Mongolia's Geological Catalogue (MonGeoCat) is contributing to increased investor trust

In September of last year, Mongolia launched its first geological information catalogue, MonGeoCat. The development, led by the Ministry of Mining and Heavy Industry (MMHI) and the Mineral Resources and Petroleum Authority of Mongolia (MRPAM), and supported by Australian Aid, instantly opened up public access to Mongolia's geological metadata, directly benefiting current and prospective investors, supporting their investment decisions.

One of the primary underpinning elements of a successful extractives sector is geological data availability. When governments have highly skilled geoscience professionals, knowledge, and data about their national mining potential it improves their ability to regulate exploration and attract investment in a sustainable manner and allows for long-term economic planning. A recent article in the Daily News indicated that Mongolia earns 6.2 billion USD annually, of which 6 billion USD comes from the extractive sector and 200 million USD is earned from the sale of agricultural and other products. The article continued to say that Mongolia's income from the extractive sector could increase further by an additional one billion USD, as global mining sector conditions continue to improve. Systems like MonGeoCat will serve to contribute to increased investment in the sector, driven by a commitment to data openness and transparency.

So, how do investors access geological data in Mongolia? Currently, investors must travel to Ulaanbaatar to access geological and exploration information. They stand in queue at the Geological Archive to 'check out' lengthy paper reports and return them immediately after use. Every page is checked for damage on return. In comparison to international practice, our practice is outdated. Australia, for example, makes geoscience information available to the public through its various geological survey portals. Much of the information is free to access and can be accessed anywhere in the world. Whilst Mongolia still has a long way to go to embed more commonly accepted international practices, MonGeoCat is already creating benefit.

As of today, MonGeoCat has been accessed by more than 30,000 users from more than 39 countries, of which 30% are regular users. The metadata – this includes abstracts of exploration and mapping reports, maps, and geological data) of approximately 2000 commonly used geological reports can be accessed in English and Mongolian at https://mrpam.gov.mn/. This number is increasing daily. Investors can access data and reports from their computer, instead of in person from the Geological Archive. One geologist at an international exploration company said "*I use [MonGeocat] for two purposes. Firstly, to find information on geology, geophysics, geochemistry and license area, and secondly, to find license information and compare this to the information I already have…Overall, I very much like the system. This system connects Mongolia with the rest of the world*".

MonGeoCat system was awarded the 'Geospatial World Excellence Award 2018' by the Geospatial World Forum; a clear demonstration of the quality and effectiveness of the system. Additionally, MonGeoCat has positively impacted Mongolia's geological database ranking on the

Fraser Institute's annual mining survey, moving it from 36% of investors consider favourable (2016) to 75% favourable opinion (2017)[1].

So what's next? The next step is to provide investors with more detailed data, specifically reports, maps and primary data, so that the information can be downloaded in the desired format. This work will be undertaken as part of the development of the National Geoscience Database, which MonGeoCat will be a part of. An ongoing activity at the Ministry of Mining and Heavy Industry and MRPAM is to convert detailed geological and mining information to digital format; currently much of it is in paper form. This work is very complex and will require significant time, funding and technical expertise. The Australia-Mongolia Extractives Program will continue its support to this work.

Investors consider a number of factors when making investment decisions, and Mongolia's mining sector is highly likely to attract the majority of the foreign investment in Mongolia. In order to promote and expand the mining sector, we need to support exploration, which starts with providing geodata and relevant information to national and international investors. Enabling access to primary information on geophysics, geochemistry, hydrology on top of geological and minerals information will will lead to increased investment in the sector and ultimately stronger economy.

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[1] The Fraser Institute of Canada ranks countries around the world based on their geological attractiveness for minerals and metals, and the extent to which government policies encourage or deter exploration and investment. The annual mining survey employs a range of indicators, one of which is accessibility or availability of geodata. This is a significant achievement, given the country's reliance on the extractive industries.