



MONGOLIA

CHILD LABOUR IN THE SMALL SCALE MINING



N.Mongolmaa
IPEC Mongolia



Characteristics of SSM

- Recent and new phenomenon
- Rush situation (gold) and gold smuggling abroad
- No legal framework, no experience of dealing with the issue and neither government administration unit in charge of SSM (new law is pending)
- Conflicts with formal mining companies especially in gold mining (with some increasing indication of consensus from mining companies)
- Poor living and OSH conditions, harsh climatic conditions
- Poor or almost no administration in most cases, but increasing awareness from local governments of the need to regulate and administer the sector



Types of SSM, numbers and distribution

- Coal (2,000)
Ulaanbaatar
- Hard rock and placer gold (est.80,000-100,000 = 20% of rural workforce)
Mostly concentrated in 6 aimags but rapidly increasing regional distribution
- Fluorspar (n.a)
in 2 aimags



Coal mining

- Coal mining (2,000) Ulaanbaatar
 - Seasonal (October-April)
 - Confined mostly to local residents/majority are redundant and unemployed workers of former state mining enterprise
 - Increased local government administration which facilitates the decrease of child labour combined with IPEC interventions (awareness raising, education, training and socialization opportunities and CLM efforts)
 - However-
 - Although children are much less found working in underground, continue working outside pits
 - Some children said working during night (after cease of mining operations)
 - Migrant parents start working with children
 - It is reported by local officials that from recent time coal miners go for gold panning during summer, no data on children



Small scale gold mining

Who?

- Agricultural workers
- Urban poor
- Herding families (currently largest source of artisanal miners especially in placer locations)

Where?

- Close relation between the geographical distribution of miners and formal gold mining
 - Mining areas under license
 - Previously mined areas
- Increasingly SSM-ers explore and mine in virgin areas



Supply (gold mining)

- Gold resources left behind (up to 50%) by the gold mining companies
- Wash plant recovers 80-85%
- Gold resources outside mining license is large
- Placer mining is less technically and physically demanding
- Gold is easily sold to middlemen, daily or weekly cash can be raised



Demand (gold mining)

- Widespread rural and urban unemployment and underemployment
- Decline of agriculture
- Loss of livestock during natural disasters and decline of livelihood of herders
- Limited expansion of businesses in rural areas due to poor infrastructure and low density of population
- Income from informal mining is higher than other sectors offer
- Need for pay children's secondary and high education
- Desire for self-employment
- Claim for the right to mine in the home land



Child Labour (gold mining)

- 10-15% of the informal gold miners (at mine sites)
- On summer vacation and weekends the number of child workers increases
- 73% work in placer mining
- Average age for starting to work is 12.2 years.
- 62.3% of children are aged 15 years and below.
- $\frac{3}{4}$ are boys
- 35% do not attend school, mostly dropped after primary education ()



Child Labour (gold mining)

- No direct employment relationship with an employer, however conflicts with formal mining companies result in “forced” labour: when children are caught by security guards, they receive abusive treatment (beating) and compelled to work as punishment such as cleaning rooms, doing laundry, fetching water, splitting firewood etc
- However, it is not uncommon that because of their small size children are sent by parents to dig in narrow tunnels
- Children are mostly work together with parents (54%) or with other children/friends (33%).
- 64.8% of children sell gold on their own
- Girls prostitution
- 83% of the working children who dropped schooling are interested in schooling if opportunity exists. However, the percentage of children wishing schooling is lowest for children aged 13-15 years.
- Parents are willing to send to school their children, especially the young ones⁹



Child Labour (gold mining)

■ In placer mining

- children stay with working parents who migrated from other areas and many of them are engaged in full-time work
- Parents are often not registered and therefore no access to education and health care
- Most concerning are children staying with all-year round working parents

■ In hard-rock mining

- child labour is mostly home based processing activity, with lesser number of children work at mine sites
- mostly families are registered, access to health care and education is provided



Issues (gold mining)

Hard-rock mining

- Very demanding and hazardous work
- Exposure to mercury (storage at home, amalgamation and burning)
- Mercury illegal import (80-90%), JICA, 2003
- Mercury digging and panning in Boroo valley and collection from thermometers Mercury sale is hidden and local administration does not control
- Poor awareness of miners on mercury hazards
- No know-how and use of retort
- 63% store mercury at home, 72% amalgamate gold on palms, 77.5% drive of mercury in family oven, in 71-78% of such cases other family members, including children are present, 69% dump left-over of processed ore nearby home



Child labour issues (gold mining)

Hard-rock mining

- Work underground, (blasting by explosive), drag or carry sacks of ore, ore visual inspection, crushing ore by hammer, milling using pestle and mortar, sifting and blowing dust, amalgamation and burning of milled ore by mercury
- 33-38% of children report mercury use
- 67% children do gold amalgamation by mercury and driving it off at home
- Mercury amalgamation by children
 - On palms 52%
 - In bowl 19%
 - On spoon 17%
 - Other means 11%



Child labour issues (gold mining)

Hard-rock mining

- Of 66 working children clinically examined for mercury poisoning, 24.2% was found with chronic mercury poisoning symptoms (13.3% for adults)
- In 48% of the above children, chronic mercury poisoning was confirmed by laboratory tests (87.5% has nervous system affected)
- Percentage of girls handling mercury for gold processing increases with age



Child labour issues (gold mining)

Placer mining

- Digging pits, carrying gravel to panning area, panning
- Numbers are larger
- High concentration of people:
 - Hygiene problems
 - Socialization in “wrong” environment (use of alcohol)



Impact of child's income (from gold mining) to HH livelihood (children's response)

- Main source of income 18.9%
- Relatively reasonable contribution 43.4%
- Little contribution 32.8%
- No contribution/spend for themselves 4.9%



Fluorspar mining

- Related to -
 - increased mining cost (mining went too deep and need technology investment) threatens complete closure of the mine (Berkh mine and consequently loss of employment by miners and need for income)
 - Willingness for such companies to increase economic margins with involvement of informals (assistance by stripping overburden, providing worktools and buying the ore)

- Companies with exploration license attempt mining which permits local residents' engagement in mining

- Rapid expansion or boosting is unlikely, because:
 - Very demanding physical work, income is much less than from gold mining
 - Regions with fluorspar deposits were least affected by natural disasters of 2000-2002
 - Fluorspar is refined and exported to a few countries (transport cost is high)



Fluorspar mining

- However:
 - Increasing involvement of local residents in the SSM as a way to raise additional income
 - Demanding physical work requiring involvement of family members, including children
 - Many mine sites or exploration sites are in close proximity to rural residential settlements
 - Increasing number of people seasonally migrating from impoverished areas (learning from others) to the fluorspar informal mining areas



Fluorspar mining

Child labour

- No data is available
- However local governments report on children's involvement as working with parents by assisting them in carrying ore in buckets and piling up ore for measurement
- Young children live with their parents who moved close to the mine site or migrated from other areas and happen to be at mine sites since they have no schooling or other socialization activities



IPEC Interventions

2 Action programmes

- In Nalaikh district of Ulaanbaatar (coal mining)
 - Since December 2000 (- 1 year)
- In 4 soums of Tuv and Selenge aimag (hard-rock gold mining)
 - Since October 2003



IPEC interventions

- Awareness raising (informal miners, children, parents, schools)
- Support to building awareness and capacity of local government officials
- Provision of education, training and socialization opportunities and mainstreaming into regular school
- Support of families (training, link with govt employment services (skills training, public work, placement into jobs, support after skills training, provision of *ger*, food items to the extremely poor)
- CLM efforts in Nalaikh coal mining with involvement of local government (gold mining areas planned)
- Capacity building of project implementers (through IPEC Partner Agencies trainings)



What is working?

In coal mining project:

- “Not-to restrict” regulation at the local level (although not initiated by IPEC) and sense of stability of work by miners changes their attitude to the local government and therefore they listen to it
- Active involvement of the local government (awareness raising, CLM efforts) is making difference in reducing child labour
- Provision of hot meal (lunch) during NFE training is the most important incentive for working children to attend NFE training at least in first few months
- NFE training with the perspective for a child to get mainstreamed into regular school brings better hope to a child and parents
- Support to the very poor families to address pressing needs (such as *ger*, sometimes food items) is good incentive for parents to keep away the child from work and support child’s attendance of school. However, caution to avoid creating “grant dependence” mentality.
- Building self-esteem of children plays important role. Both children and parents start to feel that a child is not lost and his/her future can be better if they grasp the available opportunities.



What are constraints?

In coal mining project:

- Unless HH income is increased the sustainability of children's removal is weak:
 - Jobs are not readily available to unemployed parents after skills training
 - For the poorest, access to loans for self-employment from existing funds is limited
 - Also poor HHs are reluctant to get loans in fear of failure to re-pay
 - It was not uncommon that parents who received loan (in phase I) were too easy to quit after starting to face difficulties, and avoid project staff and sometimes even did not send children to NFE training (After-loan support was poor)



What are constraints?

In coal mining project:

■ Currently:

- Linking parents and adult members of the families with existing govt schemes (skills training, public work, job mediation)
- Support after skills training by the project. However, both the implementing agency and local government chooses to be selective and is cautious about giving away to everyone.



Gold mining

Lessons:

- Research (although limited by scope):
 - Child labour situation in informal gold mining, 2002
 - Health situation of miners and children working in the informal (hard-rock) gold mining, 2002, PHI

- Research findings made available to authorities is important to raise the profile of child labour within the overall problem
 - IPEC NSC
 - National Children's Council headed by Prime Minister
 - National Human Rights High Commission
 - Parliament members (during launching of ILO/IPU Handbook)

- Increased awareness has brought different actors so far in:
 - Development of awareness raising materials (MoH, MoEnvironment, State Professional Inspection Agency etc) **Government agencies (MoH, MoE) have had a strict approach of immediate and total prohibition of use of mercury use in SSM (**
 - On going follow up discussion on specific issues such as mercury related
 - Involvement of employers (MONEF)



Challenges that are outside current IPEC interventions

- Miners request about medicines that would help in releasing mercury from body
- Doctors request to include those medicines into the list of national drug list approved by the MoH
()
- Safe mercury technology
- Coordination for burying dump waste with mercury



IPEC Interventions

■ Lessons so far (gold mining):

- No involvement from professional agency in charge of occupational disease (MoH considers mercury poisoning as a type of occupational disease which is under the responsibility of the MoLSW)
- Although local administration (gold mining) support the project and shows cooperation, their attitude tends to be of the feeling that more pressing issues in the SMM need to be addressed also as priority
- The capacity of project implementers at the field (soun level) in various dimensions should have been assessed and capacity building interventions planned thoroughly before the project



New initiative (gold mining)

MONEF (Mongolian Employers' Federation)' s project in cooperation with National Mining Association:

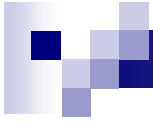
- Improve relations between formal mining companies and small scale miners
 - Awareness about Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work in the mining sector to local governments, policy makers and mining companies
 - Explanation of regulation to informal miners
 - Examination of conflict situations and development of Model agreement between mining companies and partnerships
 - Conflict resolution capacity of the mining companies
 - TPR discussion on further improvement of legislation

- Improve the situation of small scale gold miners
 - Improve OSH knowledge and practice
 - Safer mercury technique
 - Improve knowledge on work organisation



New initiative (gold mining)

- Increase role of employers in the elimination of child labour
 - Provision of NFE training opportunities of children of informal miners in mining company's school
 - Skills training opportunity for older children (not graduated compulsory schooling) into mining college and complimentary curriculum for children on generic knowledge and skills (such as child labour, OSH, negotiation skills etc)
 - Skills training and apprenticeship in other sectors using employers' network
 - Discussion of the role of employers in skills training and apprenticeship of workign children in relation to the existing skills training scheme and funding



THANK YOU.