculture, Development Policy, and Land, Construction, Urban Development. We had a total of 43 participants, where 37% were herders.

Discussion

The discussion had three main elements. In the first part, the researchers from Nutag Partners and Colorado State University presented the main results of the study as well as relevant information for Bayankhongor particularly. During the second part, the participants provided their feedback on the presented results, and their views how these results can be used in the local rangeland management decisions and practices. This discussion was organized in a “World café” style, where all participants had a chance to comment on the content of the four presentations. The third part was a scenario planning exercise, where participants were first introduced to the scenario planning as a planning tool. This introduction was followed by group exercise to identify a priority problem and explore different ways that problem can be addressed in four types of scenarios.

1. Study results

Following a brief introduction to the MOR2 project including its research objectives, study areas, and key research questions, the first part of the workshop included several presentations as follows:

- Comparisons of herder observations on climate change with the results of remote sensing studies by Maria Fernandez-Gimenez, CSU;
- Results of ecological studies by Khishigbayar. J, CSU;
- Outcomes of Community-Based Rangeland Management (CBRM) by Tungalag. U, CSU;
- Main concepts on sustainable rangeland management by Altanzul. Ts, Nutag Partners;
- Rangeland management policy and implementation issues by Tegshbayar. S, Dept. of Bayankhongor Food and Agriculture.



2. World café discussion

This discussion had the following objectives to: 1) enable participants to ask questions on the prior presentations and make clarifications; 2) exchange their ideas on the research results and comment on how these results agree with their observations in daily practices in their soum and aimag; 3) suggest the ways how these results can be applied to the local decision-making and management. Four stations with respective facilitators were set relating to the topics of the four study result presentations as follows:

Station 1: Climate change roundtable facilitated by Khishigbayar. J;

Station 2: Ecological results table facilitated Altanzul. Ts;

Station 3: CBRM results facilitated by Tungalag. U

Station 4: Land management issues facilitated by Nomin-Erdene. S

There were general questions that each discussion table followed. These were:

1. Were these results consistent with what you observe in your daily practices in your areas?
2. How these results can be applied in your work and rangeland management?
3. What measures will you suggest for efficient application of the study results?

Results of round tables

Climate change: Participants shared their observation on warming winters, cooler autumn and delayed summer and vegetation growth. These changes have important implications for their livestock herding practices. For instance, low temperatures during the birth of youngsters and livestock shearing cause other difficulties.

For addressing consequences of climate change, the participants suggested following measures:

1. Well construction in pasture reserves to open new grazing areas;
2. Possession rights over rangeland need to be issued to enable more effective use of grazing areas;
3. Herders need to have an opportunity to sell livestock/meat twice a year so that income acquired can be invested in creating more water sources and hay making
4. For well construction, an initial feasibility study needs to be done in a proper manner including necessary depth and cost estimation. The current practice of a few people investing in well-

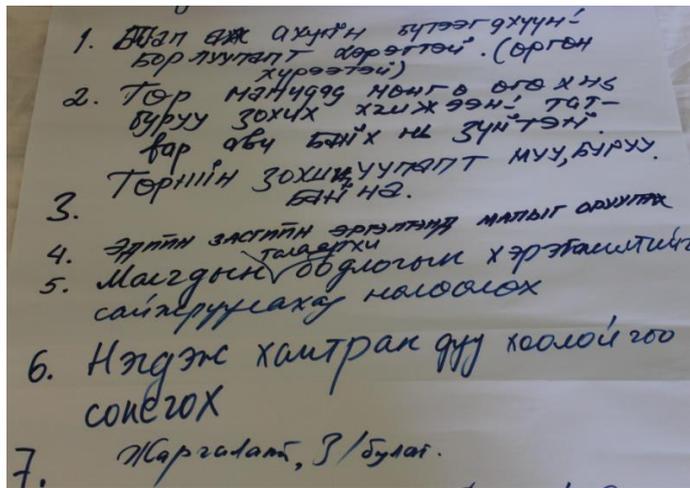
construction and limiting access of other herders to the well should be avoided to make the water accessible to all herders.

5. to restore traditional activities such as creating reservoirs and preserving snow water;
6. For sustainable use of grazing areas, herding household should have not more than 500-600 livestock and pay pasture use fees;
7. Higher taxes and sanctions need to be imposed for those who exceed the pasture capacity;
8. Herders who reduced livestock numbers should be awarded by obtaining beneficial opportunities for repair of winter camps, well construction, tree planting, forage production;
9. The government needs to be involved in opening marketing opportunities for herders such as establishing livestock price (maximum and minimum) and create meat quotas for each aimag for addressing the national demand. Herders understand now that current livestock is aging losing its economic and commercial values;
10. A need to improve veterinary services including vaccination, livestock registration, and health records;
11. Encourage people's environmentally-friendly attitude by restoring traditional ethics of relating to the nature; not to pollute water sources, avoid constructing buildings and carrying mining activities nearby, and build protective structures;
12. Herders need to learn how to use weather forecast information
13. Encourage herders to get organized for adequate grazing management and access training opportunities

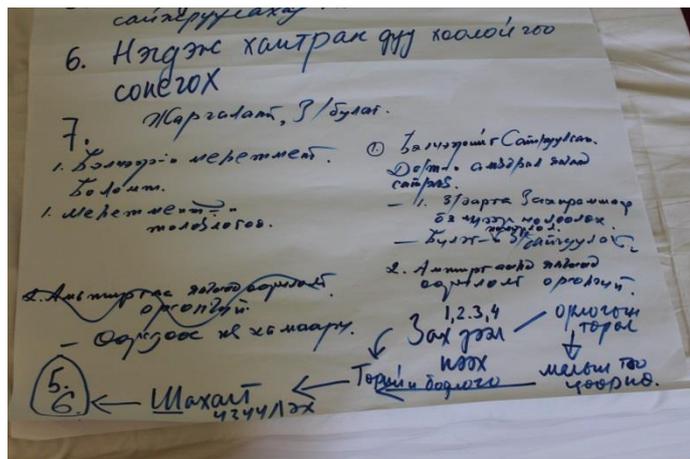
Ecological condition: Participants confirmed that the study results were consistent with their observations. Particularly, they emphasized the importance of rain for plant growth, expansion of desert plant species into mountain steppe areas in the govi areas, emergence of annual grasses in the desert region, decline in species richness and types, and decreasing habitat for wild herbivores. Besides these changes in ecology, other socio-economic changes have taken place including loss of traditional rangeland management practices, an increase of mining and its consequences such as the spread of disease, and an excessive number of livestock. The following were recommendation towards improving ecological condition:

1. More rotation and rest of pastures, seasonal moves and planned use of grazing areas;
2. Herders desperately need more training and information;
3. More water sources; /especially in the Gobi region and areas without water sources/
4. Cloud shooting and obtain necessary equipment;
5. Pasture protection by fencing;
6. Reserve pastures and prepare hay and forage
7. Adoption and enforcement of a regulatory document on pasture use;
8. Improve and increase livestock marketing, meat processing;
9. Improve partnerships between herders, entrepreneurs and consumers
10. More rigorous coordination of the State in the pasture matters is necessary

CBRM: Participants at this table focused more on the study applications in CBRM development in their areas. Some of them considered the importance of CBRM in addressing current problems in rangeland management while others viewed that CBRM has a limited scope influencing small portion of the herders hence, a larger, national level policy on management and marketing is necessary. Some criticism of the current government policy included the cash distribution to herders, the lack of taxes for pasture use, and the failure to take necessary measures for improving marketing of livestock products. Particularly, they emphasized the increase of herders' debt to KHAAN bank, a need to keep more number of livestock due to limited marketing opportunities, and the dominance of Chinese merchants over cashmere purchase since the domestic producers are not able to offer higher prices.



This discussion led them to think about how they can influence the current inefficient policy. They found that herders can get organized and through their collective voices they can participate in policy-making. Among the priority problems, the most important was the opening of better marketing for livestock and livestock production. Groups viewed that with increased opportunities for marketing, herders do not have to keep large numbers of livestock and try improving livestock quality. Once livestock numbers are reduced, herders can improve their life quality reducing hardships for dealing with large herds.



Land management: Main problems in land management were considered to be difficulties for considering citizens’ suggestions in the land management plans, climate change impacts, mining expansion, ignorance by herders and other residents for enforcement, disputes over land management and pasture management plans, water scarcity, increase of harmful rodents, income disparity among residents, summer trespassing of rested winter grazing areas, difficulties for meat marketing, overgrazing, and increase of illegal fencing. For addressing these problems, participants recommended the following measures:

1. More training and awareness raising;
2. Increase of water supply;
3. Better law enforcement;
4. More effective structure for livestock husbandry with a focus on quality;
5. Better pasture management: rest and rehabilitation;
6. More responsible mining, restoration, and reforestation;
7. Include a pasture use component in the Land Management Plan of Soum;
8. Clarify borders for soums and bags;
9. Regulate activities of intermediary merchants of livestock products
10. Change recognition criteria for herders (not by livestock numbers but livestock quality)

3. Scenario planning

Participants were divided into five groups by adjacent soums and the aimag office to do the scenario planning exercise. The main question was “What policy and actions are necessary for the sustainable development of your soum for the next 20 years?” Each group identified a key problem relevant to the soum sustainable development as follows:

Group 1 (representative from Jinst and Bayantsagaan): Overgrazing

Group 2 (representative from Jargalant and Gurvanbulag): Lack of rain

Group 3 (representative from Erdenetsogt and Bayan-Ovoo): Risk for livestock herding

Group 4 (representative from Bayangovi and Bayan-Undur): Global warming

Group 5 (representative from the Aimag Governor Office): Pasture degradation

All groups learned about the scenario planning as a participatory planning tool and found it interesting for envisioning future scenarios of the conditions depending on people’s actions.

Workshop evaluation by participants: A total of 30 responded to the evaluation survey as follows:

	1	2	3	4	5
Presented information was relevant to me	58.6	41.4			
Presenters deliver their content well	68.9	32.1			
I obtained new information	65.5	31	3.5		
Information and communication was good	51.7	44.8	3.5		
Time was sufficient to ask questions and exchange ideas	48.3	34.5	13.8	3.4	

1 = strongly agree; 2 =agree; 3=neutral; 4= do not agree; 5= strongly disagree)

The organizers asked several questions regarding workshop results. The main responses of the participants were summarized as follows:

1) What was the most interesting learning for you?

Responses included scenario planning, results of CBRM with both social and ecological outcomes, and study results of climate change. Among these, scenario planning was found interesting by the majority of respondents.

2) How will you apply your learning here?

Majority said that their learning will be useful for working with herder groups, planning and making decisions for future activities, particularly for pasture management issues, share with others including herders, for involving herders in the planning, and organizing training in their soums.

3) What was the most valuable to you from the workshop?

Many respondents found that the workshop was very relevant for herders, and study results well reflected the issues faced by herders in their every day practices. They also learned the importance of scientific research for policy and decision making and practical application by herders. Also, they found the organization of group discussions as a useful way of exchanging information and working as a team to produce collective results.

4) Do you have a suggestion for workshop improvement?

The respondents did not have many suggestions for improvement. Few comments included limited time for sufficient discussions, more detailed information on climate change (regional specific), include representatives of other aimags, more regular workshops like this one, enable participation of other soums, and a need for training in addition to workshop and discussions.

5) What kind of additional information from MOR2 results do you need?

Responses included the topics not only relevant to MOR2 but beyond its scope. These were desire to learn from experience and practices for addressing desertification in other countries, more guidance on sustainable development of livestock husbandry in Mongolia, research methods, more of social information including herder livelihood, education, health and other social aspects of their life, soum-specific information of MOR2 results, and expansion of MOR2 scope and help applying results locally.

Conclusions

1. Participants in the discussion confirmed the consistency of study results with their observations of environmental and climate changes.
2. They concluded that rangeland degradation is increasing with the decline of palatable plant species and the increase of annual weeds.
3. It is clear that participants are well aware of the inefficiency of current rural development policies in terms of addressing support to herders' livelihoods, improvement of rangeland management. In their opinions, the key measure necessary to solve many rangeland issues is supporting livestock products' marketing. They were confident that once marketing issue is addressed, overgrazing will be solved as a consequence.
4. Participants had views that herder organizations are more important for collectively influencing policies only.
5. They considered important to streamline the results of MOR2 studies into aimag and soums' rangeland management plans and implementation.
6. Participants also obtained understanding for identifying priority policies and actions considering possible positive and negative factors that may arise under different conditions of socio-economic, environmental and climate trends.