



Mongolia

In the last two decades, Mongolia has experienced rapid political, economic, and social transformation, from a Soviet client state to a democratic, independent, market economy. A major priority now is to establish the conditions for sustainable and inclusive economic growth. The Asia Foundation is well positioned to help Mongolia meet these challenges, with programs to advance good governance, promote citizen participation, improve urban services in the ger areas, address environmental issues, empower women and promote dialogue on regional cooperation.



THE ASIA FOUNDATION IN MONGOLIA

In 1990, The Asia Foundation was the first nonprofit organization to be invited into Mongolia, and we have played a unique role in the country's development since then. Our long-term, comprehensive approach and record of programs have met important needs at critical junctures in Mongolia's recent history. The Foundation has earned a reputation as a neutral and credible partner that can work effectively with government, civil society, and the private sector. Now in the midst of an economic boom, the country is facing complicated new economic, social, and governance challenges. In response, the Foundation is collaborating with multiple stakeholders on key reforms to strengthen democratic governance and build a foundation for long-term economic prosperity. The Foundation's programs in Mongolia are built around four key themes:

1. Advancing democracy, good governance, and civic engagement
2. Addressing environmental challenges
3. Empowering women
4. Improving access to information and education

STRENGTHENING GOVERNANCE

In the last two decades, Mongolia has achieved certain success economically and socially, yet corruption and bureaucracy have been thwarting development. Public services are plagued by a lack of transparency, accountability, conflict of interest, and corruption. Management of public resources and assets are ineffective and inadequate. Increasing good governance, transparency, and accountability is essential to reduce corruption and bureaucracy, which contributes to the efficiency of managing and distributing public resources effectively. Ultimately, addressing these issues will contribute to the long-term sustainability of the country's economic growth and social well-being.

At the national level, our Strengthening Democratic Participation and Transparency in the Public Sector (STEPS) project seeks to increase citizens and the business community's awareness of public sector corruption and transparency issues by promoting more effective, accountable, and transparent government for the management of public services and resources.

STEPS continues to collaborate with public, private, and civil society stakeholders to carry out anti-corruption initiatives through the implementation of innovative ideas

and approaches for improved quality, impact, and sustainability. With consultation from stakeholders, the STEPS project developed a joint action plan on good governance and corruption for 2016-18, which focused on ensuring citizens participation in the law-making processes, monitoring of the effective implementation of laws and rules, and demanding accountability from government offices and officials. Other key activities of the project include annual corruption benchmarking surveys, the *Survey on Perceptions and Knowledge of Corruption* (SPEAK), and the *Study of Private Perceptions of Corruption* (STOPP). These surveys are well-regarded by citizens, public institutions, civil society, and the private sector as an objective source of information on corruption trends and information.



URBAN GOVERNANCE

Despite Mongolia's mining-led economy, rampant poverty in ger areas of Ulaanbaatar persists. In 2015, Mongolia had a population of three million people, almost half of this population now live in Ulaanbaatar. However, due to a lack of affordable housing and limited space in Ulaanbaatar, migrants from the countryside are forced to settle in ger districts, which have become sprawling, unplanned neighborhoods. To improve the environment, infrastructure and public service delivery in these ger districts, The Asia Foundation has signed an agreement with the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development to implement the Urban Governance Project (UGP) in 33 ger area khoros (small scale administrative units), from across all nine districts of Ulaanbaatar, reaching 330,000 citizens. In these khoros, the project is working with municipal government and communities to improve participatory budgeting, service delivery, and strengthen capabilities of citizens as well as front-line government officials.

EMPOWERING WOMEN

The Asia Foundation's programs seek to protect the rights and increase the economic opportunities of Mongolian women. In Mongolia, the female to male labor force participation and women's economic participation in the formal sector is relatively high in comparison to other countries in the region. However, women entrepreneurs face great

challenges in the areas of developing solid networks, gaining technical information on how to develop and grow their businesses, and in accessing financial support for entrepreneurial activities. By supporting business development and addressing key constraints facing women entrepreneurs, Mongolia has an opportunity to build a more stable economy and increase job creation.

The Women's Business Center and Incubator Project (WBC Project) addresses this critical demand from women entrepreneurs to receive day-to-day professional and high-quality business support and development services in an enabling environment that fosters women's entrepreneurship and supports small and medium businesses. The WBC Project also responds to the desire of the Ulaanbaatar City Municipality to support women entrepreneurs.

Education is a vital path to empowerment for vulnerable and at-risk women. While access to education has improved for Mongolian girls, and they now exceed boys in tertiary education, women still face challenges in the job market and remain underrepresented in the political system. It is especially difficult for low-income young women, often from rural families, to obtain a university education. The Foundation is committed to improving access to education for underprivileged women in Mongolia. Throughout our six-year partnership with the Zorig Foundation, we have awarded 160 scholarships to low-income women from across the country, enabling them to pursue undergraduate degrees at two respected Mongolian universities. The scholarships are specifically awarded to young women pursuing degrees in the sciences, an area of study where women are especially underrepresented in Mongolia.



ADDRESSING ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

Although Mongolia is large and sparsely populated with just under three million people, it faces serious environmental challenges. This is true in both the remote countryside and the rapidly growing capital, Ulaanbaatar, which has become the primary destination of a massive urban

migration. Major urban challenges include inadequate wastewater treatment and solid waste disposal, threatened water resources, and some of the world's worst air pollution. Elsewhere, priority issues include desertification, the effects of human induced climate change, groundwater that is diminishing in quality and quantity, and loss of biodiversity. There is a history of destructive practices in Mongolia's mining industry due to a weak regulatory system with poor oversight. Excessive mine licensing and the activities of unregulated artisanal miners have caused widespread environmental disruption and soil and water pollution. While progress is being made toward mining sector reform, government institutions lack the capacity and resources to enforce regulations, and citizen participation in local resource management is still limited.

August 2016 marked the end of the second and final phase of the Engaging Stakeholders in Environmental Conservation Project (ESEC II). The project brought together the main stakeholders in artisanal and small-scale mining (ASM) environmental management to introduce a set of standardized environmental management practices for frugal rehabilitation through Local Multi-Stakeholder Councils (LMC's) and soum governments. Based on the experiences and results of the 17 frugal rehabilitation demonstration (FRD) projects implemented throughout 2014-2015, ESEC II developed a frugal rehabilitation methodology (FRM) that enables ASM rehabilitation approaches that are economically affordable, socially acceptable, and ecologically viable, with benefits for both ASM communities and affected stakeholders. The FRM is now a formal attachment to the Revised ASM Regulation 308, which has yet to be passed by the government. The methodology provides a comprehensive description of the rehabilita-

tion of land degraded by ASM and includes a Monitoring Checklist to be used by artisanal miners and by local environmental inspectors during the signing off stage of rehabilitated land to be handed over to local governments. In addition, the methodology handbook includes a template for ASM-led Rehabilitation Action Plans.



BOOKS FOR ASIA PROGRAM

Since 1993, The Asia Foundation's Books for Asia program (BFA) in Mongolia has helped improve access to information and education by donating one million books to education institutions in nationwide. The program has expanded its activities in a number of new directions, including offering a children's digital library, supporting open access, and promoting reading initiatives. Let's Read! Mongolia uses the power of low-cost technology to give students in ger districts access to an ever-expanding collection of books. The program, Mongolia's first children's digital library, distributes e-books in Mongolian and English through an Android-based digital library platform developed by Library for All. The project started in January 2016.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Books for Asia Program | Under the Let's Read! Project, over 200 English and Mongolia books are freely accessed by about 2,500 students from 5th to 9th grades.

Corruption Surveys | The Asia Foundation has conducted national corruption benchmarking surveys since 2006 annually to assess public perception and the impact of corruption at the household level. Also, surveys have been conducted in the private sector to understand how corruption debilitates the business environment. Together, these surveys provide a broad picture of the level of corruption in Mongolia, and triggers invigorated and critical dialogues on issues of transparency and accountability.

North-East Asia Mayors Forum | The Asia Foundation supported the third annual Northeast Asian Mayor's Forum held in Ulaanbaatar. This year's forum, "Supporting Cities to Promote Green Energy," featured more than 90 representatives from 20 cities of the Northeast Asia region, and over 20 international organizations.

Women's Business Center | The Women's Business Center opened on July 6, 2016. In its first two months of operation, the Center provided 680 services.

Support to Education | The Asia Foundation provided 160 scholarships for young women to pursue science degrees at two top Mongolian universities and supports the only university endowed ecology chair of its kind in Mongolia.



The Asia Foundation

The Asia Foundation is a nonprofit international development organization committed to improving lives across a dynamic and developing Asia. Headquartered in San Francisco, The Asia Foundation works through a network of offices in 18 Asian countries and in Washington, DC. Working with public and private partners, the Foundation receives funding from a diverse group of bilateral and multilateral development agencies, foundations, corporations, and individuals.

HEADQUARTERS

465 California Street, 9th Floor | San Francisco, CA 94104 USA | Tel: (415) 982-4640
sf.general@asiafoundation.org

WASHINGTON, DC

1779 Massachusetts Ave., NW Suite 815
Washington, DC 20036 USA | Tel: (202) 588-9420 | dc.general@asiafoundation.org

MONGOLIA

P.O. Box 69 | Orient Plaza, 3rd Floor, G. Chagdarjav Str. 9 | Ulaanbaatar, 14210
Tel: 976 (11) 330-524 | mongolia.general@asiafoundation.org

www.asiafoundation.org