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Land Conflicts Related to Land Privatization in Mongolia

After more than seventy years of communist domination, Mongolia is undergoing the initial stages of embracing private property rights through the implementation of land privatization process as a part of its transition towards democracy and market economy. However, land privatization, as experienced in other countries, is not an easy task to deal with. Mongolia's history, mainly its communist regime has generated and intensified a mentality of common property based on the common use of the country's vast natural pastures by mobile livestock keeping. The Government, the authorities and administrative bodies as well as the citizens face a lot of problems deriving from the new land privatization process and these often end up in conflicts on land.

Because of a rapid increase of in-migration from rural areas, the urban and peri-urban areas of the major cities of Mongolia are mostly affected by the respective problems and conflicts. This situation has prompted to look deeper into the issues confronting the land privatization process particularly to get to know and understand the causes of land-related conflicts due to land privatization and the conflict parties, and to examine the specific impacts and consequences of such conflicts to the country's poor. To address the underlying research questions and to verify or falsify the hypotheses, a case study as the prime research methodology of this thesis has been carried out making use of semi-structured interviews and dissemination of a survey questionnaire focusing on two sites which have been selected to represent the urban and peri-urban areas of the Mongolian capital of Ulaanbaatar.

Theories and concepts regarding property rights and land tenure, land reform and privatization, land conflict and its management have been adopted and discussed. Experts' interviews have been conducted and secondary data have been collected to contribute to an appropriate understanding of the complex situation and to assist in its analysis. As a result it may be stated that the case study confirms that land privatization has caused, among many others, land conflicts on multiple allocations of land and boundary conflicts to a significant number. The conflicts arise due to inefficient and ineffective implementation by the responsible agencies because of limited knowledge and familiarity as well as to the vulnerability of the agency staff that prompted them to adopt inappropriate practices.

Resolution of land conflicts is characterized by bureaucratic manner. It lacks transparency, is confusing and in most cases favours those applicants who are well off and possess informal

connections to respective decision makers. In this regard, the country's poor who are weak, financially limited and lack education and information are the ones to be affected negatively by land privatization and land conflicts in general. In this regard, administrative efforts will have to focus on the prevention of land conflicts and resolving land conflicts in close and proper relation to the laws, rules and regulations. It is highly recommended that the country's poor should be given more support and assistance in this matter. If no concrete actions are undertaken, the growing number of land conflicts in Mongolia will not only delay the realization of land privatization but also undermines it as a whole causing damage to the people's livelihoods as well as the country's economy.

Key words: Land privatization, land conflicts, urban and peri-urban areas, laws and regulations, transparency, conflict resolution.