

| **11:30 p.m.** | A call from home: my 6-year-old tells me she has been hunting bugs. I am so tired, it's hard to focus on the bug story, but these calls do help bridge the distance between me and my family.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ...

The U.S. Agency for International Development Mission Director

EMBASSY ULAANBAATAR, MONGOLIA

By *Jonathan Addleton*

| **8:30 a.m.** | Our small delegation has breakfast at the Gobi Hotel in Moron, a small town located in the northernmost province of Mongolia, bordering Siberia. I'm with program manager and translator Mendsaihan (many Mongolians go by just one name) and driver Loya. The town consists of little more than a large collection of log cabins, resembling nothing so much as a desolate frontier town in Montana, circa 1900. We arrived yesterday in an aging Antonov 24 with bald tires and frayed seats. I sat next to a grizzled sheepherder who kept looking anxiously out the window at the rugged landscape below.

| **9 a.m.** | We visit the local power plant and see the five USAID-funded Caterpillar generators provided some four years ago. Nearby, a set of Russian and Czech generators from an earlier era languish, unused. Somehow, the chief engineer manages to keep the plant running.

| **10 a.m.** | Representatives from XasBank, a new USAID-funded micro-finance program that provides small loans to Mongolian entrepreneurs, meet with us. The bank is now expanding to cover all of Mongolia, a country larger than France, Britain, Italy and Germany combined — but with less than 1,000 miles of paved road.

| **10:30 a.m.** | We meet with a journalist working for *Rural Business News*, a USAID-funded monthly magazine with a circulation of 100,000, the largest in Mongolia. She mentions that she is working on an article about the economic impact of tourism on the Lake Hovsgol region.

| **11 a.m.** | We discuss the economic situation with the deputy governor of Hovsgol province. About the size of the state of Georgia, Hovsgol has a population of just over 100,000 — and *no* paved roads! Livestock — horses, sheep, goats, yaks, even a few camels — are the mainstay of the economy, though tourism offers some possibilities for the future.

| **11:30 a.m.** | We make a brief visit to the local Agricultural Bank offices, another rural financial institution that has been revived following the insertion of a USAID-funded management team. Although USAID has one of its smallest missions in Mongolia, the impact of our programs is significant.

| **12 p.m.** | Lunch at a local cafe located in a small log cabin in the middle of town con-

sists of “booz,” the Mongolian national dish made of chopped mutton sprinkled with garlic and encased in dough.

| **1 p.m.** | We tour the local Buddhist monastery, nicely situated against a backdrop of snow-covered mountains. Despite strong efforts made to root out religion during Stalinist times, Buddhism is making something of a comeback in Mongolia. A half-dozen young monks dressed in orange robes chant out a blessing for our journey, one that will involve travel by Jeep across some 1,000 kilometers back to Ulaanbaatar, most of it on dirt track.

| **2 p.m.** | We drive into the countryside to see a collection of ancient “deer stones.” A few cows graze among the several “sacrifice mounds” as well as various standing stones, some with animals carved onto them. Some archeologists rate this site as the most impressive of its kind in all of Central Asia. The site figures prominently in a USAID-funded application to UNESCO to have the Hovsgol region declared a world heritage site, perhaps affording it eventual protection. We also visit a nearby river and an abandoned Soviet-era geology camp, quite large with its own well, generator and soccer field now covered in weeds.

| **7 p.m.** | Our Mongolian counterparts organize a dinner at the Gobi Hotel. Almost everyone at the table offers toasts to eternal friendship between the United States and Mongolia, though on this evening toasts are made with Scotch rather than the usual vodka. The chief engineer keeps referring to the importance of hydropower for Mongolia. For some reason almost every engineer in this country, on seeing a river, immediately wants to dam it.

| **10 p.m.** | I head off to bed while most of the Mongolian group retire for a round of billiards in the basement. The hotel room isn’t much: the window is cracked, the curtains are torn, and the plumbing doesn’t work. I pause briefly to watch the sun set over Moron. Tomorrow we will visit Lake Hovsgol National Park, another USAID-assisted program in Mongolia. The day after that, we begin the long journey back to Ulaanbaatar.



Jonathan outside a Mongolian ger (yurt) during a field trip to a rural area of the country.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

A Foreign Service Spouse

EMBASSY YEREVAN, ARMENIA

By *Donna Scaramastra Gorman*

| **7:30 a.m.** | Today’s Saturday and it’s our last week at post. I packed up my office at the embassy last week (I was one of the embassy’s two community liaison officers). Four burly movers finished packing the contents of our house yesterday. Despite the