



WOLTS Champions' Perspectives No.1

We now have the knowledge to control mining and save our livelihoods

By P. Purevdolgor

P. Purevdolgor is a herder from Dalanjargalan Soum in Dornogovi Province in south-eastern Mongolia. She has been a gender and land champion since 2018, having participated in the local champions training programme led by Mokoro's WOLTS project with our Mongolian NGO partners, PCC – first in 2018-19 and then as a mentor to a new cohort of champions from 2020.

WOLTS Champions' Perspectives is a blog series in which community members share how they are supporting more inclusive, participatory and gender-equitable land governance in their local communities after taking part in the WOLTS champions training programme.

I live 500 km from Mongolia's capital, Ulaanbaatar, in an area called Taliin Buuts (Steppe in the Dung). I am a herder with sheep and goats that I sell for meat and for high quality cashmere wool. When I was a child, the land around us was wilderness with very diverse plants and grasses. As I grew up, I learned to name them all.

However, in recent years, 80% of our soum territory of Dalanjargalan has been allocated to mining. The land around my ger (shelter) is surrounded by eight different mining concessions. I have witnessed with my own eyes that the biodiversity of our area has hugely degraded since the mining started. It saddens me that I can no longer see the vegetation that I used to see when I was younger. I feel frustrated that the springs near our area have dried up. I feel unhealthy and just see dust everywhere, instead of green grass and fresh air under the blue sky.

As well as living in an unhealthy environment, the productivity of our herds has significantly decreased. The animals do not have the rich pasture they used to eat, they do not get the water they need, and the dust contaminates their fleeces. Before the mining started, one sheep weighed around 32kg, but now they only grow to 25kg. The valuable cashmere from our goats is dusty and heavy, reducing the price we can get for it because the quality has decreased.

As a gender and land champion, I am working with my community to try to stop irresponsible mining. Through the [WOLTS](#) champions' training programme with [PCC](#), I have learned how to negotiate with the mining companies to force them to act responsibly. By talking to them, they have started cleaning up the land in our area.

[We even took our concerns to the capital](#) – travelling with other champions to Ulaanbaatar to make a peaceful demonstration in front of the national parliament. We stopped 10 irresponsible miners from operating in the soum and we will continue until the land is restored and safe for us and for our animals. I am confident that we can achieve this as champions – [we have the knowledge now to ensure that our rights are protected.](#)



P. Purevdolgor, gender and land champion
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