

INTERNAL MIGRATION IN MONGOLIA

Situation Analysis Report



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INTERNAL MIGRATION IN MONGOLIA

Situation Analysis Report

Conducted under the
Understanding and Managing Internal Migration in Mongolia Project

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Cover photos



Kazakh people living in Bayan-Ulgii Aimag, in western Mongolia, still migrate seasonally, even in harsh climatic conditions. They combine nomadic traditions with modern culture in a unique cultural heritage that fascinates the world. It is with pride in their nomadic culture that Kazakh herders continue to migrate through the highlands and follow the pastures to graze their livestock.
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Herders migrate across *aimags* in search of better graze for their cattle.
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A herder household is on the move for better pastures for their livestock.
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Families with migrant single mothers in Ulaanbaatar are considered a vulnerable group in society. Some migrate to the capital city to work and study, with the desire, hope and expectation to make a decent living. However, the reality is often more challenging than they imagine.
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Migrants are constantly on the move with their herds in search of graze.
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A middle-aged, self-employed man in Ulaanbaatar takes his child to school and goes to work afterwards. The most pressing issues for migrants in the capital city are finding a job and ensuring decent living standards. Some have sold their livestock in exchange for cash and settled down in ger districts. However, finding a job and improving one's livelihood in the capital is not always easy.
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A herder sets up a *ger*, a highly adaptable type of dwelling suited for the nomadic lifestyle. Herders in Mongolia are constantly on the move, living in *gers* as they follow their herds in search of fresh graze.
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As rural-to-urban migration continues to increase over the years, migrants struggle to find stable jobs and sources of income in the capital city. Most are unable to establish residence in the capital and have no other option but to crowd in the outlying *ger* districts.
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"The traffic into the city is heavy, but the traffic out of the city is empty."
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The lack of qualified specialty medical doctors and equipment in rural areas is another major reason why people migrate to cities, especially the capital. As the number of people moving from the countryside to the capital increased in recent years, the subsequent demand for health facilities in the capital has doubled (or even tripled).
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A former herder, who has sold his few heads of cattle and migrated to the city, hopes for better life opportunities, only to face more hardships.
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Rural people migrate to the capital city, expecting to improve their lives, but often find themselves in a worse situation than before. Many of them end up living in *ger* districts on the outskirts of the city, where they have no access to most government services.
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When people in Mongolia migrate to the city, they either sell off or simply take their livestock with them.
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FOREWORD

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is implementing a four-year (2019–2023) intervention project, “Understanding and Managing Internal Migration”, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The project seeks to consistently integrate a migration perspective and consider the needs of internal migrants in national- and local-level policies and projects in a comprehensive and coordinated manner to promote inclusive internal migration governance that contributes to the development of Mongolia. To improve evidence-based policymaking on internal migration, it is necessary to increase and improve both migration data and thematic research evidence. To establish a more accurate and nuanced picture of internal migration in Mongolia, IOM Mongolia has been conducting a series of thematic studies under the project, “Understanding and Managing Internal Migration in Mongolia”, and was able to produce internal migration data and information from 2018 to 2021. The highlighted research works include:

- (a) Mongolia: Internal migration study (2018);
- (b) Mongolia: Urban migrant vulnerability assessment (2018);
- (c) Mongolia: Migration and employment study (2021);
- (d) Research study on assessing the effectiveness of migration restrictions in Ulaanbaatar and migrants’ vulnerability (2021);
- (e) Conference on Reverse Migration (2022).

These research studies are collectively able to fill a substantial gap in the knowledge and awareness of internal migration in Mongolia and offer tailored recommendations for relevant government actors regarding short-, medium- and long-term policy responses. For instance, the thematic studies, “Migration and employment study” (2021) and “Research study on assessing the effectiveness of migration restrictions in Ulaanbaatar and migrants’ vulnerability” (2021), have shed light on specific challenges that migrants face in Ulaanbaatar, as well as their potential to contribute to the country’s socioeconomic development. A strong message was delivered to government agencies through those studies, that without understanding the development potentials and weighing the benefits or advantages of internal migration in Mongolia against its (potential) adverse impacts, policy interventions to manage migration might bring about multiple counterreactions and ineffective results. Overall, the key findings of IOM-produced studies and data have widely been introduced to the relevant national government agencies and specifically acknowledged by strategic counterparts, including the Cabinet Secretariat of the Government of Mongolia, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Municipality of Ulaanbaatar, and civil society organizations (CSOs) in the country.

To continually provide stakeholders with a broader knowledge base, as well as nuances of internal migration, IOM Mongolia conducts this situation analysis by integrating all the findings of migration research and data, as well as reviewing existing policies, plans and institutional structures related to migration. This would help to identify legal and institutional barriers to improving internal migration governance and management and serve as an integrated analytical tool for further policies and interventions at national and local levels.

This situation analysis is formulated based on the desktop review of secondary information sourced from research studies of IOM from 2018 to 2021, a series of reports related to voluntary reviews of and follow-ups to the Global Compact for Migration from 2020 to 2021, and ongoing research projects with national government agencies such as the National Development Agency (NDA), the National Statistics Office (NSO) and the Cabinet Secretariat Office of Mongolia. The situation analysis also incorporates the results of a comprehensive evaluation report on population policy that was jointly conducted with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection (MLSP) of Mongolia. In addition, several policy consultations and workshops were conducted from January to November 2021, involving representatives from the Government, CSOs, academia and local communities. The situation analysis report will inform the development of the road map for internal migration, which will outline the overall strategy, objectives, and implementation arrangements for mainstreaming internal migration into national and local policies of the Government of Mongolia. The scope and context of the document is aligned with national long- and medium-term development policy frameworks: Vision 2050, New Recovery Policy, and Social Development Targeted Programme for Medium-term Development.

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Low rainfall and poor grass yields in Mongolia in recent years have been the main drivers for herders with limited livestock to migrate to urban areas. For migrants, an important first step after arriving in the city is to obtain official residency registration. Only once official residency is confirmed can they access all public services like other city residents.

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A herder household is on the move for better pastures for their livestock.

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ACRONYMS

DPPM	Law on Development Policy and Planning and Its Management
GDP	gross domestic product
IOM	International Organization for Migration
MLSP	Ministry of Labour and Social Protection
MNT	Mongolian tugrik (currency)
NGO	non-governmental organization
NSO	National Statistics Office (of Mongolia)
SDG(s)	Sustainable Development Goal(s)

"The traffic into the city is heavy, but the traffic out of the city is empty."

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GLOSSARY

<i>aimag</i>	The first-level or primary administrative unit in Mongolia, usually translated into English as “province”. The territory of Mongolia is divided into 22 primary administrative units: 21 <i>aimags</i> and the capital city of Ulaanbaatar.
<i>bagh</i>	The third-level and the smallest administrative unit in a province of Mongolia. <i>Soums</i> are divided into <i>baghs</i> .
Citizens’ Representative Khural	Elected legislative bodies (or councils) at the <i>aimag</i> , <i>soum</i> , capital city and district levels.
<i>dzud</i>	A severe winter with harsh snow storms, preceded by summer drought, causing serious loss of livestock.
<i>ger</i>	A traditional Mongolian dwelling.
<i>ger area</i>	An informal settlement where internal migrants tend to settle initially after coming to the city.
<i>khoroо</i>	An administrative unit, below the level of the district (<i>düüreg</i>), unique to the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. Provinces (<i>aimags</i>) are divided into <i>soums</i> , which are themselves divided into <i>baghs</i> , while Ulaanbaatar is divided into <i>düüregs</i> , which are then divided into <i>khoroos</i> .
<i>soum</i>	The second-level administrative unit in a province of Mongolia. <i>Aimags</i> are divided into <i>soums</i> .
State Great Khural	The unicameral Parliament of Mongolia.

A migrant family enjoys a meal en route to the capital city.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the situation analysis conducted to inform and develop a road map for mainstreaming internal migration into national policies and actions of the Government of Mongolia. It assesses existing national policy frameworks and plans that include, among others, current mechanisms, processes, mandates, capacities and resources that are relevant to internal migration.

Mongolia has experienced a high volume of internal migration, mostly rural-to-urban, in the past 30 years due to three key reasons:

- (a) A national constitution (1992) granting freedom of movement to people after decades of Government-controlled movement;
- (b) Increased climate change-induced natural disasters, extreme weather and livestock loss, which have pushed rural people to seek better living conditions and employment in urban areas;
- (c) Increased infrastructure development gap between urban and rural areas in Mongolia.

In Mongolia, the term “urban” usually refers to Ulaanbaatar, the capital city, which is 13 times larger than the second biggest city, Darkhan. Therefore, the sudden increase in migration in recent decades has led to Ulaanbaatar now accommodating over 1.5 million people (45.9% of the total population), with multiple ramifications such as water, soil and noise pollution, heavy congestion, insufficient public service availability and the growth of large, urban-poor residential zones called “ger areas”. The Government has been taking several measures since 1994 to address the continuously growing internal migration flows. However, as these measures are based solely on movement restrictions, they have caused or led to increased vulnerability, inequality and social exclusion, as well as growing poverty and irregular migration pathways.

The main push factors for migration out of rural areas are low income, poverty, social insecurity, scarcity of core State services such as education and health, and limited employment and business opportunities, while better access to health care, education and higher income can be considered pull factors of migration to Ulaanbaatar. Migrants arriving in Ulaanbaatar largely live in unplanned ger areas, where poor living conditions and unregistered migrants are usually excluded from core public services. Migrants that arrived in Ulaanbaatar many years ago and reside in these ger areas especially need increased targeted intervention.

However, in addition to considering migrants as a group that needs improved and targeted intervention, migrants should also be considered as development actors. Research by IOM shows that migrants are ultimately successful in reaching their migration objectives: Migration helps to improve their living conditions, as it provides them with better jobs and ensures their access to better education. In fact, the migrant population is impressively educated and of working age. Therefore, if managed well and effectively integrated into society, migration could benefit the socioeconomic development of destination regions and the country overall.

In 2020, Mongolia started adopting several umbrella policies and legislation – namely the Law on Development Policy and Planning and its Management, Vision 2050, the New Recovery Policy, the Social Development Targeted Programme and the State Policy on Population Development – that contain clauses addressing migration issues. However, there is still a need to develop dedicated migration policy that governs and regulates internal migration in Mongolia more systematically and effectively.

Finally, the report outlines the following:

- (a) Recommendations to be implemented at the national level that focus mainly on refraining from migration restrictions, mainstreaming migration in national policies and plans, improving the integration of migrants, and institutionalizing migration;
- (b) Recommendations to be implemented at the local level (Ulaanbaatar, *aimags* and *soums*) that focus mainly on mainstreaming migration in local development planning, promoting reverse migration and promoting informed migration decisions;
- (c) Future research areas that need to be explored to better understand internal migration in Mongolia.

COUNTRY MAP AND KEY STATISTICS

Figure 1. Map of Mongolia



Source: United Nations Cartographic Section, 2021.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

Table 1. Key statistics of Mongolia

Geography^a	
Total surface area	1 564 116 sq km
Human Development Index^b	
Life expectancy at birth, in years (SDG 3)	Females: 73.8
	Males: 65.5
Adult (age ≥15) literacy rate	98.4%
Expected number of years of schooling (SDG 4.3)	14.2
Mean number of years of schooling (SDG 4.6)	10.3
Gross national income (GNI), PPP* (in USD) (SDG 8.5)	USD 10 839
Population^a	
Total population, in millions (2021 projected estimate)	3.329
Population growth rate, annual (2021)	1.8%
Population density	2.1/sq km
Migration^a	
Net international migration rate, per 1 000 population	-4.3 ^c
International migrant stock (per thousand/% of total population)	21.3/0.7
Number of refugees and others of concern to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	~0.0
Total number of emigrants, in thousands (midyear, 2020)	82.1
Development	
Personal remittances received (as % of GDP)	4.15 ^d
Remittance inflows	USD 549.01 million ^c
Foreign direct investment (as % of GDP)	12.9 ^c

Sources: a United Nations Statistics Division, 2022 (unless otherwise indicated).
b United Nations Development Programme, 2020.
c United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2019.
d World Bank, 2020.

Note: * PPP – purchasing power parity.

A migrant, who had wanted to stay in his place of origin, moved to the capital city to improve his livelihood and live closer to his children. It may be more comforting for him to head to the hills, above all the pollution, and take a deep breath.

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A wide-angle landscape photograph of a valley with a winding river, a person on a cliff, and a blue sky with white lines. The scene is captured from a high vantage point, looking down into a vast valley. A river winds through the center of the valley, surrounded by fields and some small structures. In the foreground, a person stands on a rocky cliff edge, looking out over the landscape. The sky is a deep blue, and there are several white lines curving across it. The overall mood is serene and expansive.

PART I

INTERNAL MIGRATION TRENDS
AND MIGRANT CHARACTERISTICS

Mongolians who graze their semi-wild livestock and worship pastures are always in danger of losing their animals to *dzuds* in the winter and drought in the summer. When either occurs, herders who lose their sources of income and livelihood are often forced to migrate to cities.

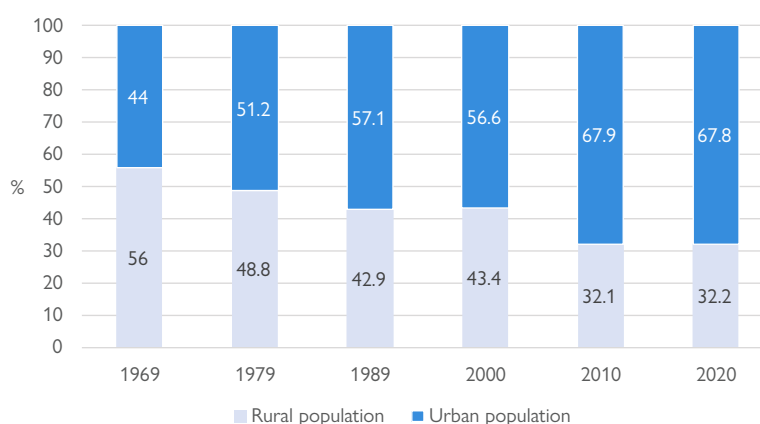
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1.1. A BRIEF HISTORY OF INTERNAL MIGRATION IN MONGOLIA

Since the 1990s, Mongolia has been transforming into a vibrant, multiparty democracy with a free market. Over the last three decades, the country has experienced an economic boom, driven largely by the mining sector, resulting in significant GDP growth and increased inbound and outbound migration flows. Before the democratic revolution in 1990, the movement of people was centrally controlled by the Government of Mongolia and people did not have the right to freely move and permanently reside in a certain place without permission. By that time, approximately 40 to 45 per cent of Mongolians were residing in rural areas, where living standards were relatively high compared to those today in terms of schools, public transport and opportunities for social activities, among others.

Figure 2. Rural-to-urban population ratio, 1969–2020



Source: NSO, 2021b.

After the 1990 democratic revolution, followed by the transition to a market economy, Mongolia enacted the first national constitution (1992) that granted people freedom of movement, allowed them to own property and provided for privatization. Due to agricultural privatization and the freedom to own livestock for animal husbandry, the levels of urban-to-rural migration were relatively moderate until 1999. However, from 1999 to 2002, and then again in 2010, most of Mongolia was impacted by the frequent occurrence of severe winter blizzards (known as *dzuds*), followed by pastureland degradation. This made livelihood in rural areas extremely harsh, especially for herder communities, with nearly one third of all livestock lost in three consecutive *dzuds* from 1999 to 2002. In 2010, approximately 22 per cent of the total livestock perished due to another *dzud*. Such severe weather conditions have caused the displacement of people in rural areas, with subsequent migration of herder communities to urban areas to seek better livelihoods as a coping mechanism.

In addition to natural disasters and the decline of the pastoralist economy, the transition to a market economy has, overall, been accompanied by continued insufficient public infrastructure provision and intensified hardships of people living in rural areas. The combination of economic, ecological, demographic and other factors has led people to move to urban areas for better livelihoods, resulting in the rural-to-urban migration corridor that has developed over the past 30 years and putting migration pressure on urban populations.

Although humane and orderly migration brings multiple benefits to the development of the country, the massive flows of forced rural-to-urban migration in Mongolia cause environmental degradation, overpopulation, unsustainable resource management, multiple types of pollution and heavy population and traffic congestion in Ulaanbaatar. To address these challenges, there have been periodic policy measures taken by the Government to restrict rural-to-urban migration to minimize congestion in the capital. As Table 2 shows, the main intention of the periodic migration policies has usually been to restrict or minimize rural-to-urban migration.

Table 2. Laws, decrees and actions relating to rural-to-urban migration

Year	Laws and orders enacted and actions carried out	Details
1994	Law on the Legal Status of the Capital City, article 8.2	The law states that “migration shall be regulated in accordance with the law in order to prevent overpopulation of the capital city and balance disruption of employment, public services, transportation and communication.”
1995	Start of collection of fees from migrants in Ulaanbaatar	Resolution No. 69 of the Citizens’ Representative Khural (or Council) imposed the following fees: (a) Per adult migrant: MNT 26,000 (USD 9.20); (b) Per child migrant: MNT 13,000 (USD 4.60).
2001	Increase in the amount of fees from migrants in Ulaanbaatar	An amendment to Resolution No. 69 of the Citizens’ Representative Khural raised the amount of service fees collected from migrants: (a) Per adult migrant – MNT 50,000 (USD 17.60); (b) Per child migrant – MNT 25,000 (USD 8.80).
2003	Termination of fee collection from migrants	The National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia issued a decree to the Court of Chingeltei District resulting in the dismissal of Resolution No. 69 (see above).
2013	Development of the Ulaanbaatar City Master Plan	A statement in the Master Plan describes the goal to “restrict the number of temporary or unregistered long-term residents in order to generate city revenue and increase access to services.”
2016	Government Policy on Population Development	An indicator in the policy notes that “by 2025, the share of the rural population in the total population will increase from 38 per cent to 50 per cent.”
January 2017	Registration restriction policy in effect	The Governor of Ulaanbaatar City announced “some measures to be taken to ensure the rights of citizens to live in a healthy and safe environment” and restricted migration from rural areas to Ulaanbaatar until January 2018.
December 2017	Extension of the registration restriction policy	Implementation of the migration restriction policy was extended until January 2020.

Source: IOM, 2021c:5.

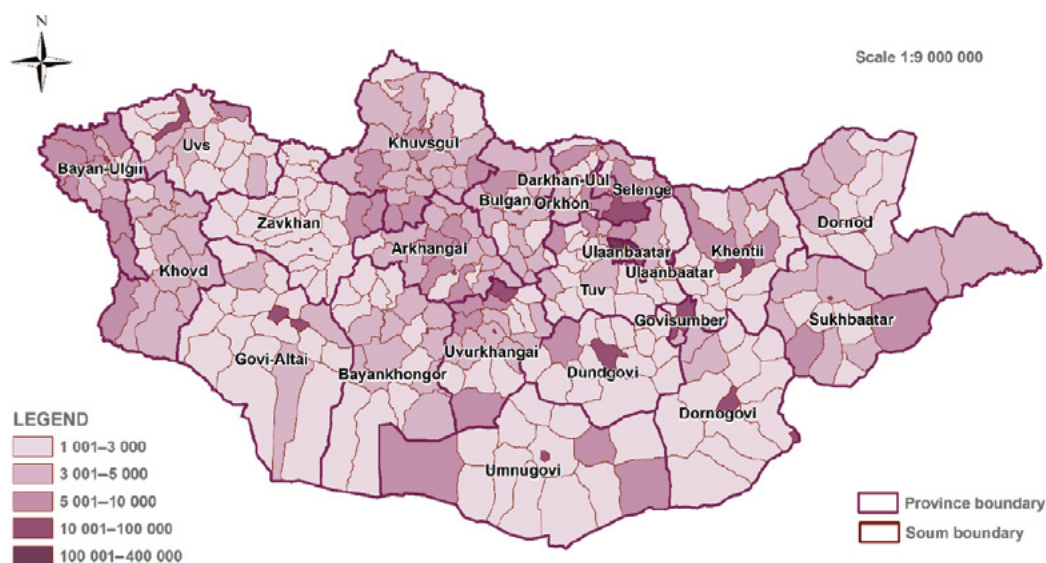
While the restrictive policy is aimed at securing the well-being of permanent residents in the capital, it leads to increased vulnerability among migrants by pushing them towards irregular migration pathways with multiple forms of risk. For instance, the latest restriction policy, implemented between 2017–2020 through order A/17 of the Municipality of Ulaanbaatar, is an effort to ensure the rights of Ulaanbaatar residents to live in a healthy and safe environment and be free from the risks of pollution and disruption of the ecological balance. The average annual number of registered internal migrants coming to the capital city was approximately 24,000 before the intervention was put in place, with the sharp drop in the number due to residency registration restrictions. For instance, 25,196 people arrived in Ulaanbaatar from elsewhere in Mongolia in 2016. As a result of the migration restriction policy, the succeeding years all recorded decreased numbers: 10,335 in 2017; 6,568 in 2018; and 12,373 in 2019. Due to the policy, internal migration to the capital city as a share of total internal migration decreased by 10 percentage points in 2020 compared to the figure from the population census in 2010. Nevertheless, there is a high possibility that the actual number of migrants could be much higher than what official statistics show because there remains a large number of unregistered internal migrants moving to the capital. As such, the restriction policy brought about the unintended result of increasing the vulnerability of internal migrants, as they are unable to officially register in the civil State registration database as official residents of the capital city and therefore be eligible to receive basic public services (e.g. education, health and other basic services). The years following the expiry of the restriction policy saw increased numbers of newly registered internal migrants – with 39,515 in 2020 and 25,695 in 2021. The steep overall rise implies that people who had moved to Ulaanbaatar while the restriction policy was in effect finally registered in 2021.

As internal migration has not been effectively managed in Mongolia through systematic policy and governance, unregulated migration flows to Ulaanbaatar have generated multiple forms of inequality, social exclusion and growing poverty in the ger areas.

1.2. INTERNAL MIGRATION TRENDS

Mongolia is one of the least densely populated countries in the world, with 3.4 million people living in a territory of over 1.5 million sq km. According to the Housing and Population Census of 2020 (NSO, 2021a), the population density had grown from 1.5 persons/sq km in 2000, to 1.7 persons/sq km in 2010 and 2.2 persons/sq km in 2021; the population increase from 2019 to 2020 was 1.8 per cent (NSO, 2021b). However, the country's population settlements are extremely unevenly distributed between Ulaanbaatar (which is home to over 1.6 million people, i.e. 48% of the country's population) and the four regions (Central, Western, Eastern and Khangai) (ibid.). It is important to note that the capital constitutes a mere 0.3 per cent of the country's total land area. On the other hand, 18.7 per cent live in the Khangai Region, 15.8 per cent in the Central Region, 12.9 per cent in the Western Region and 7 per cent in the Eastern Region.

Figure 3. Population density of Mongolia, 2020



Source: NSO, 2021a.

Note: This map is for illustration purposes only. The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the International Organization for Migration.

The number of migrants was estimated to be 748,000 in 2020, which means that one in every four people in Mongolia were migrants. The vast majority of these migrants are internal migrants – those who moved mainly from rural areas to urban areas – causing intense urbanization and depopulation of the countryside.

Table 3. Key statistics from Population and Housing Census 2020

Indicators	2021 census report
Urbanization rate	68.5%
Capital city population	1 639 072 000
Regional share of the country's total population	48.0 (Ulaanbaatar)
	17.7 (Khangai Region)
	15.2 (Central Region)
	12.2 (Western Region)
	6.6 (Eastern Region)
Number of persons who have changed their residence from their place of birth (flows) in the last five years	748 103
	739 126 (within the country)
Number of persons who have changed their residence (flows) in the last five years	8 977 (abroad)
	228 908
	140 647 (within the country)
Number of persons who changed their residence (flows) in 2021	88 261 (abroad)
	87 955
	60 355 (within the country)
	27 600 (abroad)

Source: NSO, 2021a.

The Central Region continues to be the top destination for internal migrants. People tend to move here as it is relatively urbanized, with a higher population density and considerable soft and hard infrastructure development compared to other parts of the country. Between 2010 and 2019, internal migration to the Central Region as a share of all internal migration in the country increased from 22 per cent to 31 per cent (Table 1). The Western Region (with its share decreasing from 9% to 7% during the same period) and the Eastern Region (its share increasing from 4% to 7%) appear to have the fewest internal migrants among the regions. As regards inter-*aimag* movements, the top five destination *aimags*, namely Selenge, Darkhan-uul, Tuv, Dornogovi and Orkhon, represent a quarter of such migration inflows. Additionally, with the large-scale mining projects in recent years, Umnugovihas emerged as another attractive destination for internal migrant workers, having a positive net migration inflow (Annex X).

Table 4. Migration inflows by region, 2010 and 2019

Region	2010		2019	
	Inflow volume	Share (%) of total migration inflow	Inflow volume	Share (%) of total migration inflow
Western	6 506	9	2 036	7
Khangai	9 827	13	5 438	17
Central	17 102	22	9 404	30
Eastern	3 259	4	2 115	7
Ulaanbaatar	39 701	52	12 373	39

Source: NSO, 2021b.

In terms of migration outflows, it is worth noting that migration from the Western Region decreased by half between 2010 and 2019, while that from other regions remained nearly the same (Table 5). The Central Region and Khangai Region remained at the top in terms of inter-*aimag* movements. The *aimags* of Darkhan Uul, Selenge and Tuv in the Central Region, with Orkhon and Uvurkhangai in the Khangai Region, represent a quarter of these migration outflows.

Table 5. Migration outflows by region, 2010 and 2019

Region	2010		2019	
	Volume	Share (%) of total migration outflow	Volume	Share (%) of total migration outflow
Western	18 127	26	4 059	13
Khangai	16 063	23	8 320	27
Central	15 726	22	9 665	31
Eastern	6 129	9	2 580	8
Ulaanbaatar	14 547	20	6 595	21

Source: NSO, 2021b.

It is important to note that the typical internal migration pattern in Mongolia occurs in phases. People tend to move to the Central Region at first, before ultimately settling down in the capital city, shaping the distinct migration pattern of rural–urban–capital city migration. The failure to retain migrants at intermediary stages, for example, in either *soum* or *aimag* centres, is one of the reasons they continue their movement towards the capital.

1.3. INTERNAL MIGRANT CHARACTERISTICS

According to the 2020 census, people who have changed their usual residence in the previous year accounted for 2.8 per cent of the total population of Mongolia. This figure is broken down into 1.5 per cent (of the total population) corresponding to males and 1.3 per cent corresponding to females. Male migrants slightly outnumbered women migrants by 5,403, as they, particularly those ages 20–54, tend to move to and settle down at their destination before ultimately bringing their families to join them there.

Additionally, the proportion of younger internal migrants has continually increased, with the 20–34-year age group forming 38.5 per cent of all migrants. This is largely related to the fact that young people are moving to the capital city to obtain higher levels of education after finishing high school in the countryside. Additionally, according to IOM thematic studies (IOM, 2021a and 2021b), which surveyed 1,562 migrant households, more than a third of internal migrants were in the 20–29 age group and had a median age of 27 years.

Table 6. Age and sex of internal migrants, 2020

Age group	Male		Female	
	Number of migrants	Share (%) of the total migrant population	Number of migrants	Share (%) of the total migrant population
0–4	4 782	10.2	4 547	11.0
5–9	4 254	9.1	4 149	10.1
10–14	2 462	5.3	2 430	5.9
15–19	2 354	5.0	2 465	6.0
20–24	5 066	10.8	6 496	15.7
25–29	6 663	14.3	6 231	15.1
30–34	5 546	11.9	3 885	9.4
35–39	3 808	8.2	2 406	5.8
40–44	3 070	6.6	1 849	4.5
45+	8 674	18.6	6 818	16.5
Total	46 679	100.0	41 276	100.0

Source: NSO, 2021a.

The studies also showed that the total dependency ratio among non-migrants stood at 64.6 per cent – approximately 40 percentage points higher than that among internal migrants. Moreover, the child dependency and elderly dependency ratios among non-migrants were 38.5 and 3.1 percentage points, respectively, higher than among migrants. In addition, the Mongolian internal migrant population was found to be impressively educated, as more than 98 per cent of the study’s survey respondents had completed at least secondary education. It is important to note, however, that migrants of working age or younger tended to be single, or have fewer children, and more educated.

1.4. KEY DRIVERS OF INTERNAL MIGRATION

The decision to migrate is usually a very complex combination of push and pull factors connected to short-, medium- and long-term socioeconomic trends that simply cannot be predicted with precision. Low income, high rates of poverty, social insecurity and limited employment and business opportunities are usually regarded as push factors at places of origin, whereas better access to health care, education and higher income are pull factors at destination.

According to the Todaro (1976) model, the decision to migrate is significantly influenced by a potential migrant's expected income in a new place. Potential migrants from rural areas tend to have a subjective estimation of the probability of being employed in urban centres. The data demonstrates that the larger the gap between current and expected salaries and other possible incentives, the stronger is the probability of migrating. Although data and information on international migration, such as regards the migrant stock, remittance and cross-border mobility, are widely available from multiple databases, there remains a huge gap in internal migration data, thus the challenges of identifying the driving factors of internal migration. Therefore, to understand the driving factors of internal migration in Mongolia, IOM conducted nationwide household studies: (a) Mongolia: Internal Migration Study (IOM, 2018a) and (b) Mongolia: Migration and Employment Study (IOM, 2021a). The household survey (covering 3,715 individuals in 1,001 households) of IOM (2018a) revealed that people's decisions to migrate were largely influenced by economic reasons, such as lack of employment and limited business opportunities. Moreover, in the survey by IOM (2021a), 60 per cent of respondents (out of 1,562) reported that they moved to the capital city due to economic considerations, particularly those related to better employment and livelihood prospects (Table 7). The share of those who moved to the capital city driven by employment-related reasons was found to be even higher among unregistered migrants. The focus group discussions echoed this survey finding that the main reason for moving to the city was to secure employment. Additionally, participants of the study responded that they moved to pursue higher levels of education (20%), better lives for their children (6%) and reunification with family members (5%).

Table 7. Reasons for migrating to Ulaanbaatar, by registration status

Reason for migrating	Registered migrants (%)	Unregistered migrants (%)	Total (%)
Better employment or business opportunities in Ulaanbaatar	35.0	45.0	38.5
Better living conditions in Ulaanbaatar	22.4	18.3	21.0
Lack of housing/arable land in the place of origin	0.4	0.4	0.4
Lack of basic necessities/services in the place of origin	1.1	0.2	0.8
Education (i.e. to study)	20.3	20.4	20.3
Marriage	1.6	1.3	1.5
Moving to Ulaanbatar with a family member (who is the primary migrant)	6.0	3.3	5.1
Joining relatives already in Ulaanbaatar	2.1	3.0	2.4
Better life for their children	7.4	4.4	6.4

Reason for migrating	Registered migrants (%)	Unregistered migrants (%)	Total (%)
Health/medical treatment	3.1	3.1	3.1
Others	0.7	0.6	0.6
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0
Number	1 022	540	1 562

Source: IOM, 2021a:25.

Although migration decisions should be highly rational and based on the best possible cost–benefit analysis, in reality, migrants tend to make decisions despite uncertainty and limited information about livelihood opportunities at their intended destinations. Therefore, from a policy perspective, it is important for policymakers to expand the availability of information and its use by prospective migrants, particularly paying attention to the needs of Mongolian women, who often see migration as a viable option and means of coping with adverse rural circumstances.

A valuable finding of IOM (2021a) is that nearly half of migrant households elected not to move again in the capital city once they had settled down. However, compared to the permanent residents of Ulaanbaatar City, migrant households usually lived in unplanned ger areas, with their poor sanitation, inadequate heating systems and hazardous environments. Migrants who had moved to the capital a few years earlier were likely to remain in the ger areas with more vulnerable conditions, while more recent migrants found more opportunities and benefited from urban re-development projects in these ger areas. This indicates that “old migrants” were stuck in a poverty trap and usually excluded from available public services, as well as the typical urban lifestyle as a whole. These old migrants became hesitant to integrate into their host communities and still carried with them a “sense of belonging” to their places of origin.

1.5. REVERSE MIGRATION

Internal migration patterns in Mongolia are very much skewed: Rural-to-urban migration remains the dominant migration pathway in Mongolia, with over 60,000 people migrating to Ulaanbaatar every year according to registration data (NSO, 2021a). Despite this, there has been an emerging trend of urban-to-rural migration in recent years. This phenomenon of urban-to-rural migration is characterized as “reverse migration”, a migration flow that runs opposite to the main mobility pattern in the country.

Despite limited sources for accurate and comprehensive data on reverse migration, estimates based on registration data from the NSO shows that over 43,000 people have migrated from Ulaanbaatar to elsewhere in the country between 2015 to 2020. This number is thought to be much higher when taking into consideration the fact that registration data alone does not give accurate estimates of migrant numbers in Mongolia, as some migrants remain unregistered.

Generally, reverse migrants tend to be young, with the 20–29 and 30–39 age groups constituting 38 per cent and 20 per cent, respectively, of the reverse migrant population from 2015 to 2020. Female reverse migrants slightly outnumbered male reverse migrants, and more than 57 per cent of all reverse migrants were married. Reverse migrants also represented a highly educated group: the largest percentage (36%) of reverse migrants had

attained tertiary-level education; 29 per cent, secondary education; 6 per cent, technical and/or vocational education; and 2 per cent, postgraduate education. Additionally, most reverse migrants were economically active, and almost 60 per cent reported being employed before migrating.

Although reverse migration occurs from Ulaanbaatar to *soums* or *baghs*, the leading destination for reverse migrants are *aimag* centres. From 2015 to 2020, Tuv Aimag received the most migrants, with almost 4,000 people migrating from Ulaanbaatar, followed by Orkhon, Selenge, Darkhan-Uul and Uvurkhangai.

The uptrend of reverse migration is thought to be a result of a combination of push factors brought about by the massive influx of migrants to Ulaanbaatar and pull factors in rural areas. A rapid, preliminary survey by IOM (2021c) found that challenges caused by the high concentration of people in Ulaanbaatar, compounded by the constant flow of rural-to-urban migration to the capital – air pollution, health issues, heavy traffic congestion, overwhelmed public services and difficulty in obtaining employment – are pushing Mongolians to migrate to rural areas (IOM, 2021a). At the same time, reverse migrants are attracted to better employment prospects and business environments in rural areas compared to the oversaturated and highly competitive labour market in Ulaanbaatar. This is consistent with the idea that economic considerations are the largest drivers for internal migration, as evidenced by the IOM thematic research studies (ibid.; IOM, 2021b).

Another considerable factor driving reverse migration is the yearning to return to family, friends and the lifestyle in their hometowns, with a high proportion of both registered (53%) and unregistered (56%) migrants reporting that they wished to move to their *aimags* of origin. Moreover, the opportunity for land ownership, although not a decisive indicator of reverse migration, is nonetheless important to take into consideration. Per the Law of Mongolia on Land, Mongolian nationals are eligible to own up to 0.5 hectares of land in the *soums*, compared to 0.35 hectares in the *aimag* centres, and 0.07 hectares in the capital. Consequently, the anticipation of owning larger amounts of land in *soums* and *aimag* centres could pose as a motivator for reverse migration.

Overall, reverse migration is becoming not only an increasingly common migration pathway for Mongolians, but also a way for migrants to improve their livelihoods. Some 65 per cent of reverse migrants in the survey by IOM (2021a) reported that they were fully satisfied with their decision to migrate. After migrating from Ulaanbaatar, more migrants were employed full-time (from 23% prior to migrating, to 34% after migrating) or self-employed (from 15% to 25%). Despite this, migrants, especially those who had high incomes prior to migrating, saw a decrease in their incomes.

The involvement of the central (national) and local governments is key in promoting regular and orderly reverse migration and ensuring sustainable integration. Major considerations for policymakers include providing soft loans and tax exemptions for start-up businesses and accommodation and facilitating access to land ownership.

Although there is a lack of comprehensive and up-to-date data, especially in some areas, the above information allows us to draw a number of important conclusions about the current trends of reverse migration in Mongolia. There is a definite need for accurate and relevant data to develop concrete and evidence-based policy recommendations to stimulate reverse migration. Hence, IOM and the NSO are conducting a survey to better inform policies on reverse migration.

Mongolians have traditionally moved from one place to another throughout all four seasons of the year. This nomadic lifestyle and subsistence culture is typical for many Mongolians. Today, however, the majority of the Mongolian population has abandoned their nomadic culture and opted for an urban lifestyle instead.

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PART II

MIGRATION GOVERNANCE



It is springtime and a herder family is migrating to their summer camp area.

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2.1. MIGRATION POLICY FRAMEWORK

Mongolia is a parliamentary democracy, with legislative power held by 76 members appointed for a term of four years and executive power exercised by the Prime Minister. The President is the Head of State, Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces and Head of the National Security Council. As a result of the eighth parliamentary elections held in 2020, Mongolia's People's Party became the ruling party in the Cabinet. The country adopted the current constitution (fourth overall) in 1992 in the name of democracy and a free-market economy and prioritizing national sovereignty, and later made amendments in 1999, 2000, 2019 and 2022.

As of 2019, Mongolia had nearly 200 sectoral and intersectoral policy documents in force, including development concepts, State policies, regional development policies, action plans and national programmes. Over two thirds of them were midterm policy documents and they were often overlapping or even contradicting each other (IOM assessment). Many policy documents were not aligned with its commitments to international treaties and international human rights obligations. Instead, they were based on inadequate situation analyses and uncertain financial and human resources for policy implementation. Most importantly, even though Mongolia is highly concerned about internal migration trends and regards it as a root cause of overarching challenges, such as heavy congestion in Ulaanbaatar, its adequate management of migration was rarely addressed in those sectoral and intersectoral policy documents. The migration dimension is somewhat incorporated or mainstreamed in legislation covering other sectors, with many of these laws and regulations challenging for internal migrants instead of being supportive to them.

To address obstacles caused by the lack of effective and integrated policy formulations and implementations, Mongolia reviewed its policy framework and thereby adopted several major legal and policy documents in 2020. For instance, the State Great Khural adopted the Law on Development Policy and Planning and Its Management (DPPM). The law provides for a new structure for the development policy and planning framework in Mongolia, with an upgraded methodology for policy formulation, monitoring and evaluation and a new institutional setting for development planning. It aims to ensure the sustainability and continuity of national long-, medium- and short-term development policies under a set of shared principles (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2020a).

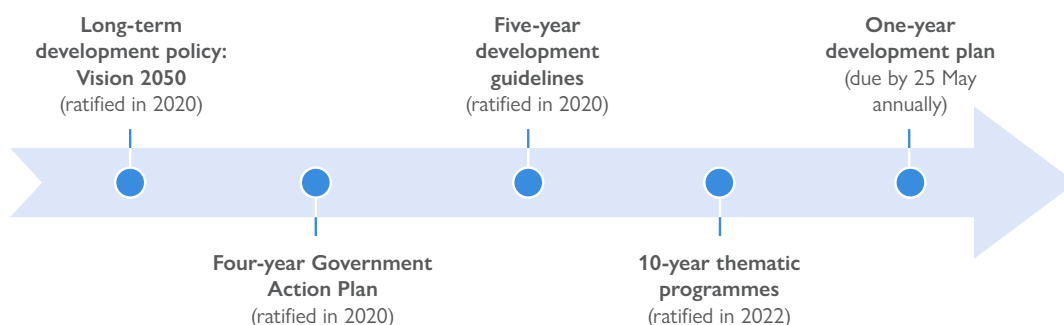
Following the adoption of the DPPM, Mongolia adopted Vision 2050, a new, long-term, strategic development policy document for the country, and drafted a road map for sustainable development for the next 30 years (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2020b). According to the DPPM, the Mongolian policy framework will consist of Vision 2050, seven 10-year targeted development programmes, the Government's Four-year Action Plan, and short-term policy documents.

Despite changes in umbrella policy and legislation, there are currently no dedicated policies and legislation directly related to internal migration in Mongolia. Therefore, this situation analysis explored key legislation and policy documents related to migration issues.

Law on development policy planning and its management

On 7 May 2020, the law was adopted by the State Great Khural to ensure the sustainability and continuity of long- medium- and short-term national development policies and planning with shared principles. According to the new legislation, there would be a long-term development policy (i.e. Vision 2050); seven 10-year thematic programmes (with the themes as follows: human development, social development, economic and infrastructure development, environment, governance, regional development and national competitiveness development), as well as midterm development programme documents and action plans.

Figure 4. The Mongolian development policy framework



Source: State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2020a.

Following the ratification of the DPPM, the Government of Mongolia shall implement policy changes by either integrating or revoking all the overlapped sectoral and intersectoral policies and programmes into seven thematic development programmes. As of 2021, the following documents had been developed and thereby adopted:

- (a) Vision 2050, ratified on 13 May 2020 under State Great Khural resolution no. 52;
- (b) Five-year Development Guidelines for 2021–2025, ratified on 28 August 2020 under State Great Khural resolution no. 23 (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2020c);
- (c) Four-year Government Action Plan for 2020–2024, ratified on 28 August 2020 under State Great Khural resolution no. 24 (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2020d).

Long-term development policy: Vision 2050

To contribute its collective commitment toward the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, as well as integrating national policies under the shared long-term vision, the Government of Mongolia developed the long-term national strategy, Vision 2050, with vast participation across various fields. On 13 May 2020, Vision 2050 was adopted by the State Great Khural as the policy foundation for all sectoral development policies and programmes.

As Figure 5 shows, Vision 2050 comprises 9 goals and 47 targets, to be accomplished in three phases: 2021–2030, 2031–2040 and 2041–2050. Although internal migration is not explicitly mainstreamed in the Vision 2050 strategy, the strategy specifically addresses the disparities between rural and urban development, and its policy components collectively aim to reduce push factors in rural areas.

Figure 5. Vision 2050: 9 goals and 47 targets

Goals	Targets						
1 Shared national values 	Nomadic culture	“Civilized” Mongolia	Mongolian language and literacy	National pride and unity		Academic research and enlightenment of society	
2 Human development 	Education	Health	Family	Science and innovation	Citizen-oriented living environment	Labour market	Genetic base of Mongolia
3 Quality of life and the middle class 	Social protection and insurance system reform		Affordable housing	Employment and start-up businesses	Financing the middle class	Healthy and active lifestyle	Land affairs
4 Economy 	Wealthy Mongolia	Economic priorities	Smart financial market	Regional cooperation	Competitive branding	National Sovereign Wealth Fund	
5 Governance 	“Smart” governance	“Smart” institutions	E-Mongolia (integrated system for citizens, the State and the private sector)		Capable and ethical civil service	Human rights-oriented society	Corruption-free governance
6 Green development 	Mother nature: Primary ecosystems		Benefits of natural resources	Water: Valuable wealth		Low-carbon, productive and inclusive green development	
7 Safe and secure society 	Armed forces	Inviolable borders	Peace for citizens and society	Development of law enforcement		Information security	
8 Regional and local development 	Infrastructure		Tourism		Sustainable agriculture		
9 Ulaanbaatar and satellite cities 	Human-centred city	Environment-centred solutions	Planning-centred development	Good urban governance		Satellite cities	

Goal 2: Human development is focused on maintaining an enabling environment with quality education, social protection and quality of life. To improve the well-being of rural populations and reduce spatial inequalities, the human development component specifically focused on improving education and health access in rural areas. In line with Vision 2050, a targeted development programme for human development was formulated in 2020. Its working group is currently being led by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of Mongolia (MLSP), with the vast participation of multiple government bodies.

Goal 3: Quality of life and the middle class aims to strengthen the current middle class, as well as increasing the share of middle-income populations by reforming the social welfare and protection system, including through the provision of affordable housing, expansion of employment opportunities and improvements in land management. Under the target of social welfare and social insurance system reform, it aims primarily at providing inclusive social welfare and protection services in response to the specific demands of different population groups according to demographic, socioeconomic and geographical characteristics. Additionally, it is aimed to support middle-income populations by implementing a smart, transparent and citizen-oriented land management mechanism equipped with an upgraded geodetic network and permanent monitoring and integrated management system. Moreover, affordable housing opportunities aligned to people's purchasing power will be offered, in response to the increasing demand. Since accommodations in the city have always been of major concern to internal migrants, it is important to note that the long-term vision addresses land acquisition and settlement-related issues as development priorities. This set of policy priorities would benefit existing and prospective migrants.

Goal 5: Governance – specifically, ensuring smart and sustainable governance – is largely targeted at developing digital governance through the establishment of E-Mongolia, an online platform that enables access to various public services for citizens, including the issuance of references, residency registration and the filing of various types of petitions, with users able to track the status of their requests anytime and wherever they are. E-Mongolia, with its agglomeration of 181 services from more than 30 public organizations successfully launched nationwide on 1 October 2020. As of May 2021, a Mongolian citizen could obtain 307 public services remotely, 8 of which relate to migration procedures and status, with a plan to increase the number of citizen-centred services to 470 by year end. Digitalizing a wide range of civil services is a big step towards eliminating bureaucratic administrative tasks and both monetary and non-monetary costs for nationals and foreign citizens alike.

Goal 8: Regional and local development aims to implement a decentralization policy for Ulaanbaatar and balance development across the various rural areas, with consideration of the adequate levels of population accommodation and resettlement of the *aimags* based on the comparative advantage of each to stimulate economic growth and generate employment opportunities. This component attempts to address unbalanced rural development and spatial inequalities by offering multiple-policy responses, such as intensifying agriculture sector development and rural industrialization, as well as increasing the resilience of rural communities.

Goal 9: Ulaanbaatar and satellite cities targets the development of human-, environment- and planning-centred cities. To decentralize Ulaanbaatar and minimize the negative effects of overpopulation, this component includes the aim to gradually increase social service standards for rural and urban communities and achieve improvements in transportation, raise urban infrastructure investment and increase accommodation not only in the capital, but also other cities and towns. Moreover, the Government is set to conduct a feasibility study and general development plan of Orkhon Aimag, considering Erdenet City as a new, alternative capital city by 2030.

State Policy on Population Development

The State Policy on Population Development (hereafter referred to as “the Population Policy”) is the key policy document on population movement. The Government of Mongolia has developed three iterations of the policy – in 1994, 2004 and 2016 – with the purpose of ensuring sustainable development and growing the population’s quality of life alongside population density. Upon expiration of the second population policy (2004), the Government of Mongolia renewed the Population Policy for the period 2016–2025, adopted through resolution no. 261. To support the implementation of the Population Policy (2016), a cross-sectoral action plan was developed and approved by the Decree No. A/221 of the Minister of Labour and Social Protection in 2017. The policy sets six major directions, and one of which was to contain rural-to-urban migration at an appropriate level. Specifically, the policy aims to increase the share of the rural population from 32.0 per cent in 2015 to 38 per cent in 2020 and 50 per cent in 2025. The data demonstrates otherwise, however, as the volume of internal migration to Ulaanbaatar has consistently increased by 24,000 on average per year during the last decade.

In 2020–2021, the MLSP, in collaboration with United Nations agencies, conducted an independent evaluation of the implementation of the activities undertaken under the Population Policy and its accompanying action plan. The evaluation collected substantive data on the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the implementation of the policy. According to the evaluation report, there were always budget deficiencies and human resource shortages in the implementation of planned activities. For instance, only about MNT 244 million was allocated and spent from 2016–2018. This amount was not enough to cover the wide range of planned activities, such as developing population and settlement plans, enabling education and health-care providers to work in rural areas and sustaining self-employment in the agriculture sector. In addition to the budget deficit, there was a lack of human resources, as well as effective coordination and synergy between government agencies, to implement migration-related activities. The evaluation pointed out that although the MLSP was involved in the reporting of migration activities, there was no designated specialist appointed to work on migration activities within the ministry. Moreover, there was virtually a two-year gap between the adoption of Population Policy and its action plan, creating confusion about the timely implementation of the planned activities.

The Population Policy was terminated on December 2021, upon the enforcement of the DPPM, to be eventually succeeded by a future midterm targeted development programme on social development.

The New Revival Policy

In December 2021, the State Great Khural ratified the New Revival Policy, a post-pandemic recovery effort aimed at offsetting the economic contraction brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and establishing related nationwide containment measures. The policy aims to stimulate economic stability and growth through increasing foreign and domestic investment, strengthening public–private partnerships and implementing fiscal reforms, while also building the foundation for the successful implementation of Vision 2050. By ramping up development efforts in six recovery areas – trade, border and ports, energy, industrialization, urban and rural recovery, green development, and efficient governance – the policy is expected to result in a doubling of Mongolia’s GDP per capita, create over 285,000 jobs and increase labour force participation to 65 per cent by 2025. (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2020e)

The main purpose of the Port Revival Strategy is increasing the capacity of the country's dry ports, land ports and airports, and expanding the highway and railway system to improve intraregional competitiveness and facilitate international trade. This outcome will also contribute to the Industrial Revival Strategy, which seeks to develop mining and agricultural plants, as well as expanding the digital economy, for export diversification.

The Energy Revival Strategy will reduce Mongolia's dependency on energy imports through the development of a high-voltage transmission line and a natural gas pipeline connecting the Russian Federation to China through Mongolia. Also, under this strategy, Mongolia seeks to invest in more sustainable forms of energy, including hydropower, feeding into the Green Growth Strategy, which will promote sustainable development in the country. The State Productivity Revival Policy aims to improve governance and increase the State's efficiency by digitalizing services, strengthening anti-corruption efforts and increasing public-private partnerships.

The successful implementation of the Port, Energy and Industrial Revival Strategies will serve as a foundation for the Urban and Rural Recovery Strategy, which aims to accelerate local and regional development by developing *aimag* centres into independent cities. At the same time, it addresses the root causes of rural-to-urban migration and tackles how to stimulate reverse migration, as well as alleviating the burdens induced by rapid urbanization in Ulaanbaatar.

Reverse migration, in particular, has become increasingly prioritized as an instrument to advance local and regional development, with the New Revival Policy including several provisions for promoting it.

Table 8. Reverse migration-related clauses in the New Revival Policy

Provision	Content
4.2.4	Policies to support financial incentives for individuals and entities relocating from Ulaanbaatar to the regions
4.2.5	Introducing legislation to provide soft loans to micro-, small- and medium-scale enterprises that employ reverse migrants
4.2.7	Supporting individuals and households that have relocated to local areas with accommodation and infrastructure, in line with the Ulaanbaatar City Master Plan
4.2.8	Policies to create favourable local business environments, supporting small agricultural businesses and providing reverse migrants with livestock
4.2.10	Decentralizing universities and education facilities from Ulaanbaatar and increasing the availability of quality education in rural areas by moving or establishing satellite campuses of universities and schools to the provinces

Source: State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2020e.

In addition, the policy identifies major projects to create local jobs and ramp up industrialization, including four meat-processing plants, three power plants, a hydropower plant in Erdeneburen, an oil refinery and copper-smelting plants, highways and railways, and a natural gas pipeline connecting the Russian Federation with China.

Successful implementation of the policy will be integral to leveraging reverse migration to advance local and regional development and contribute to Ulaanbaatar's decongestion efforts. However, as the policy was ratified only in December 2021, it is difficult as yet to assess its implementation.

Targeted development programmes

Under the DPPM, Mongolia introduced seven midterm targeted development programmes to support the implementation of its Vision 2050. The seven targeted development programmes were identified as the Human Development Targeted Programme, the Social Development Targeted Programme, the Economy and Infrastructure Development Programme, the Environment Targeted Programme, the Governance Targeted Programme, the Regional Development Targeted Programme, and the Increasing National Competitiveness Targeted Programme.

IOM is working with relevant government counterparts to mainstream migration into the targeted development programmes, with an emphasis on the Human Development Programme, the Social Development Programme and the Regional Development Programme.

2.2. MIGRATION LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Mongolian legislation governing migration and migration-related issues comprises the following:

- (a) 1992 Constitution of Mongolia (Constitutional Court of Mongolia, 1992);
- (b) 2022 Civil Code of Mongolia (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2002);
- (c) 2018 General Law on State Registration of Mongolia (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2018a);
- (d) 2018 Law on Civil State Registration of Mongolia (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2018b);
- (e) 2018 Guidelines for registering and reporting civil movements within the territory of Mongolia (Government of Mongolia, 2018).

Each of the above is discussed in this section.

Constitution of Mongolia

The primary legislation related to internal migration is the Constitution of Mongolia. In 1992, the first democratically elected Parliament adopted the current constitution to build a democratic and prosperous nation. Since then, several amendments were made to the constitution. The biggest and long-awaited amendments were adopted in November 2019, which improved the independence of the judiciary and heightening the executive power of the Prime Minister, among others. Concerning migration, a 2019 amendment guarantees the right of citizens of Mongolia to exercise freedom of movement and residence within the country, to travel and reside abroad, and to return to their motherland. The right to travel and reside abroad may be limited exclusively by law to ensure national and population security, and for protecting the public order (specifically in art. 16(18) of the 1992 Constitution of Mongolia).

The newly granted freedoms in this amendment parallel core elements of international human rights instruments: (a) freedom of movement within the territory of a country (i.e. in art. 13(1) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (United Nations, 1948)); (b) the right to leave any country (ibid., art. 13(2)); and (c) the return to one's own country (ibid.). Without valid justification, any policy intervention shall not be imposed to restrict an individual's movement by law.

Civil Code

Migration status is based on changes to one's residential address. To exercise civil rights and obligations, including property relations, it is necessary to verify the place of residence for any changes. The Civil Code of Mongolia (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2002), in its article 22(1), indicates that a citizen's place of residence is determined to be the administrative and territorial unit where he or she is registered. If a citizen does not have permanent residence in the place of registration, the place where he or she usually resides or where the majority of his or her property is located can be defined as the place of residence (*ibid.*, art. 22(2)). Additionally, the place of residence of a person in the care of another, that is, a parent or guardian, is determined to be the place of residence of that parent or guardian (*ibid.*, art. 22 (3)).

General Law on State Registration

In line with the civil registration, the General Law on State Registration of Mongolia (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2018a), in its article 6, prescribes relations to State registration principles, changes in registration status, and the issuance of references to citizens and legal entities. The law enlists 15 forms of State registration services to citizens in the form of or pertaining to: birth, marriage, divorce, marriage restoration, affidavit of parentage, adoption, change of given name and/or family name (i.e. last name or surname), death, national ID, passport or an equivalent document, biometric fingerprints, residential status, migration status, change of nationality, and change of gender (*ibid.*, art. 6.1). Registration of migration status is specified under article 6.13.

Law on Civil State Registration

The Law on Civil State Registration of Mongolia (State Great Khural of Mongolia, 2018b) refers to important administrative elements of migration such as migration status, its registration procedures and relevant guidelines. According to the law, "permanent residence" refers to registered residence of at least 180 days; "temporary residence" refers to registered residence of a period less than 180 days. Mongolian citizens must register to the place of destination within 10 days of arriving and present documents such as a national ID, birth certificate, proof of accommodation and other supporting documents that may be required. In 2018, the Law on Civil State Registration of Mongolia was revised to remove one of the registration requirements – that is, to de-register from the place of origin. As such, State registration offices at the *aimag* and district levels can directly retrieve citizens' information from their places of origin, facilitating barriers to the registration of internal migrants settling at destination.

Under the "proof of residence" requirement, migrants are required to submit one of the following documents to register:

- (a) State registration certificate of property ownership;
- (b) Certificate of land ownership or land use rights;
- (c) Notarized lease agreement or property reservation agreements;
- (d) Written residence permit issued by the owner of immovable property.

Guidelines for registering and reporting civil movements within the territory of Mongolia

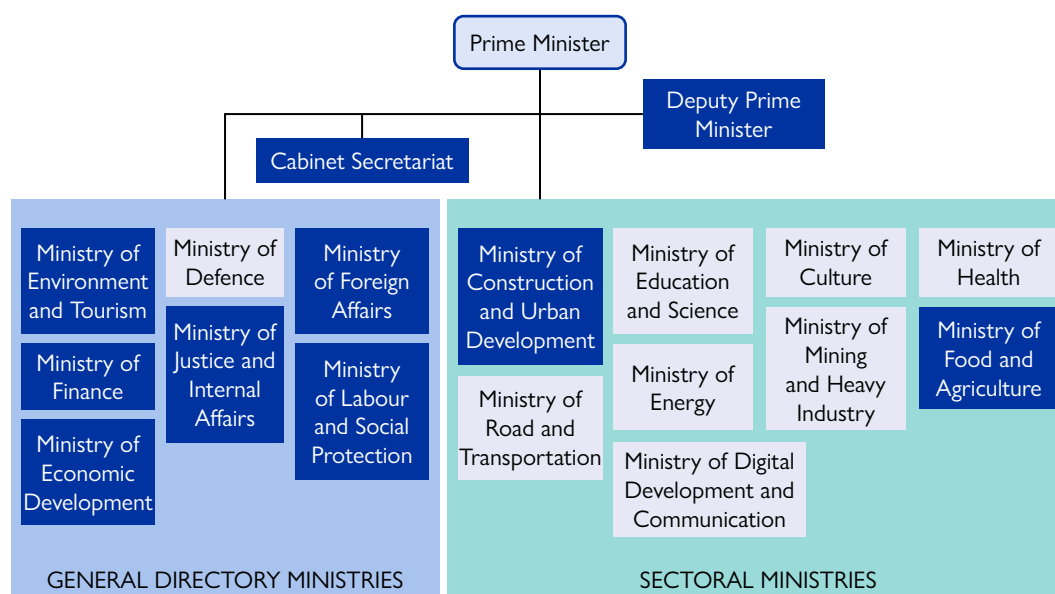
Within the scope of the law on Civil State Registration of Mongolia, the Mongolian Government adopted the “Guidelines for registering and reporting civil movements within the territory of Mongolia” through resolution no. 332 in 2018. The guidelines define the term “migration status” (e.g. permanent and temporary), administrative procedures of registration and, more notably, exceptional conditions for restricting population movement. According to the guidelines, internal migration shall be restricted in the following cases:

- (a) Sixty days before the elections of the President of Mongolia, members of the State Great Khural of Mongolia, or members of citizens’ representative khurals in Ulaanbaatar and at the *aimag*, *soum* and district levels;
- (b) On the date of submission to the polling station, within the administrative unit, of the decision of the authorized body to hold re-elections of the President of Mongolia, members of the State Great Khural of Mongolia, or members of citizens’ representative khurals in Ulaanbaatar and at the *aimag*, *soum* and district levels.

In addition to the above, if a citizen’s ownership rights to real estate and land are expired and not registered with his or her corresponding residential address in the civil State registration database, the registration of his or her residence may be suspended as well.

2.3. INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Figure 6. Structural organization of the Government as of October 2022



Note: Ministries in dark blue boxes have duties and responsibilities related to migration.

Table 9. Government authorities and their duties and responsibilities in relation to internal and international migration

Ministry or office	Name of minister or secretary	Duties and responsibilities	Migration-related duties	IOM migration themes
Deputy Prime Minister	Amarsaikhan Sainbuyan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disaster protection Urgent reconstruction-related issues Standardization and measurements Conformity assessment accreditation Fair competition Consumer protection Professional inspection Free zone development Government procurement Implementation of measures against air pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disaster protection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Displacement
Cabinet Secretariat	Dashzevge Amarbayasgalan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive national development policy Economic priorities and sectoral balance in development Integrated investment policy and regulations Concession and private–public partnership policy Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Division Enforcement of government decisions Government internal information Coordination between Cabinet and Parliament Public official human resource issues Local development integrated policy Local government management and administration Management and coordination to the governors and citizen representative meetings Implementation of measures against air pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comprehensive and sectoral development policies Economic priorities Enforcement of government decisions Local development integrated policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mainstreaming migration in national and sectoral policies and regulations Migration and development Migration management and governance

Ministry or office	Name of minister or secretary	Duties and responsibilities	Migration-related duties	IOM migration themes
Ministry of Labour and Social Protection	Zulpkhar Sarkit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population development policy and planning Social welfare policy Social insurance policy Child, youth, women's, elderly and family development Gender development issues Development and empowerment for people with disabilities Employment policy and employment conditions Poverty alleviation policy Labour affairs; trilateral partnerships between the Government of Mongolia, employers and labour union/associations Labour market regulations Labour board and unions Immigrant workers' employment issues Labour force abroad Technical and vocational education and training Implementation of measures against air pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Population development policy and planning Social welfare policy Employment policies Labour market regulations Immigrant workers' issues Child, youth, women's, elderly and family development Seven types of funded programmes for different target groups (women, people with disabilities, herders, etc.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migrant workers Remittances Labour migration Migration governance Migration management Remittances Vulnerability Protection of victims of trafficking (e.g. through provision of shelter)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Battsetseg Batmunkh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political cooperation with foreign countries and international organizations Foreign economic relations and cooperation Foreign trade policy Protection of the interests of Mongolian citizens and businesses abroad Bilateral and multilateral agreements Humanitarian cooperation with foreign countries and international organizations Diplomatic and official visas and consular issues Foreign advertising Implementation of measures against air pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Protection of interests of Mongolian citizens and businesses abroad Humanitarian cooperation with foreign countries and international organizations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Migrants' rights Safe, orderly and regular migration Diaspora engagement

Ministry or office	Name of minister or secretary	Duties and responsibilities	Migration-related duties	IOM migration themes
Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs	Khishgee Nyambaatar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal reform policy • Systematization of legislation, information and legal training, advocacy and research • Legal support • Border protection • Police and public order, crime control and prevention • Court decision enforcement • Government's relations with the judiciary, the Prosecutor's Office and the legal community • Government relations with churches • Citizenship and immigration issues • Visas, entry, exit and residence of foreigners in Mongolia • Review of the legal basis of public administration decisions • Registration of property rights of citizens and legal entities • Media registration • Intellectual property, patents and copyright issues • State policy on archives • Implementation of measures against air pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Border protection • Citizenship and immigration issues • Ordinary visa, entry, exit and residence of foreigners in Mongolia 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Border management • Border governance • Immigration • Trafficking in persons • Exploitation of migrants • Citizenship issues for Kazakh citizens who were originally Mongolian citizens
Ministry of Finance	Javkhian Bold	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction and building material production policy • Urban planning and urban development policy and architecture • Housing policy • Public utilities • Land relations, geodesy and cartography • Issues of increasing production, services and jobs in the sector • Implementation of measures against air pollution 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urban development policy and planning • Land policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal migration • Vulnerability • Resettlement • Land management

Ministry or office	Name of minister or secretary	Duties and responsibilities	Migration-related duties	IOM migration themes
Ministry of Economy and Development	Chimed Khurelbaatar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of existing targeted programmes and laws Development of a comprehensive development policy of Mongolia Development of regional, urban and rural development policy Promote and attract foreign direct investments into the country 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regional development policy Urban and rural development policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Internal migration Regional investment
Ministry of Digital Development and Communication	N. Uchral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital infrastructure (the readiness of backbone infrastructures to meet growing ICT needs) Transparent e-governance and efficiency of e-services Information security Digital literacy Innovation and productions National development accelerator 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digitalization of registration services Capacity-building in terms of digital literacy for government officials and citizens 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International and internal migration Digitalization of services E-governance Decreased vulnerabilities

2.4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of the internal migration situation in Mongolia that covers current legal framework, migration history, trends, migrants' characteristics and governance point of view, the report produces the following list of overall and specific recommendations to support the Government of Mongolia's ongoing efforts in policy and procedural development to improve internal migration governance and management.

National level

Recommendation 1. Refraining from imposing migration restrictions

Research conducted by IOM (2021c) has proven that the migration ban's intention to reduce migration flows was not achieved, as the volume of unregistered migrants actually increased. The ban did not affect the overall number of migrants, but because of its operational nature (i.e. impeding people to get residency registration), there were fewer migrants with registered residence and more without. The research discovered that unregistered migrants who moved during the period of restriction enforcement faced additional exposure to economic, social and health risks. It also found that these consequences led to other issues, from corruption in public service delivery to health hazards, and from illegal connections to electric lines to stigma and negatives attitudes among the non-migrant community. Therefore, it is vital to not impose any form of migration restriction by considering international human rights principles and applying less strict barriers to entry.

Recommendation 2. Mainstreaming migration into national plans and policies

To sustainably address migration-related issues at both the national and local levels and systematically reduce the migrants' vulnerabilities, it is important to mainstream internal migration in the national long-term development plans and policies. It is worth noting that the mainstreaming of migration in national plans and policies do not only contribute to reducing migrants' vulnerabilities, but also to leveraging and managing migration for development purposes.

Recommendation 3. Institutionalizing migration governance

To ensure the successful and effective implementation of migration-mainstreamed policies and plans, there is a need to institutionalize migration and dedicate more targeted resources, for example, by establishing an agency, department or unit for migration management and migrant integration at the national level (most probably within the MLSP), but, more importantly, at the municipal and local levels, primarily in the Municipality of Ulaanbaatar.

Recommendation 4. Facilitating better integration of migrants



If poorly integrated, migrants are more likely to be vulnerable, and if integrated well, they have high human capital and potential to contribute to local development. Therefore, it is important to focus policies on better integrating migrants in the destination communities by facilitating their registration and access to all services and providing targeted integration support through local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on the ground, among others.

Recommendation 5. Promoting reverse migration

To support the national priorities on promoting regional development in the country, it is important to promote reverse migration by creating a specific policy or set of policies (including as part of a more comprehensive Ulaanbaatar Migration Policy) to offer a pathway for these people to return to the countryside that includes reintegration grants/loans, education grants and employment support, among others. When promoting reverse migration, the interventions should not be solely focused on infrastructure and job creation, but rather on improvement of living conditions, quality of education and access to public services and attracting high human capital.

Recommendation 6. Improving residency registration

About one third of migrant households do not have proper registration in their places of residence. This has had negative implications for their employment, housing and education, among others. Registration status directly influences access to basic rights and development prospects for migrants in Ulaanbaatar. One solution to this could be the re-engineering or reform of the residency registration service so that it:

- (a) Is appropriate for the modern economic and social system in Mongolia;
- (b) Is less reliant on hard evidence of property ownerships or rental, among others, but also motivates the people/migrants to inform in an honest and timely manner about their location;
- (c) Is available online;
- (d) Implements campaigns to motivate migrants to register as soon as they move within Mongolia. It is also important to simplify and improve access to residency registration services by making it easier for internal migrants – for example, by digitizing the services and considering targeted registration of the most vulnerable migrants to improve their overall access to services.

Recommendation 7. Supporting informed migration decisions

Finally, it is vital to provide critical information and services to ensure that the decision to migrate, whether internally or internationally, is well informed and that migration, if decided, takes place in a safe environment.

Local level

Recommendation 1. Mainstreaming migration in rural development planning

Most internal migrants settling in Ulaanbaatar seem to come from *aimag* centres, making these the main origin of migration inflows to the capital city. However, for many, migration to Ulaanbaatar seems to start with the movement from *bagh* and *soum* centres to *aimag* centres first, and also with movements between different *aimags*, and only after with the move to the capital as a last step. As such, internal migration in Mongolia is often divided into phases. The failure to retain migrants at intermediary stages, when they are in, for example, *aimag* centres, is one of the reasons they continue their movement towards the capital. Therefore, it is important to mainstream migration into the development planning for the *aimag* centres and increase their migrant retention capacity.

Recommendation 2. Supporting reverse migration

Low-paid and scarce employment opportunities, as well as overall poor quality of life, are the main reasons for which migrant households in Ulaanbaatar do not to return to the countryside. Therefore, it is important to promote return migration not as a Population Policy component but, rather, as an element or component of the Regional Development Policy transforming reverse migration into investment into the development of the regions, recruiting and promoting high-level specialists, facilitating remote employment rules, and developing and supporting welcoming policies, among others.

Recommendation 3. Improving the resettlement and reintegration of reverse migrants

To strengthen efforts related to reverse migration, there is a need to improve the reintegration of urban migrants into rural communities and enhance their inclusion in the labour market and access to property, among others. By supporting employment, accommodation and housing and access to health care, the vulnerabilities will decrease, and the net contribution of migrants to their own and the local communities' prosperity will increase.

Recommendation 4. Supporting local public administration in managing migration

As part of the continuously increasing efforts on the regional development policies of Mongolia, the Government is planning to develop and grow the population of the major cities of Darkhan and Erdenet and building new satellite cities. This growth is expected to happen primarily via internal migration, from smaller and more remote *soums*, but also from other regions, including reverse migration from Ulaanbaatar. Thus, there is a need to support local public administration in producing good data on migration, supporting better integration of internal migration into the development of the capital city's and provinces' general plans, including their five-year development guidelines, as well as local development strategies, to enforce and support choices in relation to reverse migration and contribute to local development.

Recommendation 5. Supporting informed migration decisions

Finally, it is vital to provide critical information and services to ensure that migration decisions, both internal and international, are well informed and that migration, if decided, takes place in a safe environment.

Within the scope of the above are more detailed and specific recommendations in the following categories:

Institutional capacity development

- (a) Government agencies are urged to implement measures to ensure institutional capacity development, as well as a staff succession plan to ensure a continuous and consistent policy and regulation process.
- (b) Add staff and increase the facility capacities of *khoroos* and *baghs* – Government service is structured by hierarchical pyramid scheme; thus, the smallest units (*khoroos* and *baghs*) provide critical social services to the largest number of people.
- (c) Train officials and government agencies at all levels – national, provincial and local – to give them a holistic perspective of internal migration and make them better understand the magnitude and importance of the timely registration of the migrants and how to effectively address migrants’ needs.
- (d) Conduct workshops for State service staff about the four pillars of the public service – “Availability, Quality, Easy access and Cost-effectiveness” – to better serve both urban and rural residents.
- (e) Train *khoroos* and *bagh* unit social workers to organize workshops to provide migrants with the knowledge of their civil rights, duties and responsibilities in urban dwellings.
- (f) Train *khoroos* and *bagh* unit staff on how to develop better outreach activities to new migrants.
- (g) Provide capacity-building training to Ulaanbaatar unified service centres and NGOs on the delivery of timely and comprehensive information and services to migrants.
- (h) Design and implement a targeted registration policy for migrants who need the access to public services the most.
- (i) Establish one-stop service centres at *khoroos* and *baghs* for migrants.
- (j) Set up “e-corners” in *khoroos* and *baghs* to assist the people who do not have Internet access to obtain government services through E-Mongolia.

Integrated system and coordination between government agencies

- (a) Urban and rural municipalities at all levels should have integrated system in terms of educating and disseminating information to both urban and rural residents about migration. This should include information pamphlets and educational materials in a standardized format to provide the same accurate information to make sure they are all “on the same page” about the migration.
 - (i) Information pamphlets on the “duties and responsibilities of an urban dweller” should be introduced and distributed at the *khoroos/bagh* level to the migrants by social workers.
 - (ii) Educational workshops of urban living, intended for the rural migrants to get them acquainted with urban culture, should be conducted.

- (b) Eliminate any methodological discrepancies between the government agencies of Mongolia and established international standards and practices in terms of defining and conceptualizing internal migration.
- (c) Ministries and relevant government agencies are urged to set up an integrated information database to have better coordination and information-sharing between them, to be on the same page. Such a system will allow ministries and other relevant agencies to provide coordinated, non-bureaucratic, efficient State service to migrants.

The General Authority for State Registration, the NSO and the City Registry Office of Ulaanbaatar, specifically, are urged to improve the data-gathering and tracking system to better capture the inbound and outbound movements of migrants.

Land and housing policy

- (a) Implement affordable rental housing programmes in areas with the greatest number of migrants in vulnerable situations, based on the data collected through the IOM Mongolia survey.
- (b) Prioritize urban redevelopment projects in areas receiving the greatest number of migrants and the areas with the largest deficiencies in housing.
- (c) Improve availability of vacant land for migrants in vulnerable situations.

Partnership engagement and communications and outreach

- (a) Implement social integration programmes in coordination with local NGOs such as “Ger Hub”.
- (b) Provide policy incentives for organizations (e.g. Lorinet Foundation and Zorig Foundation) that work towards addressing the issues and challenges faced by “left-behind children” of unregistered migrants.
- (c) Information dissemination of residency registration and related regulations are deficient. The Government of Mongolia needs to distribute general information and the latest developments or changes to the registration regulations and services through various platforms such as E-Mongolia and administrative units such as *khoroos*, *baghs*, *soums* and districts.
- (d) Design and implement behavioural change and public communications activities.
- (e) Promote educational contents intended to provide information on the risks and benefits related to migration, to help people to make well-informed, prudent decisions about migration.

Further research areas

Considering what has been studied so far and the knowledge available through such studies, as well as the gaps identified through this research, the following areas for further research are identified:

- (a) Women and internal migration in Mongolia: their role, situation and impact and possible policies that target them. (Women-headed households (i.e. households in which a woman is considered the main person) tend to earn less than men-headed households, which is true especially among unregistered migrants and non-migrant households. At the same time, women seem to concentrate much of the decision-making power and favours internal migration, whether in households in which the main person is a woman or a man.)
- (b) Impact analysis of residency registration as a public policy. (Possible questions to investigate include: What is the extent of the damage done to individuals that are left without access to services because they remain unregistered? What are the advantages of such a policy? How exactly does it influence access to public services?)
- (c) The impact of asset ownership on internal migration.
- (d) Internal migration and access to health care.
- (e) The impact of internal migration on economic development in Mongolia.
- (f) The impact of traditional support networks on internal migration and internal remittances.
- (g) Reverse/urban-to-rural migration in Mongolia: past and current trends, future intentions, and recommendations for encouragement and welcoming policies.
- (h) The role of elderly, family and community social support networks in providing childcare and other services.
- (i) A pre-feasibility assessment to guide the policies of the Ministry of Education and facilitating necessary resource mobilization for the movement of universities.

Building a Mongolian traditional dwelling "ger."

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