

BRIEFING NOTE

FOR INFORMATION

SUBJECT: The Rivers Movements in Mongolia

The term River Movements is used to classify various grassroots movements that have emerged in Mongolia, engaging in actions against mining operations and their negative effects.¹ The movements arose in response to growing neoliberal reforms being undertaken by the Mongolian government in the early 1990's, and the subsequent lack of regulation surrounding the mining industry as the country's economy transitioned from a Marxist-oriented one. To improve economic conditions in the country, the Mongolian government allowed mining interests to operate with relative impunity in terms of development and regulation. While the move has allowed for an impressive growth in the Mongolian economy, it has also led to a large amount of environmental degradation, pollution, and questionable business practices. With a lack of government and NGO engagement in rural mining areas, local communities began to form groups with the goal of protecting the environment, primarily grasslands and waterways, which are vital to traditional herding livelihoods. This brief will provide a general overview on the development of th

mining in river basins, while others argued for a more balanced approach that created a system of responsible mining.

There was also disagreement between the HWPC and the Asia-Foundation on how to approach the issue of mining. The Asia-Foundation sought to collect reliable empirical data through river monitoring, build knowledge based on the collected data, and then make informed decisions based on the data and act accordingly.² The reality of the situation, weak community interaction and an expanding gold market, meant that this method was ineffective at quickly securing real results for communities. Instead, the HWPC opted to undertake more direct action against the Mongolian government and mining companies, such as strikes and more radical tactics, to promote awareness for the issue.

Eventually the HWPC was dissolved due to the rifts in