Mongolia’s Ger to Ger Foundation – Nomad Centered, Community-Based, Cultural Eco Tourism Development

Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Zanjian Former
Concise Summary: Help us pitch this solution! Provide an explanation within 3-4 short sentences.

Responsible Community Mobilization for Sustainable Livelihoods
Ger to Ger systematically enables rural communities to responsibly and sustainably tap the tourism industry to generate sustainable livelihoods through vocational training (Foundation) and market linkage development (Agency); to which within 3 to 5 years community based tourism will become well rooted. Rural communities, particularly herder groups in league with rural single service suppliers (rural drivers, guides, other human resources and businesses), provide travel services and products to the travel industry. Ger to Ger productively utilizes herders and their existing assets to develop cultural eco travel products ...
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Name of your organization</strong></th>
<th>Ger to Ger Foundation &amp; Agency</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organization type</strong></td>
<td>NGO (community development) &amp; Agency (social enterprise that represents the communities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual budget/currency</strong></td>
<td>60,000USD</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mailing address</strong></td>
<td>Arizona Plaza, Suite 11, Baruun Selbe 5/3, 1st Khoroo Chengeltei District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Telephone number</strong></td>
<td>(976-11) 313336</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Postal/Zip Code</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Website</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://www.GertoGer.org">http://www.GertoGer.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Email address</strong></td>
<td><a href="mailto:info@gertoger.org">info@gertoger.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Alternative email address</strong></td>
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</tbody>
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**Your idea**

This will be the address used to plot your entry on the map.

**Street Address**
Arizona Plaza Building, Suite 11, Baruun Selbe 5/3 1st Khoroo, Chingeltei District

**City**
Ulaanbaatar

**State/Province**

**Country**

**Geotourism Challenge Addressed by Entrant**
Quality of tourist experience and educational benefit to tourists, Quality of benefit to residents for the destination, Quality of tourism management by destination leadership, Quality of stewardship of the destination.

**Organization size**
Small (1 to 100 employees)

**Indicate sector in which you principally work**
Tourism-related business

**Year innovation began**
2005

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**Innovation**
What is the goal of your innovation? Please describe in one sentence the kind of impact, change, or reform your approach is intended to achieve.

Contribute towards sustainable poverty alleviation, rural economic development and community initiated health, cultural and natural resource
It's the responsibility of the Organization as it matures, in cooperation with the local inhabitants, to find new and creative ways to tap the "global" market created by "visitors from point "A" to point "B" safely.

Example: even a homeless man with an upright and honest character, with proper knowledge and some applied experience, can walk and guide sustainability. rural economic diversification, new labor market creation and promotion of community services in line with greater industry demands to ensure development of micro and small enterprises. Public and private sector partnerships are fostered for business enabling environments that encourage further additional routes. and labor by establishing and maintaining the route, and later participate in the trainers of trainers programme to prepare other groups to develop The project is inclusive of the poor and the extreme poor by mobilizing herders into productive economic activity. Herders/Rural Communities/Environment/Industry Partners (Public-Private Partnerships)
The project is inclusive of the poor and the extreme poor by mobilizing herders into productive economic activity. Rather, they contribute their time and labor by establishing and maintaining the route, and later participate in the trainers of trainers programme to prepare other groups to develop additional routes. These rural communities are active in self-monitoring to assess local opportunities so as to work with the project and partners to develop micro and small enterprises. Public and private sector partnerships are fostered for business enabling environments that encourage further rural economic diversification, new labor market creation and promotion of community services in line with greater industry demands to ensure sustainability.

Example: even a homeless man with an upright and honest character, with proper knowledge and some applied experience, can walk and guide visitors from point "A" to point "B" safely.

It's the responsibility of the Organization as it matures, in cooperation with the local inhabitants, to find new and creative ways to tap the "global" market and use this massive social economic power responsibly to systematically materialize the vision of their community’s development.

Impact

Describe the degree of success you have had to date. How do you measure, both quantitatively and qualitatively, the impact on sustainability or enhancement of local culture, environment, heritage, or aesthetics? How has it transformed or contributed to the power of place or demonstrated the sustainability of tourism? How does your approach minimize negative impacts?

Surveyed clients responded nomadic families, scenery, and nomadic methods of travel were outstanding. 98% percent noted hospitality, traditional customs, tourist safety were excellent, and 60% rated families as good. Travellers choose Ger to Ger to visit nomadic families, support the local community and value-for-money. Nomadic families are satisfied with the pre-season vocational training and fall seasons’ SWOT Development Workshops.>

Lonely Planet’s 2008 Mongolia Guidebook: “As the most innovative tourism concept in Mongolia, the Ger to Ger Programme should be near the top of every traveller’s wish list.”

UNESCAP cited Ger to Ger as one of the region’s effective social economic regional tourism case study for Asian and the Pacific at the 63rd UNESCAP Session

2008 ECONOMIC BENEFIT GENERATED BY 492 TRAVELERS = 169,904 USD (including incomes for rural businesses, transportation, and etc).

Province—Nomadic Families--------Generated Revenues USD--------# of Travellers
Arhangai——12------------------------13,749.49-----------------------138
Dundgovi——15------------------------8,405.98------------------------76
Tuv--------4--------------------------13,180.29----------------------176
Bulgan-----3--------------------------9,133.28------------------------102

Note: Before Ger to Ger, annual cash income w/o tourism was averaged at 400 USD and less per household

Mrs. Battsetsseg, rural facilitator and nomadic family

‘Besides increasing income, I was a cancer patient - tourism has paid for my surgery.’

In what ways are local residents actively involved in your work, including participation and community input? How has the community responded to or benefited from your approach?

> Annual rural spring and fall training workshops for nomadic families, local businesses, drivers, guides, etc.
> Developed new rural job markets for nomadic herder groups and their communities.
> Establishing community-based Info/Ticketing Centers
> Support local handicraft cooperatives
> Promote community travel products, rural public transportation and travel networks for travelers.
> Mapping of service suppliers to strengthen social economic sector linkages between demand and supply chains.
> Support industry knowledge sharing for local development of tourism facilities to meet industry demands.
> Assist in facilitation of herder/community-led initiatives that are aimed at rural health, education and environmental management.

How does your program promote traveler enthusiasm, satisfaction, and engagement with the locale?

arryout pre-departure Responsible Tourism Orientations Lessons for independent travelers and tour operator tourists
> We Mongolize the travelers instead of westernizing the nomadic families and community members.
> We share lessons learned and over 16 years of in country experiences with the travelers
> We share destination information that includes the geography, culture of the families of the region, climate, travel methods, rural health and safety, language, etc., of the locality.
Describe how your work helps travelers and local residents better understand the value of the area's cultural and natural heritage, and educates them on local environmental issues.

> Developed community tourism portal (www.GertoGer.org) that promotes Ger to Ger herders and their community product and services for travelers.
> Developed custom designed, in-country, mandatory pre-departure Responsible Tourism Orientation Lessons and handbook for travelers that covers all aspects of travel, culture, geography, rural health & safety, language, etc for travelers.
> Carry out pre-season Vocational training Workshops and fall SWOT Development Workshops for nomadic families and rural communities.
> Implemented domestic and international monitor and evaluation methods that allow cross industry feedback, analysis, consultation and incorporation via rural facilitators with community members and nomadic family network groups.

**Description of Project**

- **How is your initiative currently financed? If available, provide information on your finances and organization that could help others.**
  
  Please list: Annual budget, annual revenue generated, size of part-time, full-time and volunteer staff.

  Ger to Ger Community Eco Tourism Agency (Social Enterprise) handles the business linkages which generates incomes for the rural communities and nomadic families. The Agency also uses some of its revenues to cover some of the overhead costs of the Foundation to ensure more funds are spent towards development initiatives.

  Ger to Ger Foundation generates Community Project Proposals with its rural communities that are sent out for fundraising via www.Give2Asia.org or other overseas counterparts.

  **Ulaanbaatar Office:**
  > 3 full-time
  > 3 seasonal
  > student interns
  > public-private partnerships

  **Rural locations and general beneficiary types:**
  > 5 Provinces
  > Regional facilitators
  > 45 nomadic families (average size 5 persons, approx. 225 household members)
  > Orphanages
  > Public schools and students
  > Handicraft cooperatives
  > Drivers and public transportation
  > Guides and translators
  > Monasteries
  > Museums
  > Fine arts
  > Rural food & drink and accommodation sectors
  > Pharmacies and clinics

  **Is your initiative financially and organizationally sustainable? If not, what is required to make it so? Is there a potential demand for your innovation?**

  Ger to Ger has reached basic level of sustainability. This initiative has been financed on extremely low budgets (skeleton budgets) over the past couple of years and this created many barriers for our development works as we always had to be postponed many initiatives till the next season owing to the lack of finances.

  **What are the main barriers you encounter in managing, implementing, or replicating your innovation? What barriers keep your program from having greater impact?**

  As Ger to Ger has just reached a base-level of operational sustainability, the majority of our funding no longer comes from donors, as of today we operate based on our Social Enterprise linkages with the greater tourism industry; Ger to Ger relies on the private sector (travelers, tour operators and agencies) to maintain its existence. The amount of revenues generated only allow slow expansion till our market share becomes more mature; as of today, for greater and more rapid expansion of Ger to Ger it requires medium level of social investments or sponsorships to reduce some technical or operational costs.

  Some areas include:
  > Travel costs by land and air in Mongolia are very expensive to remote locations where development initiatives are required.
  > Maintenance costs for our vehicle repairs that is used for research, training, monitor and evaluation works.
  > Procuring cheap land to establish Community Information and Ticketing Centers (CITCs) and its furnishings.
  > Long term funding for multiple rural destination development, management and expansion works – long term funding doesn’t necessarily mean heavy budgets.

  **What is your plan to expand or further develop your approach? Please indicate where/how you would like to grow or enhance your innovation, or have others do so.**

  As Ger to Ger grows and matures, it’s becoming a medium for travelers and international tour operators that are seeking a “Responsible” Social Enterprise partner, and “value added component” to Mongolia’s tourism industry.

  To diversify and strengthen Mongolia’s rural tourism industry’s job markets, to develop into a private sector supported public sector development initiatives with travel routes, rural information/ticketing kiosks that allow greater systematic involvement of communities as well as to fulfill the much needed public travel infrastructure, and to advocate ‘responsible and sustainable’ destination development and management that allows greater community and industry involvement.
The Story

What is the origin of your innovation? Tell the Changemakers and media communities what prompted you to start this initiative.

Half of Mongolia's population are herders of which 65% are living at or below the poverty line. In comparison, the national poverty rate is at 36%. Rural poverty has been exacerbated by severe 1999-2001 dzuds, extreme winters, that caused the death of nearly 10 million livestock reducing the total number of the nation's livestock resources from 33.6 million to 23.9 million by the end of 2002. In addition, inadequate pasture management has resulted in advance desertification and water shortages that will require many years for the environment to recover. Alternative and complementing sources of incomes that cultivate herder's assets into non-agricultural and non-livestock income to lessen economic and natural shocks and smooth the effects of seasonality need to be developed.

At present, there still exists substantial public private partnership gaps between government, tourism projects, NGOs (i.e. policy, information development) and rural communities - that possess untapped tourism assets (i.e. mode of travel, experiencing culture). Despite the ongoing works of Ger to Ger, many rural communities and herders lack the ability and understanding on how to organize, develop and market competitive tourism services and products. Private tour companies are interested in rural community development insofar as the inexpensive outsourcing of basic food services, horse riding and a handful of other activities; these activities reaches less than 1% of Mongolia’s nomads. To alleviate rural poverty and prevent others from slipping into poverty, it is critical that there is a mobilization of the industry to develop an interlacing rural tourism infrastructure that responsibly fulfills private sector needs, while addressing the needs of sustainable community growth. Furthermore by cultivating Mongolia’s natural and herder resources, rural communities are engaging in income generating activities that is generating towards enhance public-private partnerships towards economic development, health and education development, and natural resource management in rural areas where Ger to Ger operates.

Please provide a personal bio. Note this may be used in Changemakers' marketing material.

Zanjan Fromer
Author and Executive Director
Film Maker, Mass Media
Community and Regional Tourism Development

Mr. Fromer is an Alaskan Native Indian who has been residing in Mongolia for over 16 years. For more than 20 years, Mr. Fromer has been working in the tourism industry professionally both in Alaska and in Mongolia. Based on his tribal knowledge and industry experience, Mr. Fromer has redesigned the concept of community tourism to ensure that its implementation and sustainable growth would be in line with the social cultural frameworks of Mongolia’s rural nomadic tribes.

Describe some unique tourist experiences that your approach provides. Be specific; give illustrative examples.

Nomadic Cultural Eco Adventures
Travel Mongolia's great outdoors with nomads that guide you along their nomadic trails with horses, camels, ox carts, or even trek from one nomadic family to the next over vast and epic landscapes to visit, overnight and home-stay with genuine Mongolian nomadic families in the mountains, along lush river valleys or deep in Gobi Desert all year round. By doing so you are directly benefiting rural nomadic groups and their local communities in their efforts to produce non-commercialized outdoor cultural adventures that allows them to generate greatly needed alternative incomes.

Traveling to these remote locations also provides an economic stimulus for government and private investors to increase and diversify rural services and job markets (health, pharmacies, education, food & drink, etc.) and infrastructure (fuel and oil, better roads, accommodations, etc.) in accordance with the growing industry demands; thus a solid foundation for sustainable rural livelihoods.

Through tourism incomes, rural nomadic herder groups and their communities are developing a greater sense of appreciation and understanding of their roles as:
> Custodians of nomadic culture and heritage.
> Guardians of local environment (income asset).
> Nurturers of Travel Industry Partnerships.
> Implementers of Millenniums Development Goals

What types of partnerships or professional development would be most beneficial in spreading your innovation?

> Partnership with registered charity organizations in European countries for fundraising works.
> Partnership with travel agencies that wish to incorporate Ger to Ger into their Mongolia travel itineraries.
> Partnership with media agencies that are interested in human interest stories of nomadic life and overcoming economic, environmental and political challenges to maintain their traditional lifestyle in today's globalization.
> More Goodwill Ambassadors to champion our cause in Mongolia.
> Corporate sponsors for technical equipments and vehicles (Toyota, Apple, HP, etc.) - so we can use those saved funds towards development and rural field works.

Source URL: https://www.changemakers.com/geotourismchallenge/entries/mongolia-s-ger-ger-foundation-nomad-centered-community#comment-0