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Pastoral production in Mongolia from a gender perspective

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• Background

This paper discusses the organisation of pastoral production at the household level, from a gender perspective. It describes and explains the use of matrices and mobility mapping as participatory methods for gathering information on seasonal labour allocation, time use, and mobility. The research was carried out as part of the Policy Alternatives for Livestock Development (PALD) project, to study and make policy recommendations on the liberalisation of the Mongolian pastoral economy and its impact within the household.

Research was carried out in two contrasting ecological areas: Erdene sum in Dornogobi province (in the desert-steppe zone of South-East Mongolia) and Tariat sum, in Arkhangai province (in the forest-mountain steppe zone of the Central-West of the country). The organisation of research was the same in both areas.

• Household labour organisation

Each household comprises the occupants of a single *ger* (felt tent), usually a husband, wife and unmarried children. Within the household there exists a clear division of labour according to gender and age. Men are largely responsible for long distance herding of large animals (cattle and camels), building and repairing winter and spring shelters and the sale and marketing of livestock.

Women are responsible for herding smallstock (sheep and goats), milking, and the shearing and clipping of all animals. In addition, women perform all domestic tasks, including product processing, cooking, cleaning, washing, sewing and collecting *argul* (dung or

wood, for fuel) and water. This gender division of labour is common and is seen as the 'ideal' which all households would adopt given a suitable gender composition within the household and sufficient labour. Certain tasks are frequently assigned to children and their labour can be essential to households.

Explaining the gender division

The nature of pastoral production necessitates the division of tasks. The men usually carry out long-distance herding duties. This is mostly for practical reasons: pregnant women or women with young children are likely to find this task arduous. However, the organisation of labour is flexible and women will perform long-distance herding in the absence of constraints. Such flexibility does not apply to domestic tasks, which are always the responsibility of the women. In common with other pastoral economies, the division of labour in Mongolia operates on both an ideological and practical level according to socially constructed ideas about men and women, which ascribe them different gender roles.

In the pastoral economy labour is invested both in the creation of livestock products for consumption or sale and in the continual generation of the herd. In spite of women's responsibilities for milking and the care of small, sick, pregnant and weak animals, it is men who are associated with the overall reproduction of the herd and women with the production of goods. This association is made for a number of reasons:

- The pastoral labour process is such that the labour of one person presupposes the effort of the other so the objective contribution of men and women is difficult to assess; and,

- The relationship between labour effort and any subsequent gain is easily obscured since the benefits are only seen over a number of years.

Thus, the contribution of men and women to productive activity is open to a wide variety of cultural interpretations, making it easy to overlook women's contribution and associate their work primarily with the domestic sphere and the reproduction of labour.

• Methods

First the households were ranked according to their wealth (Grandin, 1988; Mearns et al., 1992). This was followed by semi-structured interviews. A total of 37 interviews were carried out with households in the two sample areas. The majority of these were with women. While a focus on women was important, the lack of substantial comparative data on men means that the findings should be seen as preliminary.

A range of participatory and rapid rural appraisal methods were used during the interviews for two reasons:

- They enabled the team to gain a rapid understanding of patterns of organisation within the household; and,
- They were useful in revealing the perceptions and judgements of informants.

Table 1. Tasks performed by women

Productive Tasks	most able to do	take s most time	hard work	needs help from others	least able to do	easy work	takes least time	done at same time as other tasks
Processing	x	x	x					x
Milking	x	x	x					
Watering animals	x		x					
Clipping small animals	x	x	x	x				
Clipping large animals		x	x	x	x			
Repairing shelters			x		x			

Analysis of labour tasks

The role of cultural and ideological factors in shaping patterns of labour organisation in the Mongolian context was observed through analysis of men and women's perceptions of the task-based gender division of labour, patterns of time use and overall work load.

Three women and one man were asked to describe the different tasks they performed for the household. They were then asked to compare tasks (two at a time) by saying what they liked or disliked about each one, to highlight differences between them. This was done to generate the informant's own criteria for describing their work.

As a result different tasks were described as 'hard', 'easy', 'time consuming' etc. These criteria were then used to form a matrix showing the range of different tasks and the criteria used to describe them. Informants were asked to score each task between one and five against each of the criteria (e.g. one would denote 'very easy' and five 'not very easy'). Table 1 summarises the data from the three matrices. The table shows that there is a difference between the criteria used to describe the productive and reproductive tasks that women perform.

Reproductive Tasks	most able to do	take s most time	hard work	needs help from others	least able to do	easy work	takes least time	done at same time as other tasks
Collecting <i>argal</i>	x					x	x	
Cooking	x					x	x	x
Cleaning						x	x	x
Washing						x	x	
Sewing		x				x		
Childcare	x					x	x	x

Productive tasks were seen as the most time consuming and requiring the most effort and help from others, while reproductive tasks were all seen as the easiest, often done in conjunction with others. While the informants themselves did not suggest that tasks were organised and performed alongside others this criteria was introduced in two cases and proved to be important. Similarly, reproductive tasks were seen as less time consuming. While they may take up a large proportion of women's total available time they are usually carried out in short periods throughout the day. They are performed between, or alongside, other work. As a result they were not perceived as taking up a single block of time.

The three women felt able to perform both productive and reproductive tasks equally well. However, they felt they only had sufficient skills, strength and knowledge to perform some tasks (milking, processing). There were some other tasks (mending shelters, clipping wool from larger animals) which they were only able to do given sufficient time or assistance. The criteria used by women to describe their work reflected their concern about their ability to perform

certain tasks according to time, labour and physical characteristics.

The single male informant identified a more diverse range of activities and judged them according to different criteria. His preferred task was building and repairing winter shelters, followed by watering, training and selling animals. He enjoyed these tasks either because they were seasonal, manual, restful, skilful or social.

Seasonal labour calendar

The task-based allocation of labour resources results in different patterns of time use and mobility for men and women. These operate according to seasonal and daily patterns and are shown in Figures 1 and 2. There is a high level of labour intensity for both men and women during the lambing and calving periods from February through to May. Generally, women are busiest during the milking season in the summer months while men are busier in winter, preparing shelters. There are different periods of intensity in the two research areas at different times.

Figure 1. Tsagaan Khutul labour calendars, showing gender division of workload

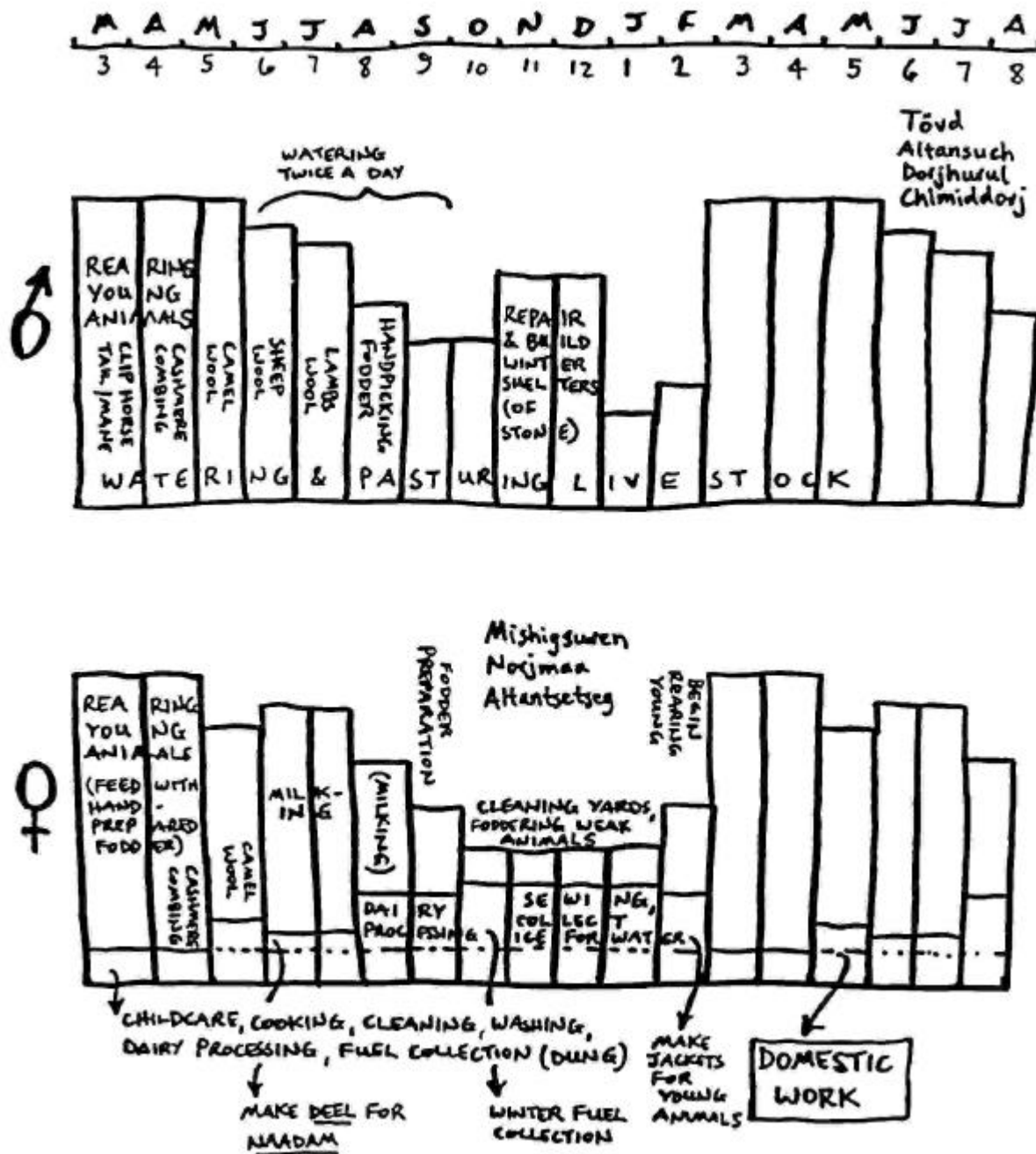
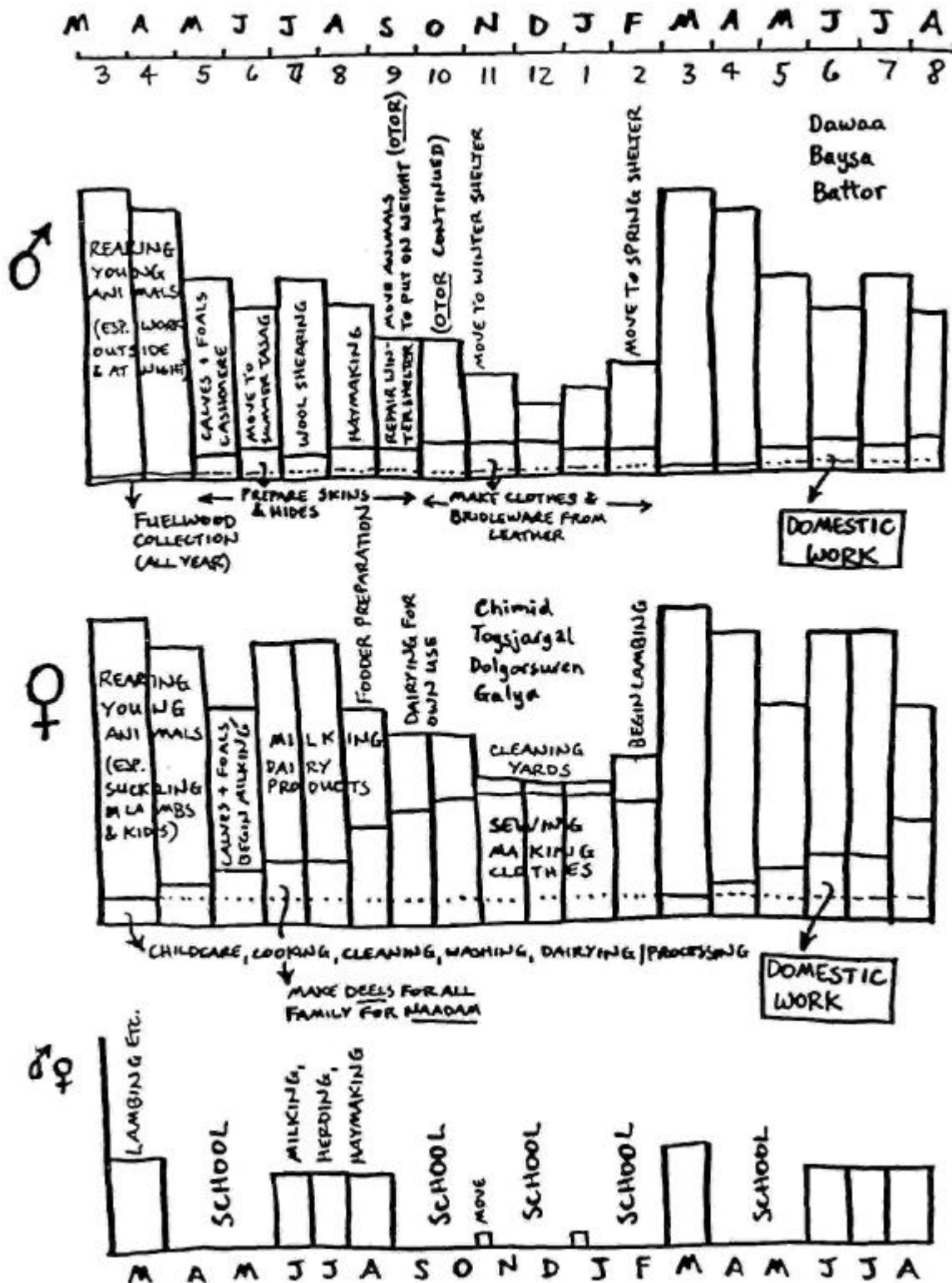


Figure 2. Xex Nuur labour calendars, showing gender division of workload



Daily labour profile

Daily labour profiles were carried out with two households (Tables 2 and 3). They revealed very different patterns of time use for men and women. Given time and other constraints,

daily profiles were not carried out during different seasons. Instead a woman from each sample area described a typical day for herself and her husband.

Table 2. Spring daily labour profile: Monkhtogoo and Tserennadmid's household (Household Reference Number: 110 Erdene Sum Dornogobi)

Tserennadmid (Wife)		Monkhtogoo* (Husband)	
5am	Gets up, (makes tea and dresses children?)	6am	Gets up and drinks tea, saddles horse, prepares for day
7.30am	Gives fodder to animals, supervises suckling of young animals, separates young from mothers after feeding, gives fodder and hay to lambs	7.30am	Takes camels to pasture, waters camels, repeats with cattle and horses
10am	Gives fodder and hay to young camels		
12am	Cooks and eats lunch, does washing and sewing, cares for children		
4pm	Supervises suckling of lambs		
7pm	Cooks and eats dinner, checks on animals for the night	7pm	Returns from pasture, eats, checks on animals
9pm	Sleeps	9pm	Sleeps

* Information supplied by Tserannadmid

? These tasks only added after questioning

Table 3. Spring daily labour profile: Altantsetseg and Dangasuren's household (household reference number: 56 Tariat Sum Arkhangai)

Altantsetseg (Wife)		Dangasuren (Husband)*	
5am		7am	
Gets up, makes tea, gets daughters up, does other domestic tasks		Gets up, collects cattle from pasture, brings cattle for milking, checks animals in shelter	
8am		10am	
Milks cows, cleans shelters, takes female cattle to pasture		Takes sheep to pasture, takes animals to river, cares for horses, reads books	
11am			
Brings milk to <i>ger</i> , chops logs for fire, collects ice from river, puts animals in shelter			
5pm		7pm	
Prepares food, cooks and eats		Returns from pasture, eats	
8-9pm		8-9pm	
Checks animals in shelter		Suckling animals in shelter	
12pm		12pm	
Sleeps		Sleeps	

* Information supplied by Altantsetseg

The profiles show the women working on a wide range of tasks in and around the *ger* with the men spending most of the day away from the camp performing long distance herding. There was a high level of cooperation between them in the care of young animals during the morning and evening. Both women initially omitted to mention some domestic tasks they performed, suggesting that they are seldom considered as separate or indeed, as 'work'.

An assessment of the time use patterns of men and women at different points in the year is still required. However it is probable that these profiles reflect a typical pattern of time use within the household. They show men and women co-operating on specific production tasks but otherwise working separately. Women are seen as dividing their time between domestic and productive tasks and

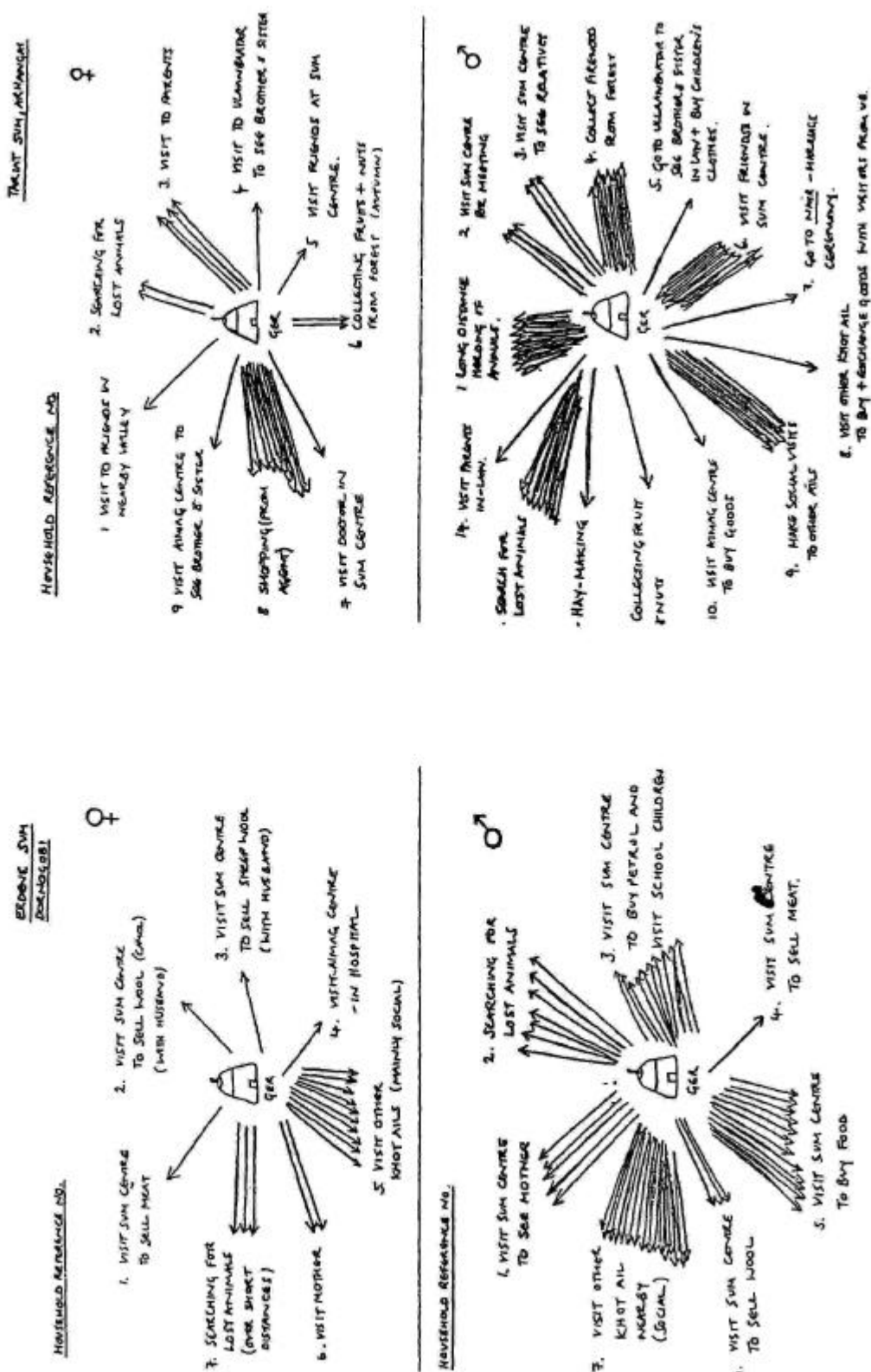
working longer hours than men, thus shifting the overall burden of household labour in their direction.

Mobility mapping

This technique determines where, why and how often people travel. The maps show the home in the centre, and on each the interviewer records destination, frequency and reason for travel for every respondent.

Men and women experience very different patterns of mobility. This reflects the gender division of labour and different time use patterns of men and women. Figure 3 shows the mobility maps of two men and two women in each sample area.

Figure 3. Mobility Maps: Men and Women



The majority of men's movements reflect their responsibility for herding movements and pasture use. As well as their daily herding responsibilities they make regular trips to *sum* centres and other *khot ail* for meetings and general information, and for the sale and marketing of products. They also attend more social occasions than women.

The majority of women's labour takes place near to the *ger*, so women make fewer trips than men. They usually make trips to do shopping or to visit friends and relatives. They usually make these trips during the quieter months of December, January and February when there is no milking and labour demands are less intense.

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