MONGOLIA
2026-2029

UN-HABITAT

COUNTRY PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

“A better quality of life for all in an urbanizing world.”

Credit: © UN-Habitat Mongolia

UN-HABITAT

UN-Habitat ROAP Country Programme Overview

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Thanks are extended to national and local government partners and other urban stakeholders.

CONTENT

01

OPENING

This Country Programme (CP) outlines UN-Habitat's strategic engagement in Mongolia to support inclusive, climate-resilient, and sustainable urban development. It presents the national urban context, key challenges, and priority areas for intervention, with a focus on housing, land, basic services, and climate resilience. The CP is structured to guide partners through Mongolia's urban transition, highlighting evidence-based challenges and identifying practical entry points for coordinated action. It also reflects alignment with national development priorities and global commitments, including the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. This document is intended for government counterparts, development partners, financial institutions, and other stakeholders seeking to collaborate on advancing resilient and inclusive urban solutions in Mongolia.

Message from the Country Manager

Mongolia stands at a critical point in its urban transition. Rapid urbanization, driven by climate pressures, migration, and economic concentration—has created significant challenges, particularly in Ulaanbaatar's ger areas, where many residents lack adequate housing and basic services. At the same time, intensifying climate risks, including severe air pollution, flooding, and extreme weather—are placing increasing pressure on infrastructure, public health, and livelihoods. These challenges call for integrated, climate-responsive urban solutions at scale.

Since 2006, UN-Habitat has supported Mongolia in advancing inclusive urban development and climate resilience. This Country Programme builds on that foundation to scale up impact through transformative investments.

Investing in Mongolia's cities today offers a unique opportunity to improve living conditions, reduce emissions, and foster a more inclusive, resilient, and sustainable urban future. UN-Habitat stands ready to collaborate with development partners, financial institutions, and the private sector to mobilize resources and scale integrated solutions for housing, basic services, and climate resilience.

Enkhtsetseg Shagdarsuren

UN-Habitat Mongolia

Photo 1. UN-Habitat Mongolia team together with the Development Solutions NGO team, partners in the Adaptation Fund funded Ger Community Resilience Project.

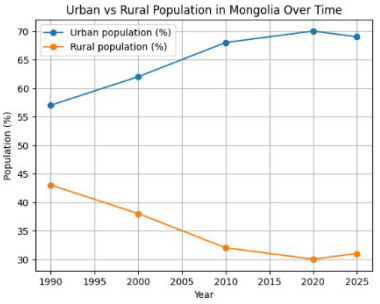
01

COUNTRY ANALYSIS

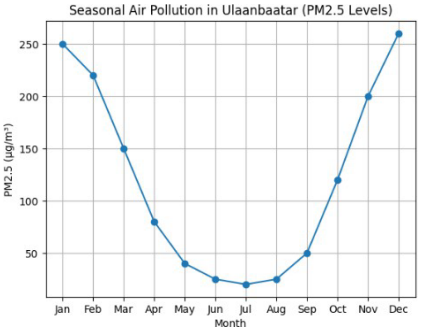
Mongolia is an upper middle-income, resource-rich country undergoing rapid urban and economic transition. Growth, driven largely by mining, remains volatile and uneven, contributing to persistent urban–rural disparities.

Urbanization has accelerated, with over two-thirds of the population living in cities—nearly half in Ulaanbaatar. Climate shocks such as dzud and concentrated opportunities in the capital have driven migration, leading to the expansion of informal ger areas and exposing gaps in housing, infrastructure, and services. The country faces compounded development and climate challenges, including harsh winters, rising energy demand, severe air pollution from coal-based heating, and increasing risks of flooding, water stress, and land degradation. While progress has been made in urban policy and decentralization, constraints remain in implementation capacity, coordination, and financing.

Mongolia's urban transition presents both urgent challenges and a critical opportunity to advance inclusive, climate-resilient, and sustainable development.



Mongolia has undergone rapid urbanization, with the urban population increasing from around 57% in 1990 to nearly 70% today, driven by migration and economic concentration in Ulaanbaatar.

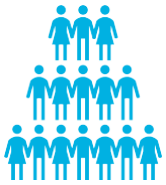


Air pollution in Ulaanbaatar is highly seasonal, with winter PM2.5 levels exceeding safe limits by more than 10-20 times, primarily due to coal-based heating in ger areas.


Credit: © Turbold

02

FACTSHEET



3.6 M

POPULATION

1.2 %

POPULATION GROWTH

6,700 USD

GDP PER CAPTA

2.5 M

URBAN POPULATION

2-3 %

URBAN GROWTH RATE

largely unaffordable

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

0.74

HDI INDEX

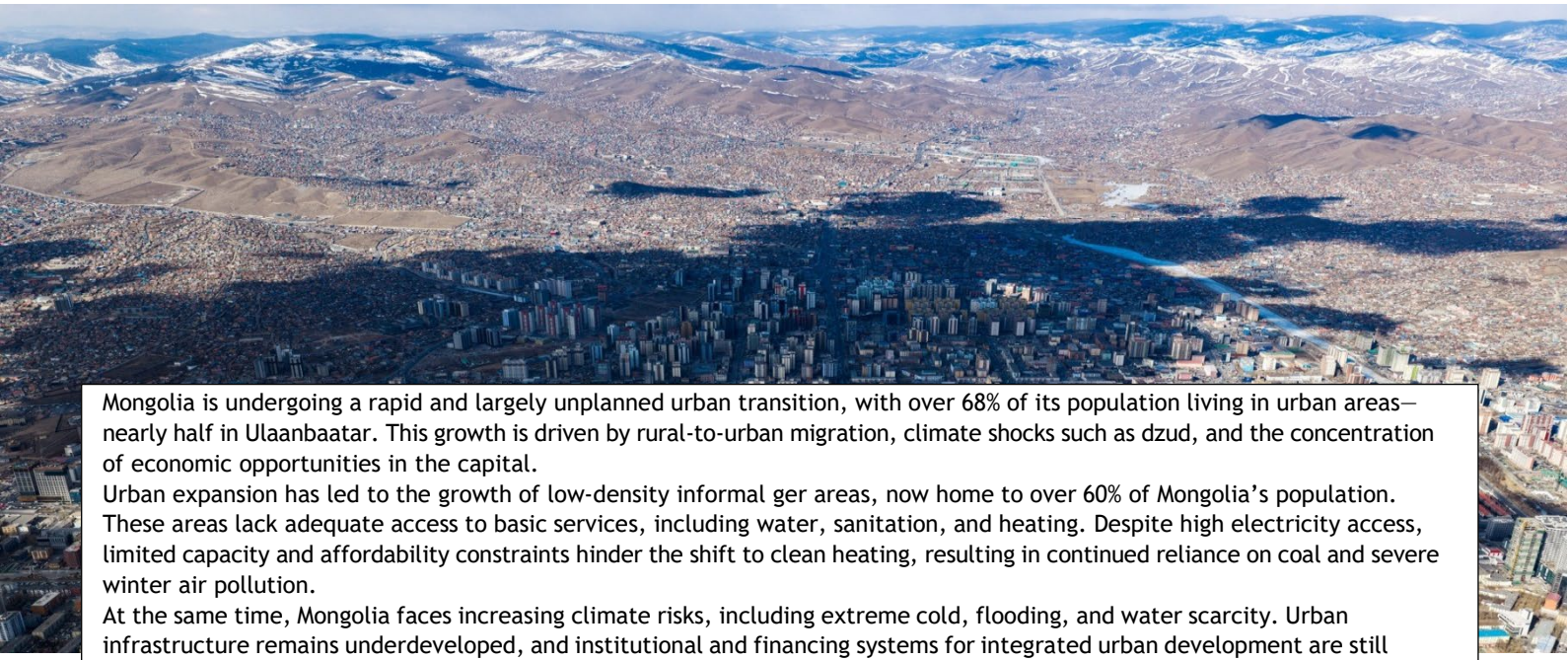
4.5-5 %

AGING RATE

68%

ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES RATE

03
URBAN CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES



Mongolia is undergoing a rapid and largely unplanned urban transition, with over 68% of its population living in urban areas—nearly half in Ulaanbaatar. This growth is driven by rural-to-urban migration, climate shocks such as dzud, and the concentration of economic opportunities in the capital.

Urban expansion has led to the growth of low-density informal ger areas, now home to over 60% of Mongolia's population. These areas lack adequate access to basic services, including water, sanitation, and heating. Despite high electricity access, limited capacity and affordability constraints hinder the shift to clean heating, resulting in continued reliance on coal and severe winter air pollution.

At the same time, Mongolia faces increasing climate risks, including extreme cold, flooding, and water scarcity. Urban infrastructure remains underdeveloped, and institutional and financing systems for integrated urban development are still evolving. Secondary cities offer opportunities for more sustainable growth but lack the capacity and investment to realize them.

CHALLENGE 1

Inadequate and Inequitable Housing in Ger Areas: A significant proportion of urban residents live in informal ger areas characterized by insecure tenure, substandard housing, and lack of basic services. Housing is often self-built, poorly insulated, and not connected to centralized heating, water, or sanitation systems. This results in poor living conditions, adverse health outcomes, and heightened vulnerability to climate extremes. Affordable and climate-resilient housing solutions remain limited, and financing mechanisms for low-income households are underdeveloped.

CHALLENGE 2

Severe Air Pollution and Energy Poverty: Despite near-universal electricity access, most ger area households rely on raw coal for heating due to limited grid capacity and high costs of electric heating. This has led to hazardous levels of air pollution during winter months, particularly making Ulaanbaatar one of the most polluted capitals globally. Air pollution poses serious health risks, particularly for children and vulnerable populations, and reflects deeper issues of energy poverty, infrastructure gaps, and limited adoption of clean heating solutions.

CHALLENGE 3

Climate Vulnerability and Inadequate Urban Infrastructure: Urban areas in Mongolia are increasingly exposed to climate-related hazards, including flooding, extreme cold, and seasonal icing. Ger areas, often located in hazard-prone zones, lack adequate drainage, flood protection, and resilient infrastructure. Existing urban systems are not designed to cope with these risks, resulting in recurring damage, service disruptions, and economic losses. Climate adaptation measures remain fragmented and insufficiently scaled.

CHALLENGE 4

Weak Urban Planning, Financing, and Institutional Coordination: Urban expansion in Mongolia has outpaced planning and regulatory frameworks, leading to inefficient land use, urban sprawl, and high infrastructure costs. Municipal governments face constraints in financing, technical capacity, and coordination across sectors. Integrated planning approaches that link land use, infrastructure, housing, and climate resilience are still evolving. Secondary cities, in particular, lack the institutional capacity and investment to develop along sustainable pathways.

04

HOUSING, LAND AND BASIC SERVICES

HOUSING FOR ALL

Mongolia faces significant housing challenges, particularly in Ulaanbaatar's ger areas, where over 60% of residents live in informal, low-density settlements. Housing is predominantly self-built, poorly insulated, and disconnected from basic infrastructure, resulting in unhealthy and unsafe living conditions. Affordable, climate-resilient housing options remain limited, and access to housing finance for low- and middle-income households is constrained. Addressing these gaps requires integrated approaches that combine housing improvements, infrastructure provision, and inclusive financing mechanisms.

HOUSING

Housing in ger areas is largely self-built, poorly insulated, and not connected to basic infrastructure, exposing residents to extreme cold and air pollution. Formal housing remains limited and often unaffordable, while access to housing finance is constrained.

LAND

Urban growth has been largely unplanned, resulting in urban sprawl and inefficient land use. Although many households have land possession rights, tenure insecurity and weak land management systems limit investment and coordinated development.

BASIC SERVICES

Access to basic services remains limited in ger areas, with reliance on water kiosks, pit latrines, and individual heating systems. Low-density settlements and harsh climatic conditions make infrastructure expansion costly and challenging..

05

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mongolia's urban areas are highly vulnerable to climate change, including extreme cold, flooding, and water stress. Ger areas that host almost 60% of the country population are particularly exposed due to their location in hazard-prone zones and lack of resilient infrastructure. Climate change exacerbates existing vulnerabilities, increasing risks to health, livelihoods, and housing. Strengthening urban climate resilience requires integrated investments in infrastructure, housing, and nature-based solutions.

Credit: © UN-Habitat Mongolia

CHALLENGE 1

High Exposure and Vulnerability of Ger Areas to Climate Hazards

Ger areas are highly exposed to climate risks such as extreme cold, flooding, and seasonal icing due to their location in hazard-prone areas and lack of resilient infrastructure. Poor housing conditions and limited basic services further increase vulnerability, leading to significant impacts on health, safety, and livelihoods.

CHALLENGE 2

Limited Integration of Climate Resilience in Urban Systems and Investments

Urban planning, housing, and infrastructure systems have not yet fully integrated climate resilience considerations. Gaps in financing, technical capacity, and institutional coordination constrain the scaling of climate-adaptive solutions, including resilient infrastructure, clean energy, and nature-based approaches.

06

RECENT AND ONGOING INTERVENTIONS

1

2019 - 2023

Flood Resilience in Ulaanbaatar Ger areas - Climate Change Adaptation through community-driven small-scale protective and basic-services interventions

The project's main objective is to enhance the climate change resilience of the seven most vulnerable Ger khoroo settlements focusing on flooding in Ulaanbaatar City by a) Improving the knowledge on flood hazard, exposure and vulnerability for these areas, b) Improving the resilience and adaptive capacity of the Ger settlements through a Community-Based gender-responsive approach, c) Increasing resilience of Ger area physical infrastructure and services, supported by enhanced capacities of responsible district level and khoroo authorities, and d) Strengthening institutional capacity to reduce risks and capture and replicate lessons and good practices

4.5 M USD

Adaptation fund

Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Municipality of Ulaanbaatar city, World Vision International

2

2023 - 2027

Ger Community Resilience Project

The project's main objective is to enhance the resilience of communities in eight khoroos of Ulaanbaatar to floods caused by snowmelt, bursting springs and melting permafrost. This objective will be achieved through four components that seek to achieve the following objectives: a) Enhance the policy and regulatory environment at the national and city level to reduce risks and enhance adaptive capacity in the future in terms of changing climate in urban areas, b) Build capacity at the national, city and community level to adapt now and in the future , c) Reduce risks from flooding through physical infrastructure in the target areas, and d) Improve and enhance the knowledge base to sustain and replicate the project's gains.

7.9 M USD

Adaptation fund

Ministry of Environment and Climate Change, Municipality of Ulaanbaatar city, World Vision International Mongolia, Development Solutions NGO

07

IMPACT STORY

From Recurrent Losses to Lasting Resilience:
Transforming Flood-Prone Communities in Ulaanbaatar

In Ulaanbaatar, climate change is intensifying floods and winter ice buildup, placing vulnerable ger area communities at growing risk. In the 26th khoroo of Songinokhairkhan District, households along the Tolgoit River have long endured seasonal flooding and severe ice accumulation—damaging homes, disrupting daily life, and straining limited public resources.

Photo 2. Flood-prone ger areas along the Tolgoit River in Songinokhairkhan District, Ulaanbaatar.

To address these challenges, the Adaptation Fund funded Ger Community Resilience Project (GCRP), implemented by UN-Habitat in partnership with Development Solutions NGO, introduced an integrated flood protection system in the Tolgoit River basin. The intervention includes a 2,050-meter flood protection channel and two retention basins with a combined capacity of over 225,000 cubic meters, designed to safely capture and manage both floodwater and winter ice.

Photo 3. Flood protection channel and retention basin capturing water and ice in the Tolgoit River basin during the 2025-2026 winter

Completed in 2025, the system delivered immediate results. During its first winter, it operated at approximately 80% capacity, effectively preventing ice accumulation in residential areas. As a result, no households were affected—compared to up to 140 households in previous years. At the same time, annual public spending on ice removal dropped sharply from USD 15,000–30,000 to around USD 1,500.

"*In previous years, our khoroo was constantly affected by flooding in summer and ice accumulation in winter. Residents faced continuous hardship.*" said Mr. Batbayar Bazarragchaa, Governor of the 26th khoroo. "After the implementation of the flood protection channel and retention basins, we experienced a much safer and more stable winter. No households were affected, and public spending dropped dramatically—from USD 15,000–30,000 annually to just around USD 1,500 for minor preventive measures."

Beyond reducing climate risks, the project has strengthened community ownership and long-term resilience. Residents have organized groups to plant greenery, stabilize surrounding areas, and support maintenance of the infrastructure. These collective efforts have transformed the intervention into a shared community asset.

"*Our area used to be heavily affected by flooding and ice, making daily life very difficult.*" said Mr. Altanshagai Ts., a local community member. "*Since the*

project, our environment has improved significantly. Residents came together to improve our street, and even water birds have returned—bringing a sense of life and pride to our community".

This experience demonstrates how targeted, community-driven adaptation investments can deliver immediate, measurable benefits—reducing risks, lowering costs, and improving lives—while offering a scalable model for building climate resilience in vulnerable urban communities.

Photo 4. Residents are participating in greening and maintenance activities around the flood protection embankment, reinforcing community ownership and long-term sustainability.

09
COUNTRY FOCUS

VISION

UN-Habitat Mongolia supports Mongolia's urban transition by working with government and communities to deliver practical, scalable solutions that improve housing, basic services, and living conditions—while strengthening climate resilience, environmental sustainability, and inclusivity, particularly in ger areas.

FOCUS

RESILIENT HOUSING & INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

- People-centred, affordable, incremental housing in ger and climate-vulnerable areas
- Integrated climate adaptation, energy efficiency, and disaster risk reduction
- Improved health, safety, and resilience to cold, heat, floods, and air pollution

CLIMATE-RESILIENT URBAN SERVICES & INFRASTRUCTURE

- Climate-resilient service delivery for informal and peripheral settlements
- Decentralized, low-carbon and nature-based systems
- Improved access, public health and urban liveability

NATURE-POSITIVE AND CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE URBANIZATION

- Compact urban growth and strengthened land-use regulation
- Tenure-sensitive land readjustment and green infrastructure
- GIS-based planning, clean energy and protection of cultural heritage

UN-HABITAT'S STEPS TO ACHIVE THE GOALS

Project name	Healthy Homes, Resilient Communities: Enhancing Housing Safety and Climate Resilience in Mongolian ger areas through Community Leadership	Nature-Based Flood Resilience for Vulnerable Ger Settlements in Chinggis and Mandalgovi, Mongolia	Compact Growth for Resilient Mongolia: Provincial and Sub-Provincial Models in Mandalgovi and Umnudelger, Mongolia
Goal	To enhance the health, safety, and climate resilience of households in ger areas through replicable, community-led housing improvements, capacity building, and sustainable adaptation practices	To enhance climate resilience of Ger settlements in Chinggis and Mandalgovi cities through nature-based flood adaptation, participatory planning, and institutional capacity strengthening.	To reduce urban sprawl and enhance land-use efficiency by piloting compact, climate-resilient, and culturally integrated growth models in Mandalgovi and Umnudelger.

COUNTRY INTERVENTIONS IN NUMBERS

Delivering inclusive, climate-resilient and scalable solutions to improve housing, services, and living conditions

20M
funds secured for projects in Mongolia

11
informal area upgrading and climate resilience building projects implemented

At least
200k
beneficiaries were assisted by the project in 2019-2023 and improved their climate adaptation capacities

Key Results

30%
improvements in social coherence among the target ger areas population

160
community groups established and capacities improved for neighborhood area upgrading

15
community based organizations established and improved their capacities as key drivers for the development

50,000
households flood resilience and adaptive capacities improved

4,000
households physically protected from flooding

740
households improved their houses

200,000
households access to social and basic services improved

INFRASTRUCTURE DELIVERED

Strategic Infrastructure Investments

9.4 km
flood protection canals & river embankments

7
community centers

4
kindergartens

1
family clinic

3
school buildings with sports & art halls

124 community-led subprojects delivered small-scale access infrastructure for communities

10

PLANNED INTERVENTIONS

1 Healthy Homes, Resilient Communities: Enhancing Housing Safety and Climate Resilience in Mongolian ger areas through Community Leadership

Project's Aim: To enhance the health, safety, and climate resilience of households in ger areas through replicable, community-led housing improvements, capacity building, and sustainable adaptation practices

Relevance to regional implementation plan: Resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive housing and community for all

Additional Priorities: Universal access to resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive basic services and infrastructures

TOTAL BUDGET: 5M USD

TIME FRAME: 2027 - 2031

LOCATION: Mongolia

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1. Communities in ger areas actively participate in identifying risks and co-designing solutions, resulting in locally owned and context-appropriate adaptation strategies.
2. Local workers, youth, and households gain the skills and knowledge to implement and sustain climate-resilient housing improvements and safe infrastructure practices
3. Vulnerable households experience measurable improvements in health, safety, and climate resilience through affordable, community-monitored housing upgrades.
4. Community-driven practices are integrated into municipal and national adaptation frameworks, strengthening institutional capacity and enabling replication across urban centers.

10

PLANNED INTERVENTIONS

2 Nature-Based Flood Resilience for Vulnerable Ger Settlements in Chinggis and Mandalgovi, Mongolia

Project's Aim: To enhance climate resilience of Ger settlements in Chinggis and Mandalgovi cities through nature-based flood adaptation, participatory planning, and institutional capacity strengthening.

Relevance to regional implementation plan: Universal access to resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive basic services and infrastructures

Additional Priorities: Resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive housing and community for all

TOTAL BUDGET: 8M USD

TIME FRAME: 2027 - 2031

LOCATION: Mongolia

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

1. Enhanced availability and application of evidence to reduce settlement exposure to climate hazards.
2. Communities with improved capacity and ownership of NbS flood adaptation measures.
3. Adaptive capacity of Ger communities increased through operational NbS flood adaptation assets.
4. Institutional capacity strengthened to plan, implement, and replicate NbS flood adaptation measures.

10

PLANNED INTERVENTIONS

3 Compact Growth for Resilient Mongolia: Provincial and Sub-Provincial Models in Mandalgovi and Umnudelger, Mongolia

Project's Aim: To demonstrate replicable compact, climate-resilient, and nature-positive urban development models that reduce sprawl, protect ecosystems, and strengthen cultural identity while improving livability and resilience in Mongolia's emerging urban centers.
Relevance to regional implementation plan: Universal need for harmonized co-existence of cities and nature and preservation of cultural diversity
Additional Priorities: Universal access to resilient, risk-informed and climate-sensitive basic services and infrastructures

TOTAL BUDGET: 10M USD

TIME FRAME: 2027 - 2031

LOCATION: Mongolia

OBJECTIVE:

To enable Mongolia's secondary cities to adopt compact, climate-resilient, and nature-positive urban development through integrated planning reforms, pilot demonstrations, and improved land management systems.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES:

1. Strengthened policy and institutional systems
2. Demonstrated compact and resilient urban models
3. Improved land-use efficiency and environmental management
4. Enhanced data systems, participation, and scaling

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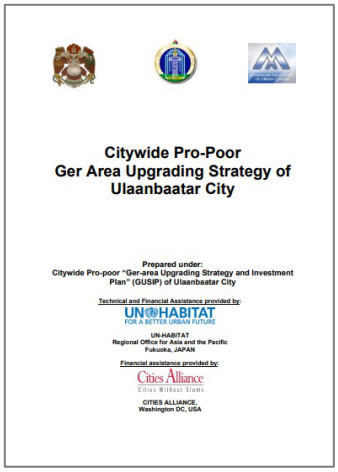
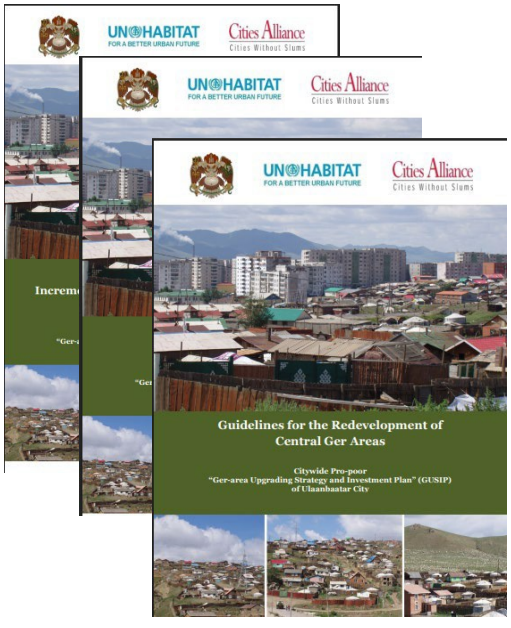
PUBLICITY AND OUTREACH



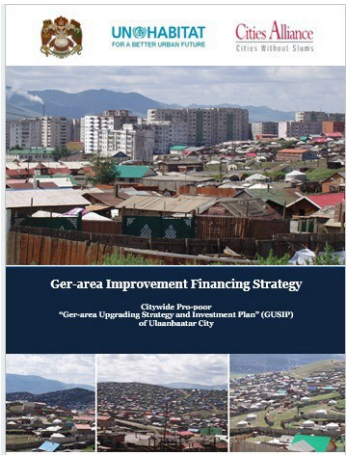
Citywide Pro-Poor Ger Area Upgrading Strategy of Ulaanbaatar City

This strategic document is the first Citywide Pro-poor Ger-area Upgrading Strategy of Ulaanbaatar city. It was developed under the "Citywide Pro-poor Ger area Upgrading Strategy and Investment Plan (GUSIP) for Ulaanbaatar" project with the technical assistance of UN-HABITAT and is the main policy document for the implementation of the Ger area Upgrading Strategy. The strategy identifies and focuses on three types of Ger areas, i.e. Central, Middle and Peri-Urban Ger areas. Further, it develops main development strategy at two levels: the first defines the main upgrading and development strategic directions for all three types of Ger areas, while the second defines recommendations.



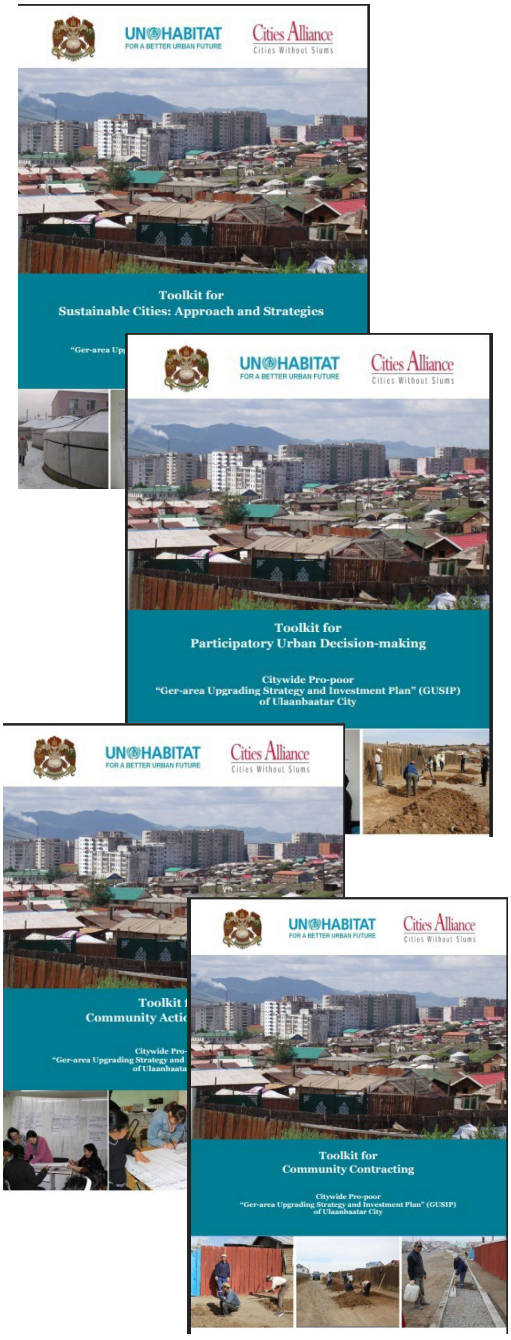
Guidelines for Upgrading and Redevelopment of Peri-Urban, Middle and Central Ger Areas

Three Urban Development Guidelines that seek to respond to overlying issues in each of the Ger areas in Ulaanbaatar, integrating lessons learnt from past interventions and initiatives, and providing a support framework for dealing with the current challenges of urban development that were developed under the "Citywide Pro-poor Ger area Upgrading Strategy and Investment Plan (GUSIP) for Ulaanbaatar" project. The Guidelines aim to support the Ger area communities by harnessing their ability to identify and prioritise problems and find solutions to their development needs. The set of Guidelines consists of: ♣ Guidelines for the Redevelopment of Central Ger Areas - addressing issues arising for the redevelopment of central Ger areas. ♣ Guidelines for Upgrading and Redevelopment of Middle Ger Areas - addressing the need for incremental upgrading and provision of basic urban services in middle Ger Areas. ♣ Guidelines for Peri-urban Incremental Upgrading and Orderly Expansion - addressing issues arising due to the haphazard expansion of Peri-urban Ger areas.



Ger area Improvement Financing Strategy

Developed under the "Citywide Pro-poor Ger area Upgrading Strategy and Investment Plan (GUSIP) for Ulaanbaatar" project, the Ger-area Improvement Financing Strategy identifies and focuses on a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches The strategy is structured at two levels: the first defines the strategic directions for optimally utilising available resources by enabling and facilitating community-led development; and the second defines strategic recommendations for raising the necessary funds commensurate with the needs.



Developed under the "Citywide Pro-poor Ger area Upgrading Strategy and Investment Plan (GUSIP) for Ulaanbaatar" project, the set of four Toolkits consisting of: i) Sustainable Cities: Approach and Strategies Toolkit addressing issues arising due to the haphazard expansion of urban Ger areas in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, ii) Participatory Decision-Making Toolkit addressing means for enabling participation of various stakeholders at the strategic and local levels, iii) Community Action Planning Toolkit addressing the process for enabling community-led/ local area led decision making for local area development, and iv) Community Contracting Toolkit addressing the means and process for enabling the involvement of communities in implementing local area infrastructure works.

The Toolkits were produced based on UN-HABITAT experiences and by drawing on both internal and external sources and publications, especially the Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP) Source Book Series.

It is intended that the toolkits will be updated over time building on experience and knowledge generated through various Ger improvement and redevelopment activities in Ulaanbaatar and other urban areas of Mongolia.

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