

Analysis of decent work standards and gaps in *Ger* and Nature Tourism in Mongolia

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1. Introduction

Over the past 25 years, Mongolia has transformed into a vibrant democracy, tripling its level of GDP per capita, increasing school enrolments, and seeing dramatic declines in maternal and child mortality. With vast agricultural and mineral resources, and an increasingly educated population, Mongolia is quickly moving towards its long-term development goals. It does, however, face significant environmental challenges, including land degradation, air and water pollution and increasing carbon dioxide emissions. Confronted with these challenges, Mongolia has made strong commitments to alternative growth based on environmental sustainability and social inclusiveness.

One potential pillar of this alternative economic growth is community-based eco and cultural tourism, in which rural herding communities, as custodians of nomadic lifestyle and culture, will be the main beneficiaries. The “Ger and Nature” scheme under the Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) proposes promoting green jobs/decent work among tourism operators and local herding communities, with individual community groups serving as hosts to cultural and adventure tourists. The “ger” in “Ger and Nature” refers to the traditional circular dwellings made of wood frames covered by layers of felt, and which would be used by nomadic herders to offer hospitality to both domestic and international tourists.

This report provides an analysis of the decent work situation and challenges in community-based eco-tourism in Mongolia with a focus on Ger and Nature Tourism, otherwise known as nomadic family stay, in rural Mongolia. Semi-structured face-to-face and telephone interviews, focus group discussions were administered among herders, tour operators, a visitor, an academic from a higher education institution, trade union representatives, policy-makers and international development organizations including the ILO and the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP) between March and July 2022. The study initially reviewed concepts of decent work under the guidance of the ILO and World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), and further interview instruments were developed based on the conceptual framework. Data analyses were framed within 11 decent work criteria or themes, which will be laid out in Chapter 3 below.

1.1. Objectives

The principal aim of this study is to assess decent work standards and to identify gaps in decent work in Ger and Nature Tourism in Mongolia. To this end, the following objectives were set:

- i. To review the concept of decent work in relation to the tourism sector followed by developing interview instruments for qualitative research covering government officials, grassroots communities and tourism sector employees who offer eco-tourism jobs for local people;
- ii. To assess decent work standards related to Ger and Nature Tourism; and
- iii. To identify the need for various capacity-building activities for persons involved or who might potential become involved in Ger and Nature Tourism.

1.1. Background

1.2.1. Tourism development among nomadic herder communities in Mongolia

The Ger and Nature Tourism concept in Mongolia is not new, and number of projects have been implemented across Mongolia since the mid-1990s. These projects have used various terms to describe themselves, including community-based tourism, nomadic tourism, and lately, Ger and Nature Tourism. Currently, there are three forms of such tourism in Mongolia:

- i. **Ger guesthouses run by local herder communities or local villagers** – A traditional *ger* is erected as tourist accommodation, and meals and trekking services are provided for international and domestic tourists. *Ger* guesthouses tend to attract mainly independent travellers and backpackers. Tourism actors sometimes complain about these services being of low quality, degrading the reputation of tourism industry and that they alter the nomadic culture of using *ger* into a purely commercial form while also contributing to environmental degradation. Herders argue that they have a right to pursue such a business.
- ii. **Partnership model between herder households and tourism businesses** – Herder households and tourism enterprises collaborate as equal partners and tend to offer rather decent accommodation, meals and activities. These partnerships tend to apply sustainable tourism criteria in their operations. The guest *ger* is often located beside the home of a herder family, so guests can experience the traditional daily culture of nomadic life. This is a kind of service suitable for 1–8 people.

iii. Top nomadic tourism services offered mainly by international companies targeting the upscale market – Mongolia’s traditional nomadic setting is supplied as luxury service. These services work with local herders and set their client accommodation in near the herder family. This is mainly for couples and tailor-made tours.

Ger tourism offers opportunities for diversifying herder families’ income, which is otherwise drawn largely (if not exclusively) from agricultural activities. The agricultural sector accounts for 12.8 per cent of Mongolia’s GDP and 5.6 per cent of export revenue. There are 181,051 herder households with a population of 651,119, or 27 per cent of Mongolia’s total population (Mongolia, National Statistical Office 2020a). Almost 54 per cent of herders have between 101 and 500 heads of livestock, as can be seen in table 1.

Table 1. Number and share of herders in Mongolia by number of livestock

| No. of livestock | No. of herders | Share of herders (%) |
|------------------|----------------|----------------------|
| Up to 11 | 3 764 | 2.08 |
| 11–30 | 9 925 | 5.48 |
| 31–50 | 9 357 | 5.17 |
| 51–100 | 20 549 | 11.35 |
| 101–200 | 38 316 | 21.16 |
| 201–500 | 59 782 | 33.02 |
| 501–999 | 29 337 | 16.20 |
| 1 000–1 499 | 8 320 | 4.60 |
| 1 500–2 000 | 1 166 | 0.64 |
| 2 001 or more | 535 | 0.30 |
| Total | 184 051 | 100.00 |

Source: Mongolia, National Statistical Office 2020a.

1.2.2. PAGE Mongolia’s activity on the Green Recovery

PAGE’s work in Mongolia began in 2013, offering support in the creation of the country’s National Green Development Policy. This set the tone for strong evidence-based policy analysis, resulting in reforms across a range of sectoral and thematic areas, including sustainable public procurement, finance and trade, green economy learning, green jobs, green buildings, and industry and waste management.

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant economic and social impacts for Mongolia, including a 9.7 per cent contraction in the economy within the first half of 2020. The tourism sector, the third-largest contributor to the economy, has been most severely impacted. Pre-COVID tourism sector earned US\$465.8 million (or 1,198.7 billion Mongolian tögrög) from international inbound tourism, with 1,270 enterprises employing 6,832 individuals in 2019 (Mongolia, National Statistical Office 2020b). But international tourist arrivals dropped 98.6 per cent from 577,300 in 2019 to just 7,787 in 2020. During this period, the number of employees in tourism decreased by 35.3 per cent to 4,421 and inbound tourism revenue dropped to US\$16.3 million (42.4 billion tögrög), or by 96.5 per cent (Mongolia, National Statistical Office 2021b). Additionally, the UN Mongolia Socio-Economic Response Plan for COVID-19 noted that the contraction has further exacerbated the socio-economic vulnerabilities of

herders, women and low-skilled youth.

In response, the Government adopted the Government Action Plan for 2020–2024, naming “sustainable tourism based on nature, history and cultural heritage” as key to the country’s economic recovery. In line with this, and building on previous work, PAGE developed a green recovery proposal together with national counterparts in November 2020. To aid the country’s economic recovery, PAGE is supporting Mongolia to develop a road map, national standards and an investment plan to further develop the community-based eco-tourism sector. PAGE conducted a market assessment to:

- identify gaps and opportunities for promoting sector growth and decent job creation;
- establish mechanisms for facilitating public-private collaboration;
- develop sustainability and green/eco-tourism business criteria and service standards; and
- enhance the capacity of local institutions to train small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), youth entrepreneurs, and community-based groups in green business standards and development.



2. Methodology

Decent work assessments use qualitative research methods to analyse decent work opportunities in labour markets. Research findings can then be used to develop proxies for decent work indicators using existing guidelines from the ILO and UNWTO. The qualitative aspect of the methodology assesses the employment impacts of greening at a national, sectoral, subsectoral or geographical level – or a combination of any of these. The assessment begins with desktop analysis of the conceptual framework of the concept of decent work, policy and programme activity for decent work, policy settings, and key stakeholders. This includes:

- understanding how decent work is defined and positioned within the wider green economy agenda;
- identifying priority sectors for green jobs and decent work and the policy frameworks and institutional mechanisms required to support green job promotion in these sectors; and
- identifying strategies and initiatives aimed at awareness-raising concerning decent work and developing skills in the private sector.

The assessment also implemented a guided questionnaire for completion by a range of national and provincial policy stakeholders to collect detailed information on activities for green jobs and decent work. Depending on the assessment context, guided interviews were also undertaken, including telephone interviews (due to Mongolia's geographic vastness), focus group discussions, and the guided completion of online forms. The results of the desk top research and semi-structured interview questions were then developed into a snapshot report of the current and potential opportunities for decent work in the selected context, including identification of the current policy system for decent work and a just transition towards environmental sustainability, as well

as linkages across policy domains. This draft report was then validated through tripartite (and tripartite plus) consultations where further gaps (including capacity and awareness gaps) and implications were identified and discussed, as well as recommendations for further activities, including capacity-building activities, were identified and prioritized.

Study participants included herders, tour operators, an academic and government official. A snowball sampling technique was administered in which initial contact was made from individuals who met study criteria. For this study, due to a practical reason, the first interview was undertaken with an owner of a tour operator company. After the initial interview, potential interviewees were referred to the study team by the initial interviewee. However, referred interviewees were not allowed to be from the close personal circle of the initial interviewee (such as siblings, friends and work colleagues). Sampling criteria for tour operators to be interviewed for the study included:

- i. experiences of working with herder households in providing tourism services;
- ii. being a small- or medium-sized enterprise; and
- iii. allowing for gender and age balances among the study participants.

Sampling criteria for herder households to be interviewed for the study were:

- i. being involved in tourism services;
- ii. the geographic landscape in which they reside; and
- iii. allowing for gender and age balances among the study participants.

A total of 16 interviews were undertaken between 9 March and 7 July 2022 (table 2) along with consultative tripartite meetings among relevant actors between 4 and 7 July 2022. A total of 15 herders, who were referred to the study team by tour operators and other herders, were approached, and seven herders were interviewed. Some contacts were too busy during the spring lambing and cashmere combing season or their phones were disconnected. A total of five directors and managers of small and medium tour operators were interviewed, along with a representative from the Government of Mongolia and trade union representative. Four groups of interviewees were coded using the initial letter of the category: "H" refers herders; "TO" refers tour operators; "O" refers officials, including trade union representatives; and "A" refers academics and V refers a visitor. Overall, the views of 12 different actor groups were reflected in the present study, as can be seen in table 3.

Table 2. A list of interviewees

| Gender | Herder (Code-H) | Tour operator (Code-TO) | Officials (Code-O) | Academia (Code-A) | Visitor (Code-V) | Total |
|--------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|-----------|
| Female | 3 (34, 47, 58) ¹ | 2 (38, 43) | 1 | 1 | – | 7 |
| Male | 4 (35, 40, 40, 63) | 3 (27, 42, 47) | 1 | – | 1 | 9 |
| Total | 7 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 16 |

– = nil. ¹ The figures in brackets represent the ages of the interviewees.

Table 3. A list of participants for tripartite consultation and interviews

| No. | Organization |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Mongolian Employers' Federation (MONEF) |
| 2 | Sustainable Finance Association |
| 3 | Mongolian Chamber of Commerce |
| 4 | Ministry of Labour and Social Protection |
| 5 | Confederation of Mongolian Trade Unions (CMTU) |
| 6 | Ministry of Environment and Tourism |
| 7 | UNDP |
| 8 | ILO |
| 9 | Private sector (tour operators) |
| 10 | Herders |
| 11 | Academia |
| 12 | National Park |

-- = nil. 1 The figures in brackets represent the ages of the interviewees.

2.1. Interview instrument

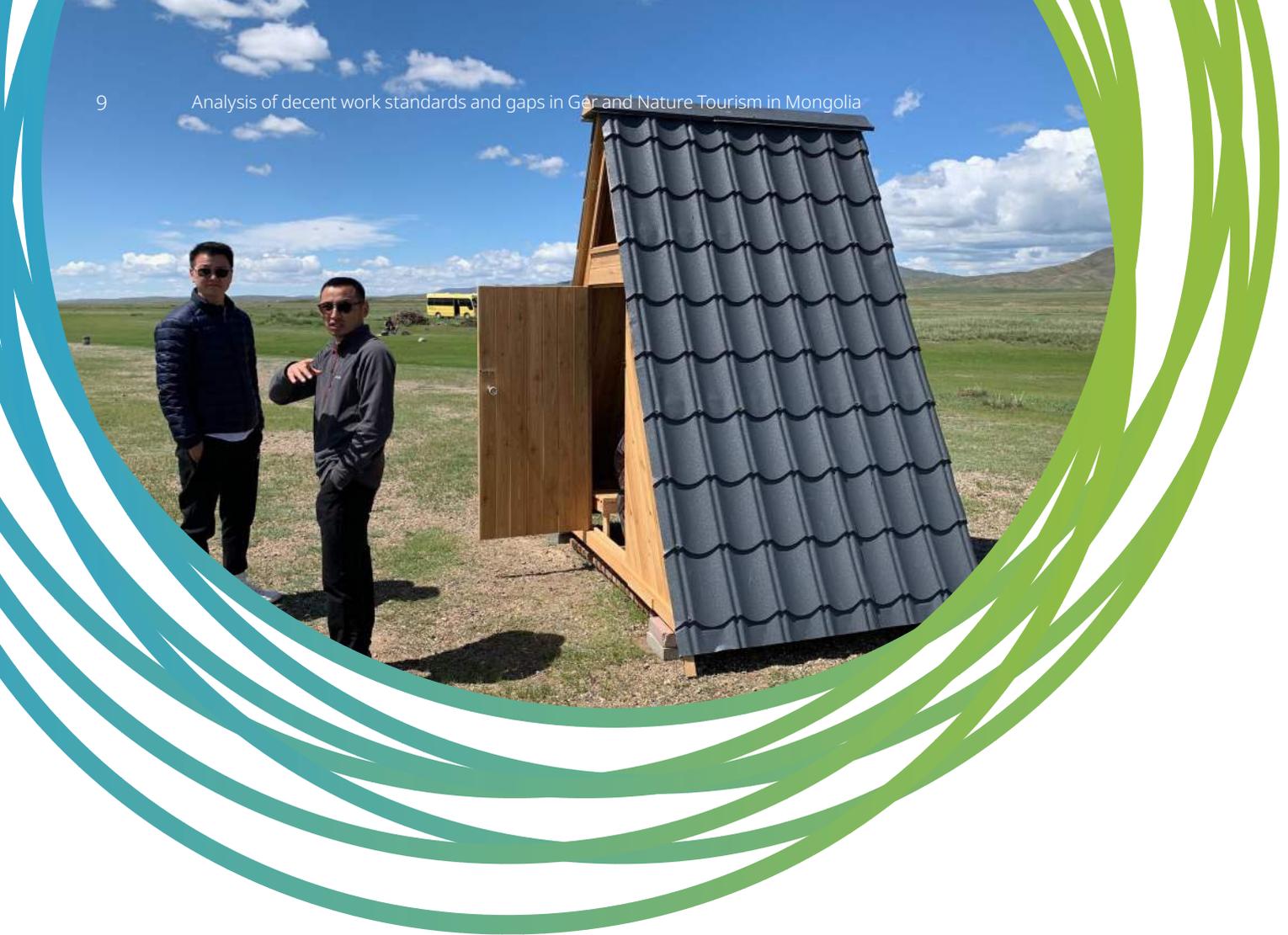
In Mongolia, the ILO and UNDP, under PAGE, have assisted the Government in greening the economic recovery through nature-based solutions and economic diversification in the community-based eco-tourism sector by conducting a green jobs potential assessment and decent work analysis of Ger and Nature Tourism. A semi-structured interview instrument was developed comprising 15 questions. Each question was based on ILO and UNWTO guidelines for statistical indicators of decent work in the tourism sector. The guidelines consisted of 186 main, 25 additional/supplementary and 19 legal indicators (Chernyshev 2009). The present study adopted selective main indicators that may reflect decent work aspects in Ger and Nature Tourism in Mongolia. These indicators are covered in the following questions:

1. Do you do any tourism-related work? (Number of domestic, international travellers, duration of stay and size of a tour group)
2. How many hours do you work a week when you host tourists?
3. How much do you earn from tourism-related jobs? Is it possible to assess the hourly rate of a family member's work?
4. Are there any differing pressures from work for female and male family members?
5. Do you have sufficient time for your family and to rest?
6. Are there any assistant workers for your household?
7. Do children do any work or contribute their labour to the families who host tourists?

8. Are there any children who dropped out from school?
9. What is the education background of your family members?
10. Are there many youth who live with their parents? How do they meet their cash needs?
11. Do you work with any household whose livelihood is considered as poor or modest?
12. Have any accidents happened to family members or tourists when you host tourists?
13. Is there health insurance for herder households?
14. Do you have any social welfare benefits?
15. Is there any herder association? Do you need one?

2.1. Study limitations

Although the present study revealed insights into how tourism is being developed and the decent work agenda among nomadic herding communities, the target number of interviewees was not achieved due to the seasonal workload of herders and the busy schedules of some officials. Also, some participants tended to have limited understanding about aspects of decent work, or some decent work aspects were considered by them to be sensitive to discuss and they felt reluctant to participate fully in the interviews. Most interviews were undertaken via phone call, which affected quality of some recordings. Having said that, tripartite consultation among constituencies in Ulaanbaatar and the workshop in Hustai National Park revealed more insights concerning the decent work agenda in Mongolia, and this was reflected in further updates and analysis of the data.



3. Decent work and its application in tourism

Decent work in tourism

Decent work is defined as “opportunities for women and men to obtain decent and productive work in conditions of freedom, equity, security and human dignity” (ILO 1999). Therefore, achieving fair globalization and poverty eradication is seen being dependent on access to productive employment and decent work (ILO, n.d.). Four strategic objectives have been set under the concept of decent work, as follows:

- i. rights at work, underpinned by fundamental principles and international labour standards;
- ii. employment and income opportunities;
- iii. social protection and social security; and
- iv. social dialogue and tripartism.

These objectives apply to all workers regardless of gender, age, geographic condition, family setting and whether the work is in private or public employment. In other word, decent work principles apply to almost all spheres of human life and livelihoods.

The Tripartite Meeting of Experts on the Measurement of Decent Work have recommended the following dimensions of decent work (Chernyshev 2009):

- i. Employment opportunities;
- ii. Adequate earnings and productive work;
- iii. Decent hours;
- iv. Combining work, family and personal life;
- v. Work that should be abolished;
- vi. Stability and security of work;
- vii. Equal opportunities and treatment in employment;
- viii. Safe work environment;
- ix. Social security;
- x. Social dialogue, workers' and employers' representation;
- xi. Economic and social context of decent work.

The figure below showcases the application of these dimensions within Ger and Nature Tourism; all of these dimensions found in the figure will be explored in greater detail in Section 4 below.

Decent work and just transition components in Ger and Nature Tourism in Mongolia



The agreement signed in 2008 by the ILO Director-General and the UNWTO Secretary-General is another good example of joint activities between UN agencies in order to further the “Delivering as One” approach to delivering coherent activities and of mainstreaming employment and the Decent Work Agenda in the tourism sector.

Small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) dominate the tourism sector – globally, almost half of the tourism workforce is employed in companies of fewer than ten people, and 75 per cent work for organizations with fewer than 50 staff. SMEs (including in tourism) tend to confront significant challenges related to accessing finance, complying with business regulations, and inadequate skills (ILO 2017). Therefore, attention to sustainability and the Decent Work Agenda may not be prioritized among SMEs.



4. Decent work standards in Ger and Nature Tourism and gaps in Mongolia

4.1. Employment opportunities

Ger and Nature Tourism generates varying employment opportunities among herders in rural areas, and such opportunities are disproportionately distributed across various geographic regions, household structures and livelihoods. The main employment opportunities emerge from providing accommodation, food and beverages, and adventure and cultural activities; while needs related to logistical aspects (access to markets) and capacity-building demands can generate induced employment as well. Employment opportunities are linked and contextualized by underpinning: (i) family livelihoods, (ii) attitudes and skills, (iii) social aspects, and (iv) missing links of employment opportunity in tourism. Each are discussed further immediately below.

4.1.1. Family livelihoods

Family livelihoods are defining a factor, as tourism work is labour-intensive and is often performed in addition to another labour-intensive livelihood source for pastoral nomadic persons – animal husbandry. Families' circumstances are partly determined by family resources, such as number of livestock, the composition of said livestock, and the ger and other material capacities. This was demonstrated by number of interviewees. Eco and cultural tourism tend to rely on rich and diverse cultural elements, and therefore, those who would like to get involved in tourism-related employment should meet such criteria. In Ger and Nature Tourism, nomadic families

who care for livestock could diversify their income opportunities through tourism due to market demand, but there is a question of balance when it comes the amount of livestock held by the family. Those who have large numbers of livestock will likely be unable to spare enough time to support other livelihood activities; while households with a small number of livestock are not of interest to both tour operators and visitors, as such families cannot offer sufficient traditional cultural amenities to attract visitors. This was supported by a tour operator company director, who said, *"Families with no or small number of livestock cannot represent Mongolian traditional culture. Therefore, we do not bring our visitors to such families"* (Interview, T01)¹. Such households are often considered as belonging to poor families. On the other side of the scale, another director of a tour operator noted that families with too many livestock are also not sought after collaborators: *"We only work with families with 200 livestock. As this is an insufficient number of livestock for livelihoods [on its own]"* (Interview, T03). In this argument, the number of livestock indicates a family income source. Therefore, families with smaller herds tend look for an additional income source. Beyond livestock holdings, interviewees argued the importance of other required resources, noting, *"Those who would like to host tourists should have financial capacity ... resources (livestock). Families with small kids cannot do this, as children can make it [the guest ger] dirty. We have a container where guest ger furniture can be stored nicely. There is no dust on the furniture as we cover it with plastic. ... Not every family has this capacity"* (Interview, H7). As can be seen, families with inadequate financial resources and family circumstances cannot take up employment opportunities in tourism.

4.1.2. Attitudes and skills

Personal attitude and skills, including a willingness to engage in hard work and having the right personality to deal with tourists, is another vital quality for gaining employment opportunities. Herders stressed the importance of individual innate qualities and skills. In a focus group interview with herders and tour operators, a tour operator director said, *"Those who would like to host tourists should have ... individual attitudes of hard work, the right mindset"* (Interview, T01). Hard work here refers to doing many things with passion. The right attitude was defined in contradiction to what is not right by the head of a tour operator as follows: *"Those herders, who live in poor condition, often lazy, with no morals. ... If I bring my guest to such family, there will be domestic violence in the evening"* (Interview, T01). This indicates good morals and kindness can be vital qualities in families who are interested in working in the tourism industry. A tour operator director argued:

For doing anything in rural areas, there needs to be leadership and participation. Current livelihood status may not be important. We need to see whether an individual has any aspiration and drive before selecting. There are many projects that are focused the poor or anyone with many children. ... Such projects go on, yet stop as funding stops. ... Eventually, one or two families succeed in [community-based tourism] (Interview, T02).

This illustrates that employment opportunities are only viable if individuals have a genuine interest in getting involved in tourism. In many cases, initiatives generated from outside of local communities tend to fail due to a lack of local drive.

4.1.3. Social aspects

Social aspects appear to play a vital part in tourism employment opportunities, with herders more able to get involved in labour-intensive activities through the help of others. For instance, one herder family said, *"We can only do these things [tourism-related jobs] with others' [herders] help..."* (Interview, H7). This indicates level of intensity of the extra jobs generated from tourism for a family of four members. Further, the herdsman disclosed, *"They asked their relative to help them on herding so they can have some spare time for hosting guests"* (Interview, H6). This indicates that one family may not be able to handle both livestock and tourism-related activities. It seems more suitable to a herder community network. In other words, tourism opportunities may be limited for

¹ The quotations presented throughout the remainder of the report were derived from interviews conducted with the various study participants as detailed in Section 2 above. From here on the speaker will only be identified by their identification code – such as "T01" or "H4".

families with fewer members in the household.

Due to its labour intensity and the gendered roles of traditional households, both men and women and youth and adults have varying degrees of opportunities. Horse trekking and camel trekking seem to be labour-intensive and are often handled by young men. Training horses and camels is largely undertaken by young men, and could potentially be a good opportunity for the tourism industry to collaborate with. Yet, in recent years, nomadic herders tend to use horses and camels less and less, which has resulted in a large number of untamed horses and camels. As a tour operator company director argued, “*There is almost no district to organize a horse trekking groups in *** province*” (Interview, TO3). This indicates a lost opportunity in adventure tourism, and reduced use of green modes of transport in the countryside. There are tourism-related employment opportunities in this space, but herders have not taken full advantage of them.

4.1.4. Missing links in employment opportunities

Missing links in employment opportunities in tourism include mechanisms to link herders with the tourism market. An academic argued how herders can be get employed in community-based tourism:

Training must be delivered [to herders] every year before tourism season. It has to be the Ministry [of Environment and Tourism]’s policy. So there should be budget for training, and it must be good quality training by licensed trainers. Trainers must pass certain criteria too. Trainers must understand what green jobs and decent work are. Herders are potential human resources who are working in the tourism industry. So, they should be trained. Now trainings are very symbolic. ... Training certification must be recognized (Interview, A1).

This demonstrates that capacity-building activities can be focal force to prepare herders for tourism-related employment. Yet, good quality training recognized by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism or delivered through education institutions is needed to make herders employable and educated on aspects of green jobs and decent work in tourism.

This is further supported by herders, as they seem to have a limited understanding about features of the tourism market and emerging trends in responsible tourism globally and nationally. The importance of preserving traditional culture and traditional knowledge for not only tourism but also environmental protection should be promoted widely. A local herdsman argued,

Training should be like ... this is tourism, this is how we can develop tourism, common mistakes by herders, behaviour, ways of attracting tourists. ... Training should be in bag² centres in June or in August. ... You can contact the bag governor’s office staff. Facebook can be a good way of distributing information. ... Most district people are on Facebook group. ... If there are people interested in tourism, there should be a bridge that lets them understand what tourism is, how you can make it a livelihood and ways of contacting tour companies. ... Or there could be regional and local expos where herders can attend (Interview, H4).

It seems vital to organize such training among herders in convenient locations at the right times. The same herder argued coherence of capacity-building activities as “*it is very important if there is a mechanism of contacting herders with tour companies. ... Some certification was useless. It did not give an advantage [on working in tourism] as companies did not value it much or recognize [the certificates]*” (Interview, H4). Clearly some trainings are not recognized in the tourism sector and add little value when it comes to herders getting involved in tourism.

4.2. Adequate earnings and productive work

Tourism can generate essential income for herder households who are involved in tourism activities. There are two key themes on this topic discussed below: (i) adequate earning; and (ii) productive work in Ger and Nature Tourism. Families often expressed that the amount of income received from tourism is reasonably

² A bag is the smallest administrative region in Mongolia.

adequate, even though they tend to work for long hours in addition to their animal husbandry duties. Study findings revealed ways of improving productivity of tourism-related employment in rural settings.

4.2.1. Adequate earnings

Herders often argue that the benefit they receive from their livestock is limited and does not provide sufficient cashflow throughout the year. So, additional income is sought. Tourism has the potential to generate much needed income for herders at the right time. This was supported by a herdsman who noted: *“We earn 30 per cent of family income from tourism, which we [use to] buy children’s clothes and other needs. ... We manage to save income from animal husbandry. ... We have 500 livestock, which is an average number in the area. We use our horses [for trekking] and sheep and goats are used for traditional barbecue”* (Interview, H4). This indicates that in central Mongolia 500 livestock is considered an average number. So, in the case of this herder, tourism income equates to roughly the income generated from 214 livestock.

Another example of adequate income via tourism was provided by focus group interview with herders and tour operator directors as, with a herder stating:

Tourism is a very good additional income. ... It provides daily cash needs ... as we have no salary or pension. ... [Revenue from] animals cover costs in spring and autumn. ... So we have no income in the winter and summer. ... In summer and autumn months, herders want to carry some cash on Naadam [Festival], also lots of weddings take place, there is also a need of children’s tuition fee, expenses for schooling. ... You cannot just slaughter an animal and sell it to cover such expenses. ... Although we grow them, we also mean to slaughter them. ... Also, we cannot sell [livestock products] at a favourable rate. In autumn, every family sells meat and prices go down. ... Such tourism-related income assists herders to sell their animals and raw materials [cashmere and meat] at favourable rates at the right moment when prices of raw materials are high (Interview, H6).

This suggests that tourism-related income meets timely needs of herders in summer months while also providing opportunities to trade raw materials from livestock at favourable rate later. Overall, the benefit of tourism income goes beyond its actual amount. As it permits herders to trade raw materials at a high rate while they are using their income from tourism. This surplus is conditioned by tourism income and can be seen as induced extra tourism income. Therefore, it is considered as adequate and essential income. Another herdsman argued, *“Income is reasonable, I think. ... We earn students’ tuition fees and have more left-over income from tourism”* (Interview, H5). So, students’ tuition fees are a major cost for a herder households that is often covered by tourism-related income.

A female director of a tour operator company said that the income from tourism-related activities is *“not much but they [herders] do daily chores regardless of whether they are hosting visitors or not. Such jobs don’t add much pressure [to the family]. ... Women perhaps receive more pressure”* (Interview, TO1). This illustrates that hosting small numbers of guests does not require much additional effort, which may generate only a small amount of income but of an amount that is adequate relative to the hours spent. Thus, herders may like getting involved in tourism. For instance, near Orkhon waterfall in Central Mongolia many herders seem to get involved in tourism. As a herdsman said, *“Lots of jobs are created from tourism. ... Forty per cent of herder families earn from tourism in my area”* (Interview, H4). This shows that tourism is already a part of herders’ livelihoods, and they seem eager to get involved in tourism because it may already be generating adequate income for people in a similar situation.

4.2.2. Productive work

Productive work is linked to service standards and required skills, as well as apprenticeship policies. Study participants suggested that certain standards of services in Ger and Nature Tourism should be applied, including bathroom facilities and showers, food and beverage, tour guiding and training people, as these are part of the services on offer and have an impact on productivity. In tourism, productive work includes providing clean

toilet and shower facilities that meet basic standards in order to cater to customer needs and ensure customer satisfaction. A herdsman who runs horse trekking trips in Uvurkhangai Province said,

“ There should be single standards on toilet and shower. ... We have an open-pit toilet. There are lots of tourists.” (Interview, H4). As an academic suggests, “Hosting tourists [in nomadic family households] is one way of providing services that are required to meet minimum standards of service ... i.e., the bed must be spotless clean, clean cooking, eco-toilet and shower. These are the most important things” (Interview, A1).

Hosting visitors sometimes requires extra skills, including being able to cook visitor-friendly dishes. Yet, some families seem to struggle to provide options beyond their usual daily meals. A herder woman reported the following about fellow herders: *“Some families cook separate meals for tourists, and it is only meat and flour, it seems difficult for them to cook. ... There are not many vegetables. ... Some tourists complain about meals and say that meals had no vegetables” (Interview, H5).* If household members have adequate skills for cooking, their jobs may be more productive. Otherwise, visitors may not enjoy their experience fully and this can limit the viability of engaging in tourism. The same woman herder reported,

There is some friction because of some demands from tourists. ... Some herders say that cooking meals is difficult, as some families live far from a village and cannot buy vegetables. This causes some difficulties. ... Tourists report complaints to their companies [intermediaries]. ... Regardless of such difficulties, herders do this, because there is not much cash revenue for herders, except when they sell cashmere, wool, and meat. ... If tourists visit twice every ten days, that will generate cash income. ... Therefore, they adapt and do this (Interview, H5).

This indicates tourism generates enough extra income for herders to be willing to accept such demands from tourists and tour companies.

Tourism productivity not only depend on household members, but also it relates to intermediaries between herders and tourists, such as tour guides. Tour guides should have sufficient understanding of local context and culture as mediators between tourists and the local culture. But herders argue that some guides misinterpret local culture and horse-riding practices, which potentially causes difficulties. As one herder put it, *“There needs to be a good horse guide. ... They [guides] do not know what to explain. ... They sometimes translate things in opposite. ... [For example, don'ts] like not creating a rattling sound on horseback, not pulling [the reins] too much. ... They do not let their guests ride with a tight bite. ... [As] such guides do not know about Mongolian traditional way of living.” (Interview, H4).*

As an academic suggests, *“hosting tourists [at nomadic families] is one way of providing services that require to meet minimum standards of service. Herders need to be trained for that. There needs to be many capacity-building training for herders” (Interview, A1).* Such basic training in hospitality services seems to underpin productive work in community-based tourism. A tour operator owner shared their experience of training people, saying, *“Those who are with poor livelihoods and with indecent behaviour, we ask them to accompany an experienced person as an assistant on horse trekking and hiking tours. We ask families without livestock to work as local guides on trekking trips” (Interview, TO1).* This reveals that there are ways for those who are from poorer households to get involved in tourism-related employment via attending capacity-building trainings. Also, peer-to-peer learning could lead to productive employment.

4.3. Decent working hours and balancing work, family and personal life

There are two areas need careful consideration when it comes to herders engaging in tourism-related work: (i) balancing work with one's family and/or private life; and (ii) the duration of working hours in Ger and Nature Tourism.

4.3.1. Balance of family or private life

As herders and tour operators argued, the nomadic way of living in rural Mongolia follows traditional routines. Thus, timed schedules sometimes make herders jobs less easy. A herdsman with three children noted, *“We have no scheduled life as a herding culture. ... Some guides manage to explain these things nicely. ... For some people it is an issue: as sometimes we need to check the herd in the field and milk mares before taking tourists on horse riding in between herding chores. ... If a guide explains these things to the tourists well, it is not a problem ... otherwise it can be an issue”* (Interview, H4). This indicates that herders need to take care of their livestock and household chores before spending time on tourism-related jobs. This highlights that tourism may need to adjust to the local context and provide local cultural features to tourists in advance and during the trip in appropriate ways. If these things are arranged well, local herders are even more willing to host guests. As the same herdsman argued, *“There are no difficulties for our private life if we host tourists for 2–3 nights. ... It is even better to understand each other”* (Interview, H4). Herders’ schedules reflect local features of the traditional way of living, and it is important that these schedules are explained to visitors as part of how herders represent local culture. Herders also like hosting their guests for more than one night, as it helps to create a meaningful experience and cultural exchange that leaves both sides fulfilled. In rural areas, such visits can enrich one’s life beyond financial gain.

4.3.2. Duration of working hours

Herders’ working hours in tourism employment seem long and can consume hours that would be spent with family or engaging in social activities, which may have negative effects in herders’ well-being. As a herdsman said, *“Sometimes we feel very tired after a day of long work and would like to go to bed at 10 [p.m.]”* (Interview, H5). Therefore, setting aside specific time for family and private life seems essential in Ger and Nature Tourism. This also can be organized by allocating jobs fairly among local herders. A tour operator owner suggested, *“In other places, a family host only guests and horse trekking can be done by another family. ... So it is new job for other families”* (Interview, TO1). In this way, herders can allocate tourism-related jobs evenly and decent working hours can be observed. A tour operator suggested, *“Herders should limit certain hours to introduce themselves to the guests. ... They can say to the guests that we will spare some hours for talking to our guests between 6–8, etc., after completing all daily livestock chores ... before going to bed”* (Interview, TO1). This could be a solution for ensuring a balance between family time and productive time with the guests. One of the widely offered services by herders is short- and long-distance horse trekking. In the case of domestic visitors, some horse trekking is undertaken over long distances with very long hours of horseback riding over the course of a few days due to the cheap price. As a result, it causes higher levels of fatigue-related risks for both horse wranglers and visitors.³ Therefore, it is vital to set a maximum duration of riding hours per day, depending on the season, as autumn and winter trips will take place with less available daylight.

4.4. Child labour

Child labour in Ger and Nature Tourism seems to be a topic of lesser concern. Mongolia ratified the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), in 2001 and the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138), in 2002. Child labour is regulated by the Labour Law of Mongolia, section 143, under which children aged 13–15 can do light jobs in a safe and healthy working environment if there is no negative impact on children’s health, growth and education rights, and provided that there is written consent from the child’s legal representative (parents, a caretaker, and so on). A member of the Government in charge of labour matters is authorized to define the types of light jobs that persons aged under 13 years can do. Employers must sign a tripartite labour contract with both the underaged person and their legal representative if they are to employ persons aged between 15–18 years.

Interviewees argued they do not let children get involved in tourism-related or dangerous jobs. A herdsman said, *“No children get involved in tourism and the companies also demand that. So [there is] no breach of children’s rights”* (Interview, H5). The Government’s list of prohibited workplaces for underaged persons seems to offer few considerations that would allow children to work in Ger and Nature Tourism. For instance, the list prohibits underaged persons working in horse training, herding livestock in dangerous weather conditions, or assisting

³ Based on field observation, 2021.

with herding (except if done with their parent, siblings or grandparents). In addition, there is a weightlifting limit of 8 kg for boys and 5 kg for girls if they are aged under 16, and 16 kg for boys and 10kg for girls if they are aged 16–18 years (Order of the Minister of Labour No. A/36, 2016).

However, some interviewees expressed that “*children of their relatives stay with them and help on camel trekking*” (H1). Yet such act is widely practiced in the countryside during school holidays and may not be considered as breaching the law. Researchers also observed children helping parents making guest beds and washing dishes, and herding livestock during the summer holiday. Also, a visitor at a herder family observed, “*The family of the herder work hard and children work, but this is school holiday. They [children] are not working at factory. ... Children are forever helping mum with this and that ... but working condition is much better than brick factory, shining shoes on the street like in some other countries*” (Interview, T1). This reveals children’s contribution to home chores during school holidays, but does not seem to be considered as a form of child labour. The jobs they get involved with in a family setting also seemed to be in decent conditions and appropriate for children’s well-being.

4.5. Stability and security of work

Having stable and secure work in Ger and Nature Tourism seems pressing issue due to: (i) the fragile nature of both animal husbandry and tourism (including the seasonal nature of both); (ii) the lack of training in Mongolia; and (iii) financial burdens.

4.5.1. Fragile nature of animal husbandry and tourism

Animal husbandry itself is already an insecure source of income due to increased frequency of natural disasters and pastureland degradation. Also, raw materials derived from animal husbandry are seasonal, which means that the income derived from the practice can be infrequent. As a herder family noted, “*In animal husbandry, only cashmere has a good price and sheep can be sometimes, but it is unstable. If you only have animal husbandry, you can lose them [all] in one winter. ... There is no guarantee. ... In Lun, a herder with 1,000 livestock lost all his livestock in a single flood*” (Interview, H6). This discloses how fragile an income source animal husbandry can be. Consequently, Ger and Nature Tourism can also be a fragile income source, as it depends on the cultural richness of a nomadic family, which in turn depends on the family’s livestock herding practices and resources. Many young people are also moving away from animal husbandry to get jobs related to extractive resources. As one herdsman said, “*There are no jobless people. ... Young people [generally men] often do many jobs and earn from natural raw materials*” (Interview, H4). This indicates young people are involved in various jobs, but it these jobs are very much dependent on unpredictable natural resources, making their incomes less stable and more insecure.

In terms of employment stability, Ger and Nature Tourism is only viable if there is a living nomadic culture. Yet, there seems to be fewer young herders in rural areas. This appears to be partially due to a lack of pastureland, as well as the pursuit of higher education by more girls in urban areas. As a herdsman stated, “*There are less young herders in the countryside. Girls often go to university. ... The carrying capacity [of pasture land] is saturated. ... There is no land for winter encampment for young families, as we have much of forest and rocky areas. ... We set summer encampment within less than 500 meters rather than 4–5 km as it is like in the Gobi*” (Interview, H4). This suggests that there will be fewer young people pursuing their traditional way of living. In relation to this, Ger and Nature Tourism will be less stable in the long run. As the herdsman further argued: “*There are not many herders from the generation of the 1990s. ... There are only five young herders who are born in the 2000s*” (Interview, H4). This indicates that there may not be a sufficient, stable nomadic culture in some areas to sustain cultural tourism, and as a result, Ger and Nature Tourism may ultimately lose its core basis as a tourist attraction and resource in rural Mongolia.

4.5.2. A lack of training and financial burdens

Tourism activities involving livestock tend to be risk prone, and this is also reflected in nomadic tourism. A herdsman who runs horse trekking said, “*People get injured from horse trekking sometimes. ... We work with*

two small companies and there was no training on horse trekking requirements. ... Big horse trekking companies organize safety training. ... They use safe stirrups" (Interview, H4). When they work with small tour operators, there seems to be a lack of training for herders in terms of security and safety for both herders and tourists. Although some herders prepare their equipment themselves, they said, "Horse riding equipment is expensive" (Interview, H4). Also, some herders were unsure of what to do in the case of serious accident, as one herdsman noted, "There was no serious accident happened to us and tourists. ... Not sure what to do if a serious incident does happen" (Interview, H5). This discloses that some herders have less confidence in the case of an accident, and it may lead to losing their contract with tour companies. So, good training seems to be vital for herders to keep secure employment in Ger and Nature Tourism, and it can also prevent herders from facing some of the potential financial risks associated with getting involved in tourism-related employment activities.

4.6. Equal opportunity and treatment

Equal opportunity and treatment of people involved in Ger and Nature Tourism varies across family and individual circumstances, and there are gender aspects that should be considered.

4.6.1. Family circumstances

Family circumstances tend to define whether tourism-related opportunities are available to a herder household or not. Eco and cultural tourism seem to have specific demands and requirements, which include meeting the principles of sustainable tourism by preserving the local culture and environment. Hence, a local herdsman argued, "We are group of 12 herder households. ... Our visitors only stay around our area and do not ask for anything non-traditional or not-natural for us. ... The requirements [for herder families] include those who milk their cows and livestock, and ride their horses ... milk sheep and goats, those who train horses also have advantage. ... As there are families who do not collect dung ... such families seem not very interesting to tourists" (Interview, H5). This is a clear example of what responsible tourism market demands and how it helps local herders to preserve their traditional culture and environmentally friendly operation on the ground. If local herder families meet such criteria, there are employment opportunities to be had. Those who pursue a traditional way of living have the most opportunities.

However, even among those families who pursue a traditional way of living, there is a limit on the available human resource capacity to engage in tourism-related opportunities. One herder family noted, "My friends like hosting tourists. ... They have two kids... But have no possibilities as there are not enough people. ... At least a family with 3-5 members ... or at least 2-3 families can do this [together]..." (Interview, H7). Tourism-related jobs can be integrated into households with a certain number of livestock and those who use their livestock in a traditional manner. Yet, human labour seems vital. So, a family with small children may not be suitable in tourism employment if there are not many people in the family. Tourism-related opportunities will be more suitable if families work together. This is already happening in Mongolia, as local herders said, "We ask saahalt [a distance of 0.5-3 km] households to hire their horses" (Interview, H6). So, tourism-related opportunities are shared amongst households.

Such tourism employment opportunities seem unequal for those who have modest livelihoods or no livestock. In some areas in Mongolia, families with modest livelihoods are integrated into tourism. A herder woman in Central Mongolia said, "The company [we work with] requires including 2-3 families with few livestock (less than 100), households with disabled members in our network. ... These families like getting involved in tourism and express their interest" (Interview, H5). This indicates that tour companies could set criteria of including those who are of modest livelihoods. There are such opportunities available if they are supported by other herdsman, as "people from modest backgrounds have opportunities to earn from tourism if they try" (Interview, H4). For families with few livestock, tourism seems to be an important source of income; as one family with 200 livestock claimed, "We earn a half of our total income from tourism" (Interview, H2).

4.6.2. Gender aspects

Depending on the types of jobs involved, men and women seem to have varying opportunities. In terms of providing accommodation and meal services, there seems to be more of a workload for women than men. Preparing and setting visitor accommodation (that is, the *ger*) requires an additional workload by women. One herdsman said, *“Women in charge of milking and sales, men in charge of horse trekking and outdoor jobs. ... We do not receive [multiple] trips at same time, which is easy for the company and us. My wife will take care of herding with help of local siblings and with the support of my community when I am away”* (Interview, H4). This statement discloses labour allocation by male and female members of the household. Also, it indicates local community support when help is needed. Another example was provided by a herdsman who leads a group of a herder community (12 households), who said, *“Overall, women have more workloads than men ... meals, drinks etc ... cooking for tourists. Also we do various things to entertain them to prevent them from getting bored. ... Women receive rather more pressure”* (Interview, H5). This indicates that within *ger* encampments, women oversee most jobs related to cooking, cleaning and communicating with their guests. An academic also argued, *“All the cleaning will be done by the wife, women and girls and children. ... The husband will not wash bed lining. ... Then, where will they wash it? It is very difficult in remote places and a lot of labour”* (Interview, A1). This suggests, hosting visitor may put more pressure on women of the family due to gendered division of labour among herding communities.

Tourism-related jobs are particularly important for youth as a herder family suggested, saying: *“Young people aged above 18 years are hired as local guides. ... Young women also work as local guides on hiking tours. There is a tour company requirement of not carrying their luggage by motorized transport, it has to be horse carriage or ox carriage; this generates another job. ... We have horse carriages. Herders like this and ask to join in such network”* (Interview, H5). This indicates eco and cultural tourism can generate jobs for both female and male youth if there is a certain requirement set for local logistics and how the tourism is being operated. When there is no motorized transport, herders can supply local traditional and environmentally friendly modes of transport. This indicates how decent jobs can be green and gender equal in the case of nature-based cultural tourism among nomadic communities in rural Mongolia if tour companies mandate specific requirements on how to handle tourism in the field.

4.7. Safe work environment

A safe work environment covers the safety of herders working in *Ger* and Nature Tourism and their livestock and guests. Two major themes emerged for the research, including: (i) activities related to safety; and (ii) placing checks on guest behaviour.

4.7.1. Activities related to safety in the work environment

The main tour activities that herders offer include horse and camel riding. Sometimes just a few herders will be in charge of large numbers of horse riders on a single trip, which can put both herders and tourists in great danger. As herders argued, horse trekking requires careful operation and labour support: *“Local youth assist me on horse trekking as an apprentice. ... We lead a pack animal with luggage. Thus, you need an assistant. An assistant takes care of all luggage and I take care of the travellers ... checking how they ride, whether the saddle belt is fine or not, etc.”* (Interview, H4). This shows that unless the herder is checking equipment and regularly monitoring travellers' safety, adventure tourism can be risk prone. Such outdoor activities take place in various geographic and weather conditions with various potential risks associated with each set of conditions. If a tour group gets larger, this requires even more planning and careful operation. Doing such intense jobs for long hours could also lead to potentially fatal risks. Another horse wrangler noted, *“Hosting tourists and organizing horse trekking make our workload much greater than [before] besides livestock herding. ... They [tourists] stay maximum of seven days and go on horse trekking and into nature”* (Interview, H2). This indicates there should be maximum distance to be covered in a day to keep working hours decent and that frequent breaks should be taken during such adventure activities.

4.7.2. Placing checks on guest behaviour

Herders disclosed difficulties of hosting domestic visitors who *“drink alcohol and sometimes make loud noise”* (Interview, H1). Such attitudes by visitors make host family’s lives uncomfortable and may cause distress for children. Also, the researcher observed such acts domestic visitors asking a host family to sell them vodka, and the family did sell such beverages. Visitors sometimes generate a lot of noise late at night. As a tour operator company director suggested, *“It is unpredictable how people will behave when they consumed alcohol. So, herders can demand their customers not consume alcohol or cigarette if they [the herders] do not consume alcohol and cigarette themselves”* (Interview, TO2). This postulates that herders can create safe visitor and host experiences free from alcohol and cigarettes if they initiate such restrictions themselves.

4.8. Social protection

Social protection for herders in Ger and Nature Tourism covers: (i) formalization of employment relations; (ii) social and health security; and (iii) social security and animal husbandry.

4.8.1. Formalization of employment relations

Mongolia’s new labour law regulates formerly unregulated labour within herding communities, including the work of assistant herders, which has direct relevance to Ger and Nature Tourism and social security. A person who works as an assistant herder must sign a contract with the person who offers the employment according to the new labour law. Therefore, all working conditions must be set in the employment contract, including wages and working hours, living conditions and holiday time. Such contracts need to be registered at the local governor’s office. Although an assistant herder is engaged in a formal employment relationship, the employer is not required to make social security contributions on behalf of the assistant herder, with such contributions being paid into the Social Insurance Fund by the assistant herder voluntarily to cover pensions and other employment-related benefits, according to the Labour Law (article 71.8).

The present study also revealed the practices of assistant herders in the countryside. A local herder said, *“We have a younger sister who helps us herding. So, we can concentrate on tourism-related things. ... Her help is very big contribution. ... We pay her monthly directly to her account, but we have not written a contract”* (Interview, H7). This statement indicates the importance of having an assistant herder to manage tourism-related jobs in the countryside, but it also demonstrates that the labour law is not necessarily being abided by and there is further need of formalization of such labour relationships through formal employment contracts and the provision of social protection.

4.8.2. Social and health security

In terms of social insurance and health insurance, there are different practices in the countryside. Herders account for 25.7 per cent of all employees in Mongolia, yet only 31.5 per cent of herders (29.4 per cent of male herders and 34.7 of female herders) pay social security, which indicates low coverage of social security among the herder population in the country. As much as 61.3 per cent of herders pay for health insurance. In terms of age group, regardless their heightened health risk due to occupational hazards and ageing, people aged 15–24 and 55 or above are the two groups who had the lowest percentage of health insurance coverage at 6.6 per cent and 5.1 per cent, respectively (Mongolia, National Statistical Office 2020a).

Many people have limited understanding of how social insurance works and of its benefits. Herders interviewed for the study said:

“There is mandatory health insurance we pay ourselves” (Interview, H5).

“We can pay our social insurance and health insurance from tourism income. ... It depends on herders’ own will. Unless we pay social insurance, we will not earn a pension. Herders need training on social insurance regulations” (Interview, H4).

These are examples of how some herders take social security and health insurance seriously, and that tourism income covers their social insurance costs. However, another herdsman said, “*We have no health and social insurance. ... We have health books and receive health service from the village hospital*” (Interview, H2). So for some, there is still lack of social security in both the short and long term, with many having limited understanding about social insurance.

During a focus group interview, some herders and tour operators complained about the social benefits provided by the State as, with one tour operator stating, “*People rely too much on the state benefits. ... Some families drink vodka and cause discomfort to tourists. Then we stop sending our clients. When this happened, they start arguing and complaining ... and say that you must send your tourists as the local governors said. ... So people too much rely on the mentality of state benefits. ... There is too much benefit; as a result, all business does not get developed and there is no-one to work*” (Interview, T01). Herders in the group interview were in agreement with this statement by the tour operator. This may be a sign of widespread social benefits with no specific targets. As a result, there might be a shortage of labour in the countryside, as social benefits could be serving as easy earnings without having to work.

4.8.3. Health and animal husbandry

The need for provision of health coverage and services is not only limited to herders themselves. Some of the herders suggested better veterinary service could lead to better health security for both locals and tourists:

Livestock vaccination should be transparent and open, covering all regions. This is important to serve tourists with healthy meat and dairy – also for domestic residents. Veterinary service needs to be improved. We have foot and mouth disease now, and it will halt tourism flows. If all animals are vaccinated, it will relate to tourism. ... Vaccination does not cover all livestock. Although we want vaccination, veterinary service is a private monopoly with no market competition. ... So, service should be with good quality and cheaper. ... There is insufficient vaccination here (Interview, H4).

This herder explains how livestock health and treatment could lead to safe food resources and could potentially increase value added agro tourism in the region. A good and affordable veterinary service seems to underpin herders’ health and ultimately employment opportunities in tourism – and the social security access associated with tourism employment. Yet, veterinary services seem to be inaccessible to many herders’ livestock due to the high costs associated with monopoly control over such services.

4.9. Social dialogue – Workers’ and employers’ representation

Social dialogue promotes “*fair and peaceful workplace relations, decent work and social justice*” (ILO 2017, 47). Benefits of social dialogue include reduction of social conflict via facilitating consensus between the parties concerned on the design and implementation of economic and social policies. Lack of social dialogue may cause “*conflict, misunderstanding and fragmented progress*” (ILO 2017, 47). The present study found: (i) imbalanced social dialogue; and (ii) the unionization of herders in the tourism and agricultural sectors being in its infancy in Mongolia.

4.9.1. Imbalanced social dialogue

Herders tend to not be able to engage in social dialogue on equal terms with other parties. Hence, herders expressed that setting the prices of their tourism-related activities and services are beyond their power. As a horse wrangler noted, “*Companies set horse rental fees and we do not decide the price*” (Interview, H2). A tour operator company director also revealed, “*We do not allow herders to host tourists from another company ... as we provide support for the families to equip [themselves] with necessary tools initially*” (Interview, T03). This suggests that although tour companies support herder families and send them tourists, families may lack their own will and free right to collaborate with other companies. Also, herders’ interests are less reflected at the policy level, as a trade union representative argued:

Their [herders'] voices are less heard at the policymaking level. There are common cases of breach of human rights in the process of cashmere and wool production, including minor injuries. Such cases must be recorded and reported by law, yet it is underreported. There is a lack of awareness of their rights [among herders]. As a result, they could not exercise [their] rights that are protected by law" (Interview, O2).

This indicates there is an imbalance of social dialogue with limited reflection on the rights of herders in rural Mongolia. The main reason for this imbalance is that unionization among herders is still at an early phase.

4.9.2 The beginnings of unionization

The lack of unionization among herders was disclosed by an interview with a representative of a trade union in Mongolia:

Trade unions cannot fully engage with herders, and herders' need of unionization is not met. Herders are scattered across vast lands and not connected by a single wage system of an employer. For herders, who their employer is is unclear. ... Self-employed people can be unionized under khorshoo [cooperatives] to supply their cashmere to the Sustainable Wool and Cashmere Association. So social, economic incentives can help herders to get unionized. ... Employers that pursue green jobs tends to have high costs. ...To incentivize green jobs, there is need of economic incentives of tax exception, customs tax levy, financing, advantages on foreign trade, etc." (Interview, O2).

This indicates a need for policy support to promote unionization among herders and for activities to raise herders' awareness of their legal rights.

The low levels of unionization can also be seen from the list of members in the Confederation of Mongolian Trade Union (CMTU) (CMTU, n.d.). Herders in rural Mongolia have joined cooperatives (or *khoshoo*)⁴ or formed partnerships (or *nukhurlul*)⁵ in order to collaborate and support each other on various activities, including trading their raw materials and helping each other with livestock-related labour, as well as protecting the natural environment and collaborating to make a profit from business operations. In the case of both *khoshoo* and *nukhurlul*, they provide a legal framework to undertake a degree of social dialogue among herders. Thus, either *khoshoo* or *nukhurlul* seem to be a solution for working towards herders' ultimate unionization. As of 2020, 53.5 per cent of herders are a member of either a *khoshoo*, a *nukhurlul* or a herders' group (Mongolia, National Statistical Office 2020a). So it can be seen that more than half of herders are a part of a community network that could underpin their unionization.

Benefit of being a part of community network was explained by a herdsman as "a group of *ten families help each other on sheering sheep wool and combing goat cashmere as a collective team. It saves a lot time. Within three days, we shear all sheep wool of three households. When we are busy with tourists in July, it is ten-day job. So, a group ten people shear our sheep wool within a day ... so we can spend extra hours on tourism. ... We also trade [cashmere] at a favourable rate without intermediaries"* (Interview, H6). Although they do not have formal registration of their community network group, they collaborate on various activities. Formalization of such relations would place herders in better position when they are involved in Ger and Nature Tourism. Another herdsman stated, "*We have no official stamp for our community network. ... [We are] thinking about having one. ... Initially we are supported by a tour company"* (Interview, H5). This indicates that there may be a greater need for making herder collaboration and cooperation more formal via initiating community network groups with official registration and stamps so they can operate as legally binding entities.

4.10. Economic and social context for decent work

Mongolia's long term development strategy "Vision-2050" supports the Decent Work Agenda in its Objective 2.6 on the labour market and Objective 3.3 on employment and start-ups. Also, the strategy envisages tourism

4 As per the Law on Cooperatives (2021).

5 As per the Law on Partnerships (1995).

development with traditional features via strengthening competitiveness on the international market in the leading economic sectors (Objective 4.2). The strategy also stresses environmentally friendly green and sustainable development in Objective 6 (Mongolia, Government of Mongolia 2020). As can be seen from the commitment of the Government of Mongolia, both the Decent Work Agenda and tourism based on the country's nomadic culture appear to be high priorities; while green development and environmental sustainability direct the overall long-term development strategy.

Yet, in practice, more may need to be done. Herders argued, *"The economy is no good. Therefore, herders raise goats for cashmere. We think the number of goats should not exceed the number of sheep, as goats take herds to mountains often. ... We have 200 goats out of a herd of 500. Some families sell sheep and start having more goats"* (Interview, H6). This suggests that traditional practices of herding are no longer able to sustain nomadic herders, forcing them to adopt new balances in their herds and new practices to chase more lucrative markets. This is also seen as one of the main reasons for pastureland degradation, as herders increase their flocks to make ends meet. Such environmental issues are also coupled with tourism-related environmental issues. As a herdsman said, *"[One family in my community] has a refrigerator, they have three kids and two school kids and slaughter 40 goats to sell before the children go to school in autumn, which covers school preparation costs. ... Since they started hosting tourists, they have not slaughtered such a number of goats and [this] increased the number of their goat herd, [because] instead tourism income covered the school preparation costs and children's costs"* (Interview, H5). This shows there may be a risk of herders investing in more environmentally unsustainable forms of animal husbandry using income earned from tourism.

Hosting international visitors seems to be much appreciated as a form of cultural and social exchange in remote rural areas: *"Tourism is very nice. ... We meet many different people from many countries. ... We as individuals grow a lot ... learn loads of things. ... It educates us ... an eye opener. Also, there is a need of socialization for those who live one by one in mountains far apart. ... Herders have great need of communication"* (Interview, H6). This indicates herders may have socializing needs, and guests offer a welcome opportunity to exchange information and learn from each other. Fulfilling this need could also underpin decent work among rural nomadic communities. Another herdsman put it thusly: *"Those who would like to experience nomadic life need to spend 3–4 days otherwise they cannot appreciate during a short or day visit"* (Interview, H4). Keeping the traditional way of living can be a driver of decent work, as another herdsman argued, *"People started riding horses and make leather tools. ... Tradition is restoring and copying each other. Financially, it is less costly without fuel cost for motorcycle"* (Interview, H5). This could be an example of how tourism can support environmentally friendly practices. She further argued, *"Having cattle and horses will have advantages: horse trekking, milking and making cheese and so forth. Two households go on horse trekking. They bought a saddle for tourists. Other families cannot organize trekking because their horses are not trained and have no saddle"* (Interview, H5). If herders train their horses and prepare the necessary equipment, it could generate alternative income from tourism.

Ger and Nature Tourism – A visitor's perspective

The following are extracts from an interview with Robert, a visitor at a Boutique Ger in Tuv Province, Mongolia:

I have enjoyed in a great deal. I think it is a very good way of getting to know a part of culture and country. I am now in a better place to understand how those people in Mongolia live and work, who are not living in cities or towns.

A family of the herder work hard and the children work, but this is school holiday. They [children] are not working at factory. ... Children forever helping mum do this and that ... but working conditions are much better than brick factory, street shining shoes [like] in some other countries. ...

I think there are some people who are not family members, involved in and doing things. ... Are they from other families nearby ... or are they employees? ... The lady here seems [to be an] employee. You can't tell. ... She could be a family member, or she could be someone else. She seems to be treating the work as exactly the same as the family. Milking, looking after family, do more, do less. ... If she is employed, is her salary is decent? ...

Families are more in control how many hours and conditions. ... As [with] any self-employed work, you try a little bit hard. But they are in control. ... Last night several young men prepared the feast, and it involved a half an hour. I guess, if there are more guests, there are more people to look after the animals. ...

Different sort[s] of tourism could be linked. ... This sort of tourism [is] not linked much to cashmere. ... The high-end tourists could be linked to cashmere. ... High-end tourists may not need hot shower, and ensuite ger. ... This type of ger with cold shower is OK. I would not mind. There is a need of some sort of toilet. This one is fine.

It is even greener if you combine three or four nights more luxurious tour with one or two nights of this kind ... being far away from roads and traffic and people has its own appeal. ... People are prepared to except such a [level of] comfort for probably for not a such a long time, probably for one or two nights here would be a good complement. ... I think people would like to see cooking, preparing, milking the animals. That is always appealing. It is always difficult being a part of the family life. ... You would not understand what is going on without a tour guide.

Decent work for self-employment is always complicated. They define their own condition. Decent jobs usually mean social security coverage, training possibilities. Self-employment, training is not always obvious. Social security depends on what the country scheme is. I see no reason why jobs should not be decent. Whether they are automatically decent, that I have no idea.

You should try to encourage herders to disseminate the information among herders so they realize that there are different options; they can seek multiple tour company clients. I guess it is difficult to host guests directly. They may not have [the] marketing side of skills. So they need tour companies. So it needs to be a partnership with tour companies. Tour companies have access to [the] potential visitor market. High end tourism potentially more decent, they can afford to pay much decent wage.



5. Needs assessment for capacity-building on decent work

Creating green jobs and decent work in Ger and Nature Tourism may require substantial capacity-building activities among tripartite constituencies. The present study revealed the following areas that may require close attention in regard to capacity building efforts: (i) tourism; (ii) environmental impacts; and (iii) entrepreneurship and social security services.

5.1. Tourism

In relation to tourism, local herders seem to have a limited understanding about features of the tourism market and emerging trends in responsible tourism globally and nationally. The importance and value of preserving traditional culture and traditional knowledge – not only for tourism purposes, but also for environmental protection purposes – should be promoted widely. This was supported by a local herdsman, who said,

Training should be like ... this is tourism, this is how we can develop tourism, common mistakes by herders, behaviour, ways of attracting tourists. ... Training should be in bag centres in June or in August. ... You can contact the bag governor's office staff. If there are people interested in tourism, there should be a bridge that lets them understand what tourism is, how you can make it a livelihood and ways of contacting with tour companies" (Interview, H4).

It seems vital to organize such training among herders in a convenient location at the right time. The same herder argued for coherence within capacity-building activities to ensure that such trainings are of actual

value, noting, *“It is very important if there is a mechanism of connecting herders with tour companies. ... Some certification was useless. It did not give an advantage [on working in tourism] that companies did not value much or recognize [these certificates]”* (Interview, H4).

Another important area of training includes facilities and furnishings for guests. As one local herder said, *“A wooden eco toilet is difficult handle and to carry”* (Interview, H5). This indicates toilet facilities should be not only eco-friendly but also culturally appropriate for a nomadic traditional culture. Also bedding for tourists should be comfortable, one as a herdsman said, *“Bed should be a good one, not a traditional wooden bed”* (Interview, H5). Traditional beds may not be suitable for tourists and may cause discomfort that affects tourists’ level of satisfaction with the experience.

As an academic suggested, *“There needs to be regular training and capacity-building activities every year on what is important in tourism. Tourists do not like artificial experiences. ... There is a herdsman in **** area; initially he was very genuine and after few years he became very fake and all he says is all the same. When tourists ask [about a] different topic, he does not show any interest [in the topic] and go out [of his ger]. ... After a number of years, herders get bored eventually it affects tourists’ satisfaction negatively”* (Interview, A1). This indicates that unless herders get trained and understand the essence of the travel experience, there will be limited satisfaction among tourists and eventually tourists will shift to other places or families.

5.2. Environmental protection

Important training may also be needed in the area of environmental protection, including litter and waste management. Local herders suggested, *“We need various training on how to handle litter and other specific information. ... There is no understanding of how to handle wastewater. ... We now clean litter in nearby areas and have toilet facilities [and] also ask local herders to clean litter in their areas”* (H5). This indicates that the public and local herders need training on dealing with hard and liquid waste in domestic environments and outdoors. The main cause for excessive littering in the countryside was claimed by local herders to be the fault of Mongolian tourists: *“Domestic tourists dispose their litter in the basalt rocks ... not international tourists. ... But last year, domestic tourists were getting better, and they take their litter back”* (Interview, H4).

Herders and tour operators suggested solutions for local littering, with a tour operator director saying, *“Litter is a big issue in Mongolia now. ... Two families collect their litter out of ten families. A good example [of how to deal with litter] is in Khentii Province; each herder family pays 20,000 tögrög and someone collects household litter once every fortnight. Each family cleans a 2 km radius from their encampment. ... Each family separates the litter”* (Interview, TO1). Although litter is excessive in the field, such a solution is practiced in some areas. This can be an applicable example of how local herders can contribute to preservation of local landscapes to ensure they are in the sort of pristine condition that attracts tourism. Getting involved in tourism has generally appeared to have raised awareness among herders of the value of waste and litter management practices, with one herder noting, *“Those who host tourists stopped littering and burn their garbage and collect litter from nearby areas”* (Interview, H5). Thus, tourism promotes environmental preservation and protection in some parts of rural Mongolia.

5.3. Entrepreneurship and social security services

Training is also needed in relation to entrepreneurship, financing and social security. Herders suggested *“financial training ... social insurance payment training”* (Interview, H7). Many herders seem to have a lack of understanding about the benefits of social insurance, health insurance and green financing solutions. Thus, such training could lead to better social projection of herders, and Ger and Nature Tourism-related financial needs could be met through green loans. Banks in Mongolia have started offering such green financing. Also, basic accounting skills are vital, and households who collaborate with tour companies need to issue receipts for their revenue from tour companies. Paperless digital receipts could be a potential solution for such cases.



6. Decent work and a just transition to environmental sustainability in tourism

Policy and institutions: Just transition policies

Although the development strategy of the Government of Mongolia postulates greener sectoral policy, it was criticized by study participants because there was a perception that it lacks policy coherence in relation to tourism sector actors and a just transition to environmental sustainability. For instance, the Government of Mongolia's focus is more on construction of monuments and tourism complexes with the aim of attracting large numbers of tourists, rather than focusing on the quality of visitor services and accessibility (World Bank 2021). Although the high-end tourism market could economically be more beneficial and could also generate decent work practices, the general tourism strategy in Mongolia is mainly looking towards mass tourism in near future. As a visitor at a Boutique Ger noted, *"Different sorts of tourism could be linked. ... [Ger and Nature] tourism is not linked much to cashmere [and] the high-end tourists could be linked to cashmere. ... Spain is trying to move away from mass tourism. In countries where mass tourism is being developed, it often lacks decent work aspects including long working hours, low pay and less social security"* (Interview, V1). There is an argument that the Government's policy should move away from environmentally unfriendly modes of tourism sector development and focus more on tourism that would lead to decent work opportunities, in part because of the reputational benefits that can improve the country's image with potential tourists. As a trade union representative also said,

Government policies should be linked to such acts via supporting employers generating green jobs. ... Green financing criteria tend to focus on the environment. ... Now it should also focus on human-centred

criteria. ... There are many organizations working towards a sustainable cashmere sector, yet working independently. ... These things should be coherent under an umbrella policy. ... As a result, we could generate sustainable and green employment in the cashmere and wool production sector” (Interview, O2).

This indicates that broader policy coherence could generate both green jobs and decent work. The broader tourism development strategy and its policy should be directed towards a high quality tourism sector rather than one that merely focuses on quantity.

Training and capacity-building: Sustainability, climate change adaptation, poverty alleviation, reducing inequalities

Capacity-building activities seem an essential component for a just transition in the tourism sector. As an academic suggested, “Capacity-building activities should be organized before the tourism season annually. The Ministry [of Environment and Tourism] can spend some budget on such training activities rather than organizing less productive conferences” (Interview, A1). Participants in a tripartite consultation and capacity-building workshop in Mongolia stressed the importance of capacity-building activities and the following set of trainings were suggested for herders and tour companies.

Sustainable development principles should be introduced to all actors and organizations involved in Ger and Nature Tourism, as well as the general public. Such a training component should have a focus on green jobs and decent work features. **Awareness-raising** on climate change and ways of mitigating the effects of climate change through pastoral nomadic herding practices could be another component. There should be a zero-littering policy in place, with all visitors being required to take their litter back with them. This could lead to standards specific to the tourism sector.

Community-based tourism is not for every tourist and is primarily “suitable for FIT [free independent travellers] or small groups, not for large groups” (Interview, A1). Herders could potentially appreciate the features of community-based tourism activities more when they host small tour groups rather than large ones, due to the smaller numbers of visitors placing relatively less pressure on other aspects of their daily lives. Further, it seems vital to introduce hospitality standards, including welcoming and farewells for their visitors. All this could lead to **entrepreneurship for herders**, as an academic argued, “Herders must have a labour contract with tour operators” (Interview, A1) and “A platform might be useful that connects herders with market” (Interview, A1). If herders have an improved understanding business contracts and better knowledge of how to navigate the infrastructure to access the tourism market, it could potentially boost community-based tourism. This could be facilitated by providing training on start-up businesses for youth, which could pave a way to value-adds upon locally featured products and services.

Any training for tourism and agricultural activities should have an essential part addressing **health and safety at the workplace and social insurance**. Also, collaboration with other actors should be based on providing trainings on how to create cooperatives (*khoshoo*) or community networks and how to engage in tourism-specific collaboration between tour operators and herders.

However, all these capacity-building and community-based tourism activities mean little without financial support. Thus, it is vital to provide training on **green financing** and its criteria, including green jobs and decent work. Such financing could also be facilitated via taxes, as an academic suggested: “Herders have to pay tax particularly herders with over 1,000 livestock” (Interview, A1) and via formalizing economic relations as a way to provide access to financial services, as such formalization will demonstrate the capacity and viability of their operations – “Herders must issue receipts for their services” (Interview, A1). In addition, the academic expressed concern that “green financing will not reach the target groups” and that this was in part due to the fact that “trainings are very symbolic. ... Training certification must be recognized” (Interview, A1). As such, training on green financing needs to be targeted at the groups that need it most, and such training should be formalized and certified by relevant authorities and industry bodies to ensure that it is effective and recognized.

In addition, the Government of Mongolia is implementing sustainable tourism development projects with the support of loans from the Asian Development Bank, but at the moment, Mongolia’s Travel and Tourism

Competitiveness Index rank is low. Inadequate service standards, poor infrastructure, and high seasonality due to long, cold winters tend to be core challenges. The main natural attractions are in protected areas which lack funding and have poor mechanisms to collect entry fees. In addition, these fees – 300 tögrög (US\$0.08) for domestic visitors and 3,000 tögrög (US\$0.89) for international visitors – are too small relative to tourism impacts induced by visitors. There is also a higher incidence of poverty in remote areas, which can make them unappealing areas for tourists. Unplanned tourism of the sort that currently dominates in countryside Mongolia tends to cause negative ecological and cultural impacts with limited economic benefit to residents.

In response, the Government of Mongolia has initiated the National Program on Tourism Development to address these issues via establishing Mongolia as a tourism destination rooted in nomadic culture. The Asian Development Bank is providing financial assistance on this programme with outlines that focus initially on Mongolia's protected areas in the northern, central and eastern regions of the country. Priority investment areas include visitor facilities, transport and sanitation infrastructure, and community-based products and services. Five sites have been selected as a pilot to catalyse ecotourism development, two of which being designated the highest priority: Lake Khuvsgul National Park in Khuvsgul Province and Onon-Balj National Park in Khentii Province (Mongolia, Ministry of Environment and Tourism 2022).

In western Mongolia, the project has four planned outputs:

- i.** inclusive planning and capacity for local tourism businesses enhanced;
- ii.** enabling infrastructure for tourism constructed;
- iii.** sanitation and waste management improved; and
- iv.** management of cultural heritage sites and protected areas strengthened.

These outputs are envisaged to result in the development of sustainable and inclusive ecotourism in western Mongolia (Asian Development Bank 2021).



7. Conclusion

Due to increasing frequency of natural disasters linked to climate change and growing degradation of pastureland in Mongolia, traditional nomadic communities are struggling to pursue their traditional way of living. The number of livestock in Mongolia is already beyond the landscape's carrying capacity, having reached over 67.3 million as of 2021 (Mongolia, National Statistical Office 2021a), and desertification is intensifying. Unless the growing number of livestock is curtailed, it is likely to result in more degraded pastureland across the country. Tourism is often considered as a viable livelihood source for rural communities, and Mongolia's tourism sector has great potential for eco-tourism. However, this is challenged by a high degree of seasonality and recently has been impacted heavily by the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's war in Ukraine. Also, agriculture and tourism are not particularly connected regardless of the promising potential that such a connection has for green jobs and sustainable livelihoods. The tourism sector is also prone to weak regulation, enforcement and organization of labour, and characterized by a high level of informality. Decent work deficits such as long working hours, low wages, limited social protection and gender discrimination are all too common in the informal economy, which for the moment is the site of most environmental and cultural tourism in Mongolia (ILO 2017).

The study findings highlight vital features of the decent work aspects of Ger and Nature Tourism in rural Mongolia. There seems to be limited understanding about decent work among various actors involved in such tourism. Notions of green jobs and decent work appear to generally not be integrated, with environmental aspects generally being the focus rather than addressing the human/social factors. Tourism in nomadic herder communities seems more viable among groups of families rather than single households due to its intense workload, which must be performed in addition to animal husbandry work. Employment opportunities for herders in eco-tourism seem to depend on families' cultural and traditional heritages and level of exposure to capacity-building activities.

Herders

The tourism-related employment opportunities open to herders include providing accommodation, food and beverages and tour activities, but accessing the target market appears to require significant capacity-building activities. There is an emerging consumer trend in tourism to get involved in more responsible, experiential tourism activities. However, herders seem to lack the skills and knowledge to take advantage of emerging tourism opportunities to improve their livelihoods. There are significant gaps in the collaboration among herders, tour companies and policymakers.

Women often expressed their feeling of taking on a significant load of labour involved in hosting, serving, taking care of and entertaining their guests. However, due to the nature of animal herding, men are also in charge of the majority of outdoor work while exposing themselves to harsh weather conditions. Both animal husbandry and tourism jobs involve significant amounts of informal labour. Assistant herders often work without formal contracts with the employer family, and tour companies also tend to work with herder families without written contracts, as the study findings revealed. As a result, addressing decent work aspect around working hours, payment conditions and child labour issues are often neglected in the collaboration between herders and tour operators.

Herders also lack knowledge about key aspects of decent work, including concerning their legal rights, social security, the benefits of unionization and formal employment relationships, and green financing. As study findings revealed, green financing stresses environmental criteria, while criteria on decent work, gender equality, and the inclusion of marginalized groups seem to take up less consideration.

Due to the nature of tourism, herders seem to be exposed to prolonged hours of herding and hosting guests. Unless it is regulated, frequent disruptions of family life may occur, including disruption of home life in the evening and even late at night. Although, there seems to be no significant breaches of children's rights as a result of tourism activities in nomadic encampment, alcohol and cigarette consumption by both hosts and guests may expose children to indecent behaviour that might adversely affect children's well-being.

Tour companies

Tour companies lack decent work aspects, and the power imbalance in their relations with herders impact the terms of setting service fees and making payment instalments, given the companies' comparative advantage as the bridge between tourists and herders. In particular, tour companies and their staff (that is, guides) tend to make impractical demands based on their own itineraries and tourists' wants without due consideration of herders' needs and duties. Thus, there may need to be thorough training of tour company staff on traditional nomadic settings and the nuances of their seasonal and daily routines. Tour itineraries also should reflect the culturally specific aspects of nomadic life, which largely depend on seasonal weather circumstances and non-farming features of nomadic animal husbandry.

The good practices of some tour companies are in line with sustainable tourism criteria, such as limiting the use of motorized vehicles in their community visits, setting requirements around including people with disabilities and youth in their community networks, and having litter management policies. Such practices can be applied in other regions as part of a tool aimed at securing a just transition to environmental sustainability.

Although herders are willing to get involved in tourism activities, they lack knowledge and skills in relation to the tourism and hospitality sector and its consumer demand. What tour companies and customers often expect can result in a mismatch with what herders deliver due to a skills gap among herders as well as geographic conditions. Families with fewer numbers of livestock often lack the financial capacity to initiate tourism-related activities. As a result, tour companies offer various forms of assistance, sometimes with unfavourable conditions including limiting herders' ability to cooperate with other tour companies, not providing relevant training, delaying payments and so forth.

Government and policymakers

Government and policymakers should pay attention to policy coherence to enable a just transition towards green jobs and decent work in *Ger* and Nature Tourism. This can be achieved by providing strategic focus on capacity-building activities aimed at the needs and priorities revealed by this study. Recognized certification of trainers of such capacity-building activities seems to be urgent and vital. Community-based tourism must be regulated in accordance with relevant legal framework in order to transition such work from the informal to the formal economy while respecting workers' rights and ensuring opportunities for income security, livelihoods and entrepreneurship.

Promoting relevant tax and infrastructure policies could support both herders and tour companies in line with relevant taxation regulations. Tax exemptions for those who practice environmentally friendly or carbon neutral transportation and decent work in *Ger* and Nature Tourism could promote employment and green jobs for women, young people, ethnic minorities, and persons with disabilities.

Ensuring a just transition to environmental sustainability includes – as the ILO advocates – awareness-raising to entail communicating the definition of a “just transition” and its impacts, challenges and opportunities for all actors involved in *Ger* and Nature Tourism. Such actions would make businesses continue to be viable and profitable. In particular, the SMEs that comprise a large segment of establishments in tourism sector may currently lack the capacity required to achieve environmental sustainability and decent work.

Also, social dialogue is the key instrument for promoting a just transition. Social dialogue is rationalized across all relevant sectors and agencies according to their mandates (rules, regulations, statutes). Implementation issues need to be addressed pragmatically, with actions across all aspects of governance from the national level down to the local level, with both the management and worker sides providing thorough policy coherence. Worker–employer relations can be enhanced to include environmental performance to ensure business resilience and market differentiation. Social dialogue on skills training needs to be institutionalized through government departments and agencies to develop and promote green initiatives and to strengthen green technology centres in collaboration with universities.

Safety nets and technical assistance need to be provided to herders and tour companies to promote and develop the green tourism industry through income diversification, skills training and proper management systems to facilitate a just transition. Small business technical assistance is also important in the form of capacity-building and training to address skills gaps. Technological solutions and platforms may be needed and warranted, as the vast majority of herders nowadays use mobile phones and can access the internet. As of 2020, 92.9 per cent of herders use mobile phone and 22.3 per cent use the internet (Mongolia, National Statistical Office 2020a). Technological solutions may facilitate access to the tourism market, which may in turn boost herders' alternative livelihoods.



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Appendix

Annex I. List of participants for capacity-building training

| Last name | First name | Residence | Job | Gender |
|--------------|----------------|--------------|---------------|--------|
| Tuvdennyam | Chuluuntsetseg | Ulaanbaatar | Tour operator | F |
| Enkhbaatar | Tamir | Ulaanbaatar | CMTU | M |
| Urtnaa | Boldbaatar | Bayankhongor | Tour operator | M |
| Gantulga | Erdene-Ochir | Ulaanbaatar | Tour operator | M |
| Baljinnyam | Sarangua | Ulaanbaatar | Tour operator | F |
| Dashgelen | Munkhtumur | Ulaanbaatar | Tour operator | M |
| Munkhbat | Lkhagvasuren | Ulaanbaatar | Tour operator | M |
| Damdin | Tsetsegdari | Ulaanbaatar | Tour operator | F |
| Nergui | Enkhmanlai | Ulaanbaatar | CMTU | M |
| | Enkhjargal | Ulaanbaatar | MONEF | F |
| Jambal | Mendsaikhan | Dundgovi | Herder | F |
| Otgonbaatar | Undrakhgerel | Ulaanbaatar | Herder | F |
| Gansukh | Tamir | Khuvsgul | Herder | M |
| Namsrajav | Bayanjargal | Bulgan | Herder | F |
| Ganbat | Munkhbold | Khentii | Herder | M |
| Buyankhishig | Ankhubayar | Govi-Altai | Herder | M |
| Tsetsgee | Jargalnyam | Uvurkhangai | Herder | M |
| Gombojav | Tuvshinjargal | Ulaanbaatar | Herder | M |
| Erdenebat | Delgerbat | Khentii | Herder | M |
| Dariragchaa | Saruulchimeg | Khuvsgul | Herder | F |
| | Chuluunsukh | Arkhangai | Herder | F |
| Tsedev | Tumendemberel | Dundgovi | Herder | F |
| Ts | Otgonbaatar | Govi-Altai | Herder | M |
| Battulga | Bayartuya | Khentii | Herder | F |
| Chuluun | Gansukh | Khuvsgul | Herder | M |
| Chimeddorj | Jadamba | Tuv | Herder | M |
| M | Ganchimeg | Tuv | Herder | F |

Annex II. Overview of herders interviewed

| Code | Province | Number of family members | Number of children (age) | Gender | Age |
|------|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------|-----|
| H1 | Bulgan | 2 | 3 (adults) | F | 58 |
| H2 | Tuv | 5 | 3 (21, 18, 10) | M | 40s |
| H3 | Khuvsgul | 4 | 2 | M | 63 |
| H4 | Uvurkhangai | 5 | 3 (1–12) | M | 36 |
| H5 | Arkhangai | 5 | 3 (18–25) | F | 47 |
| H6 | Tuv | 2 | 4 (20, 9) | M | 35 |
| H7 | Tuv | 2 | 4 (20, 9) | F | 34 |
| H8 | Govi-Altai | 5 | 3 (18, 14, 3) | M | 40 |

| Code | Education in years | Number of livestock | Assistant herder and relationship to you | Tourism activities | Distance to Ulaanbaatar (km) |
|------|--------------------|---|--|--|------------------------------|
| H1 | 10 | 400–500 (sheep, goats and camels) | 2 Children assist in the summer+ 2 daughters | Camel trek, guest house, cooking | 280 |
| H2 | 8 | 200s (sheep, goats and horses) | Local families | Ger accommodation, cooking and horse trekking | 90–115 |
| H3 | 11 | 100 reindeer | 25–26 households live together | Horse trekking, tepee accommodation, souvenir, cooking | 1 200 |
| H4 | 10 | 500s (sheep and goats) | No assistant herder | Horse trekking | 450 |
| H5 | 10 | 600 (sheep and goats), 20 cattle, 13 horses | 2 families from modest background | Ger accommodation, cooking and horse trekking | 450 |
| H6 | 8 | 630 (sheep and goats) | Relative | Herder, Ger accommodation, cooking and horse trekking | 90 |
| H7 | 10 | 30 horse, 40 cattle | Relative | Ger accommodation, cooking and horse trekking | 90 |
| H8 | 14 | 630 (sheep and goats) | No assistant herder | Guiding in a protected area | 1 300 |

Annex III. Overview of interviewees other than herders

| Code | Industry sector | Gender | Age |
|------|---------------------------------|--------|-----|
| T01 | Tour operator | F | 40s |
| T02 | Tour operator | M | 40s |
| T03 | Tour operator | F | 40s |
| T04 | Tour operator | M | 50s |
| T05 | Tour operator | M | 30s |
| A1 | Academic | F | 40s |
| O2 | Labour union | M | 30s |
| V1 | Visitor from the United Kingdom | M | 60s |



PAGE PARTNERSHIP FOR ACTION ON GREEN ECONOMY

Mongolia has experienced remarkable transformation in recent decades, developing into a vibrant democracy while experiencing significant GDP per capita growth. However, Mongolia faces environmental challenges that include land degradation, air and water pollution, rising carbon dioxide emissions and declining biodiversity. To address these, Mongolia has made firm commitments to developing growth strategies with sustainability and social inclusion as key goals.

Mongolia's alternative economic growth may rely on community-based eco- and cultural tourism, which seeks to empower rural herding communities as protectors of nomadic lifestyle and culture. Through PAGE's Ger and Nature scheme, tourism operators and herding communities collaborate on green jobs creation, with individual community groups serving as hosts to cultural and adventure tourists. These efforts aim both to bring economic benefit to local communities as well as to support sustainable tourism practices.

This report presents an analysis of the current state and challenges associated with decent work practices for community-based ecotourism, with particular attention paid to Ger and Nature Tourism in rural Mongolia.

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