As Mongolia moves into a new phase of its economic development, driven predominantly by rapid economic growth in the extractive industries, the country faces a number of significant challenges. Rapid rates of urbanization are leading to an increasingly overwhelming concentration of the population in urban centers, especially the country’s capital city Ulaanbaatar. In 1989, 26.8 percent of Mongolia’s population lived in Ulaanbaatar. Today more than half of the population of Mongolia now lives in the capital, with a total population of approximately 1.2 million. Growth in the capital city is expected to continue apace.

As a result of this rapid population growth, more than half of Ulaanbaatar today consists of unplanned settlements called “ger districts,” which house more than half of the city’s residents and nearly 25 percent of Mongolia’s total population. Dealing with the ramifications of these large, unplanned settlements and effectively delivering basic urban services to all the city’s residents has been, and will remain, a massive challenge. It is a challenge made all the more difficult by the low-density settlement patterns in the ger districts and the extreme climate of Mongolia. These factors significantly increase the cost of delivering urban services such as water, electricity, waste management, transportation, and other core needs.

**PROGRAM GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

In May 2012, The Asia Foundation signed an institutional partnership agreement with the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to launch various initiatives relating to good governance, health and education across the Asian region. These initiatives are designed with an emphasis on flexibility and adaptability to ensure that they are timely, opportune, and likely to achieve significant impact. In Mongolia, the initiative under the institutional partnership aims to improve urban services in the ger districts of Ulaanbaatar. The Foundation is working closely with the Ulaanbaatar City Municipality to support efforts to improve the quality of services to the ger districts, and to introduce a more inclusive style of urban governance.
PROJECT AREAS

IMPROVING SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Based on an initial fact-finding exercise which identified solid waste management as a key area for program development, the Ulaanbaatar City Municipality and The Asia Foundation are partnering in a Model Solid Waste Management Khoroo Project, which aims to establish an efficient and effective solid waste management system at khoroo (neighborhood) level in which ger area residents, khoroo, district, and city municipality authorities, and solid waste management companies are actively working together to improve solid waste management in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. The project uses a testing and demonstration intervention logic that combines practice, policy, innovation, and learning at the micro-level to achieve impact at the macro-level. The project combines three interrelated components: (1) system development and performance monitoring (2) infrastructure/technology solutions, and (3) behavioral change. The project is being implemented in the six pilot khoroo of Chingeltei 16, Songino Khairkhan 26, Sukhbaatar 14, Khan-Uul 13, Bayangol 9, and Bayanzurkh.

SUPPORTING THE CITY CHARTER

In 2013, the Ulaanbaatar governor's office started the initial phases of a project to introduce a new Ulaanbaatar City Charter, which will comprise of the main charter and a comprehensive set of more than 50 sub-charters/codes that will govern the city's social, economic, political, and cultural context. The Ulaanbaatar City Municipality also plans to undertake a review of the City Master Plan 2030, the key document in guiding their planning and activities, to refine and clarify its contents in order to make the document more publicly accessible and understandable. The Asia Foundation is supporting the city by providing direct technical assistance for reviewing current drafts of the proposed charters for compliance with the national legal framework, and in the development of a public version of the Master Plan.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

COMMUNITY MAPPING

In partnership with the Ulaanbaatar City Municipality, The Asia Foundation conducted a community mapping initiative from June - October 2013, covering 87 khorooas in the ger districts. Working together with activists and kheseg (local) leaders, the mayor’s office and the Foundation mapped each khoroo in the ger areas, and then used that data to carry out spatial analysis to identify service levels and gaps in accessibility and coverage of public services. Using eight indicators, the maps measure the availability and accessibility of services in six sectors: water, health, education, public transport, solid waste management, and vulnerability and safety.

The community maps serve as an advocacy tool for citizens to engage in discussions on the availability of public services in their communities; and as a planning tool for both citizens and the city for the prioritization of resources and investment and to monitor service improvement over time. The data collected helped the Mayor’s office prepare for the 2014 budget discussions related to the City Municipality’s five-year investment plan. This was the first time that spatial analysis played a key component in political level budgetary discussions.

In January 2014, the Ulaanbaatar City Municipality and the Foundation launched the online community website, www.manaikhoroo.mn, an interactive platform where citizens and city officials can find information on service provision in the ger areas and download community maps. The website features an interactive Google Maps interface with various display indicators.