



PEOPLE IN NEED MONGOLIA COUNTRY PROGRAMME COUNTRY STRATEGY 2022–2026



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1. Country context

One of the major long-lasting issues has been the impact of **climate change** and deterioration of natural resources. Anthropic climate change and other human-related activities have brought about higher disaster risks and environmental degradation.

Over the past 60 years, the rapid pace of global warming has had a significant impact on Mongolia. Air pollution has worsened, leading to an increase in related illnesses, and the country has been increasingly affected by natural disasters such as floods and droughts.

Rapid urbanization, reliance on coal and compressed fuel, industrialization in the mining sector, and insufficient pastureland restoration have led to increased air pollution. Ulaanbaatar is now considered one of the cities with the worst air quality during winter, water pollution (in some regions, water extraction exceeds renewable supply by at least 50% annually), and pasture degradation (90% of grasslands have experienced some degree of desertification). The impact of climate change is exacerbating these issues. If they are not controlled and restored to their previous state, these problems could become significant obstacles to public health and economic growth in the medium to long term. Efforts are being made to develop regulations and establish institutions to address these pressing environmental issues facing the country.

However, there remains a need to increase public participation on one hand and to make forward-looking, effective decisions on the other.

The lack of adequate policies and actions to resolve these serious issues and prevent the situation from worsening highlights a shortage of information, as both the public and policymakers struggle to effectively address these challenges.

Mongolia's economy, which was expected to grow starting in 2023 after the slowdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and related trade disruptions,

¹ Introduction to Macroeconomics. Ministry of Economy and Development. 2023

may be impacted by inflation, ongoing trade disruptions, increasingly stringent conditions for external financing, and a complex geopolitical environment. Mongolia's economy grew by 1.4% in 2021 and expanded by 2.3% in 2022. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) had forecasted a 5.6% growth in 2023, driven by domestic demand, investment, and recovery in the industrial, agricultural, and service sectors, but the actual growth reached 7.0%¹.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine has already elevated the risks to the economic outlook for Mongolia, increasing pressures on the balance of payments, the fiscal position, inflation, and business activities. Per ADB, says that Mongolia should focus on designing a countercyclical policy package to maintain macroeconomic and financial stability and secure funds to meet external and domestic financing needs while deepening efforts to drive forward structural reforms to strengthen economic resilience and competitiveness².

The growth in 2022–2023 will depend heavily on when major trade ports along the border with PRC reopen, whether another COVID-19 outbreak occurs, and how Mongolia responds to economic pressures from the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Continuously increasing inflation and the continued trade disruption limit monetary and fiscal policy room, requiring a comprehensive macroeconomic policy adjustment plan to safeguard the economy.

The disruption of supply chains, ongoing trade delays, and rising fuel prices were expected to drive up business costs, potentially leading to an average inflation rate of 12.4% in 2022. Tugrug depreciation would affect the prices of imported goods. However, after addressing these issues, inflation was projected to decrease to 9.3% in 2023, with the actual rate being 7.6%³.

Downside risks to the outlook stem from prolonged closures and restrictions at the main trade portals with the PRC, potential trade disruptions with the Russian Federation and Europe, and deeper impacts of the situation in Ukraine on the balance of payments and the government budget. The possible

² ADB News Release, Mongolia's Growth to Stay Muted for 2022 at 2.3% Before Climbing in 2023 — ADB | Asian Development Bank, April 2022

³ Introduction to Macroeconomics. Ministry of Economy and Development. 2023

worsening of nonperforming loans and consequent balance sheet distress in domestic financial institutions and corporations weigh heavily on the growth outlook and on financial stability over the medium term.

The backsliding of democracy and respect for human rights is a big concern for many donors and development partners.

As of June 2018, 17,634 CSOs were formally registered at the General Authority for State Registration. This includes 15,241 CSOs for "public benefit" and 2,393 "mutual benefit" CSOs. While the total number of registered CSOs is high, only a small proportion of CSOs have regular and systematic operations⁴. However, while an outside observer may consider the aforementioned as positive infrastructure for a young democracy, like Mongolia, there are serious challenges for a healthy and robust civil society.

Public support for the LGBTQIA+ community to support gender equality continues to grow year-by-year: Gender stereotypes and biases does not only limit the opportunities of those affected (i.e women, LGBTQIA+ community, and men) professionally and personally, but are also the root cause of genderbased violence. PIN, in collaboration with the EU, supports the LGBTQIA+ community to celebrate their "Pride Days". More than 60 private companies, embassies, and NGOs publicly joined the event – up from 5 in PIN's first year supporting in 2019. Unfortunately, there was some backlash as the UB City's deputy mayor vandalized some of the event materials and a well-known Mongolian writer propagated homophobic rhetoric about the community. The positive is that much of the netizens pushed back and the National LGBT Center is now taking the Deputy Mayor to court for violating their civil and political rights to assemble. If victorious, an important legal precedent could be set. During Mongolia's recent UPR review⁵, the GoM accepted 15 of the 17 recommendations set forth. Unfortunately, the GoM rejected a recommendation for marriage equality to be recognized. PIN continues to support the LGBT Center of Mongolia in advocacy efforts to have the

community formally recognized and their equal rights respected by the national government.

<u>COVID19 Law restricts press freedom and right to assemble</u>: In April of 2020, Mongolia's Parliament adopted a law to prevent the spread of COVID19 and mitigate the socio-economic impact. The law authorized the government to regulate quarantine, traffic movements and other public safety measures to prevent the spread of the virus.

Whilst the law did note that the aforementioned measures must be conducted with respect for fundamental human rights, in reality, there were numerous instances during the pandemic where journalists and civil society activists were arrested and detained, restricting freedom of the press and the right to assemble. This law is still in-place, which is worrying as the pandemic, at the moment, has subsided within the country. This law should be repealed immediately and the fundamental rights of citizen, including journalists, fully restored. Article 13.14 of the Mongolian Criminal Code stipulates that disseminating false information can be punished by fines for individuals equivalent to approximately €600 - €900 Euros, 240 - 720 hours of community service, or restriction of the right to travel for one to three months. For companies, including newsrooms, can be punished by fines for equivalent to approximately €10,000.

Mongolian press freedom and anti-corruption activists are concerned that the law does not define the term 'false information'. In practice, they say, police, prosecutors and judges involved in criminal defamation cases are not considering the accuracy of information reported in the media or proving that it is false when charging people under the law.

<u>Environmental CSOs face significant gaps:</u> As Mongolia re-opens, a flood of investment in the mining sector has re-entered the country – majority coming from Chinese mining companies. Civil society organizations, especially environmental NGOs, citizen coalitions, and movements have low capacity.

⁵ https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/mn-index

⁴ Civil Society Brief: Mongolia, ADB, 2019

Additionally, their activities are often hindered by conflicts of interest or by threats and intimidation from their communities.

To establish and improve public oversight in areas where large-scale mining operations are being conducted within the territory of Mongolia, it is necessary to strengthen local NGOs, provide financial support, and create networks among them. We will focus on addressing this matter.

2. PIN's Mandate & Presence in Mongolia

<u>Our Global Vision:</u> We strive for a world in which people can fulfil their potential, live in inclusive societies and in a sustainable manner.

We work with the ambition to enable the people to fully utilize their potential and to create opportunities for sustainable living in an inclusive society.

At the global level, People in Need (PIN) is a *Civil Society Organization* with more than 30 years of experience in humanitarian, development, and human rights programming. Today, PIN has headquarters in both the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom, with offices and programming in more 40 countries.

Our Global Mandate: We work together with local actors to alleviate poverty and exclusion and strengthen the resilience of the most vulnerable people

Our mandate in Mongolia:

PIN is mandated to supporting civil society organizations by enhancing their capacities, fostering respect for human rights, and empowering them to be drivers of change and equal opportunities in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and Mongolia's "Vision-2050" long-term development policy.

Our presence in Mongolia

PIN came to Mongolia during the winter of 1993 with a 50-ton food and clothing donation as the Mongolian population was struggling to adapt to the new realities resulting from the collapse of the Soviet Union. PIN returned to Mongolia during the dzud (severe frosts) of 2009–2011, with the permanent office being established in 2011. Since then, PIN has delivered more than 30 projects covering all 21 Aimags (provinces), impacting thousands of people in rural and urban settings. These projects have focused on climate change and sustainable livelihoods, emergency response, gender and social inclusion, civil society empowerment and good governance, as well as education and skills development sectors.

Our stakeholders

PIN Mongolia has developed a comprehensive donor engagement plan that's also inclusive of key stakeholders. Our key stakeholders include research institutions, universities, local administrations, the government, ministries, and their implementing agencies. In addidtion, PIN widely recognizes and supports the leadership of civil society as a crucial group in influencing the implementation of development goals and programs, as well as in building stronger governance to help mitigate climate change. In recent years, PIN has become an influential institution, working alongside civil society and international NGOs to uphold democratic values and promote human rights.

PIN's program in Mongolia is committed to strengthening civil society by partnering effectively with local civil society organizations and activists who share similar values and vision. We are dedicated to helping them overcome challenges they face. PIN will continue to support and empower the voices of civil society and the private sector, not only by amplifying their voices but also by engaging them at a level where they can take meaningful action.

The identified stakeholders have strong relationships with PIN and see our added value. Many of these partners/stakeholders have already joined PIN in a consortium or expressed interest to do so. These partnerships could be leveraged to access funding that PIN would otherwise be unable to obtain (ADB, USAID, DRL, etc.). For contact details and some strategic opportunities, the 2022 donor engagement plan can be referenced.

Over time, we have maintained close relationships with all past and current partners, consistently demonstrating our value to them. Many of these partners have already joined a consortium with PIN, and some have expressed interest in doing so. Through such collaborations and partnerships, PIN has successfully secured funding for large-scale projects and programs, which would not have been possible to achieve alone. These include funding from the ADB, USAID, the Agency of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, among others. If you are interested in joining our network of collaboration and partnership, please refer to the 2022 Donor Engagement Plan.

Building on our current and past partnerships, PIN will continue to diversify its partnerships portfolio and develop strategic partnerships with like-minded organizations and institutions for sustained impact.



3. Programmatic priorities

PIN Mongolia, based on previous strategies, analysis of external conditions, and the changing environment, as well as accumulated knowledge and experience, has identified the following three key pillars as the program's main focus areas.

- 1. PILLAR I: Emergency response & recovery
- 2. PILLAR II: Climate resilience & environmental pollution reduction
- 3. PILLAR III: Civil Society and Inclusive Governance

These pillars lay the foundation for our work and values in Mongolia as we are a non-governmental, non-profit organization founded on the ideals of humanism, freedom, equality, and sustainability.

We consider human dignity and freedom to be fundamental values. We believe that people anywhere in the world should have the right to make decisions about their lives and to share the rights expressed in the <u>Universal</u> <u>Declaration of Human Rights</u>.

Across the thematic pillars, PIN ensures synergies with the strategies and priorities of our partners. As indicated in the EU Roadmap covering the period until 2025 in Mongolia, there has been an increasing emphasis on CSOs' role to play in 'climate change adaptation and mitigation, including moving towards a low carbon, resource efficient, green circular economy'. Echoing the priorities of the key players in the country, the main programmatic focus of the Mongolia Country Office is likewise centred around environmental protection and building climate change resilience, whilst strengthening coordination and collaboration with CSOs.

PILLAR I: Emergency response and recovery

While Mongolia is often classified as a low-risk country when it comes to risk of disaster, PIN is committed to maintaining a high level of emergency preparedness. For instance, in the past five years, Mongolia has faced growing humanitarian challenges — deadly storms, flooding, dzuds, environmental

⁶Delegation of the European Union to Mongolia. Undated. EU Roadmap for Civil Society Engagement in Mongolia for the period 2021–2025.

pollution, increasingly more frequent earthquakes and the COVID-19 pandemic.

PIN aims, together with our partners, provide timely humanitarian assistance to disaster-affected individuals, aiming to save lives, alleviate suffering, and treat people with dignity. This assistance is delivered with high quality, in appropriate forms, and according to principled methods, ultimately helping people recover, return to normalcy, and strengthen their resilience to future disasters. In doing so, we strictly adhere to the fundamental principles of humanity, impartiality, neutrality, and independence. Our work focuses on three main areas: disaster preparedness, response, and recovery, with special attention to Mongolia, ensuring that the assistance is tailored to the specific needs and conditions of the country.

To help the most vulnerable people of Mongolia recover, PIN has provided more than **1 million USD** in humanitarian assistance since **2017**. The following are examples of some emergency support we have provided for people in the aftermath of rapid onset crises and support them in the time of recovery to help them to get back on their feet by leaving no one behind:

- In response to the dzud crisis in 2009, PIN provided emergency support to the most heavily affected groups, herders, by addressing their basic needs. PIN delivered humanitarian aid in the form of food, winter clothing, medicines, heating fuels and finances for buying telephone credit or costs of travel to the regional centres. In 2021, PIN provided cash assistance to 381 households in three Western provinces.
- In partnership with the Government of Mongolia, PIN ran an emergency response programme with the goal to provide aid to the most vulnerable populations impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. Relief was provided in the form of vouchers and food kits to more than 5,000 households, such as child-headed households, single parents, dormitory students, people living with HIV, PLWD (people living with disabilities), and other vulnerable families and communities.

Furthermore, in alignment with the recently approved "New Revival Policy" of the Government of Mongolia, we aim to support those in the most vulnerable situations in returning to normal life as quickly as possible in an environmentally sustainable way. In this regard, we will undertake the following activities:

- Building resilience of vulnerable communities;
- Supporting target communities facing disasters; and
- Building long-term partnerships with both local and international NGOs, as well as academia and government.

Pillar II: Climate resilience & environmental pollution reduction

PIN's role in addressing climate change is to enhance the resilience of the people vulnerable to a changing climate and environmental degradation, trying to maximise solutions in line with green growth and circular economy principles, and solutions to reduce the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and sequester/stock carbon. In Mongolia, GHG emissions per capita are some of the highest in Asia and nearly two times the global average. The country is disproportionately affected by climate change, with children, elderly and lowincome families bearing the brunt of its negative impacts. PIN prioritizes highly-contextual adaptation programming, particularly in relation to environmental pollution that is posing severe, long-term health risks to the people of Mongolia and can increase people's vulnerability also considering a changing climate. PIN is committed to implementing a program aimed at combating environmental pollution, which not only poses a potential longterm and serious threat to the health of the Mongolian people but also has the potential to increase their vulnerability. In this area, we will undertake the following activities:

- Increasing nutrient-rich and climate-resilient food and livelihood systems;
- Reducing environmental negative factors such as air, soil and water pollution;
- Developing, piloting, and scaling climate-smart energy solutions;
- Ensuring transparency and accountability for environmental pollutants;

- Prioritizing interventions that directly benefit children's well-being;
- Strengthening local capacities in monitoring, assessing, and reducing environmental pollution;
- Supporting civil society on climate change advocacy and transition to green economy.

In line with Mongolia's commitments, we will work with our partners to promote climate-smart solutions and green development by raising public awareness about climate change, ensuring civil society participation, and utilizing behavioral science knowledge. As a leading organization in the **independent monitoring and reporting of air pollution**, we will provide the following support to the citizens and communities of Mongolia:

- Environmental pollution capacity building and awareness campaigns to Local Authorities, schoolchildren, students and general public using social and behaviour change methods (see our resource website here: www.behaviourchange.net).
- Use of technology to understand and map pollution causes and solutions: Air quality monitoring, drone mapping, air quality data accountability
- Climate-smart and environmentally friendly technical solutions at household level (e.g. animal husbandry, gardening, thermal insulation, modern heating and insulation for traditional Mongolian ger dwellings) and sustainable value chains
- Local communities, civil society, private sector, local authority empowerment for good governance and networking on environmental protection in urban areas and rangelands, and leverage advocacy capacity.

Stabilizing the use of the model developed by PIN that predicts Ulaanbaatar's air quality through automated algorithmic processing.

PILLAR III: Civil Society and Inclusive Governance

Rooted in our commitment to empower local actors, PIN supports civil society to play a key role in social, economic and democratic development in our target communities in Mongolia. PIN supports NGOs to develop the technical skills and mechanisms to become more effective governance and

development actors. We support civil society to engage with government actors to advance participatory democratic processes and the development of inclusive public services. Specifically, PIN targets a range of civil society actors, including youth and marginalized communities — such as LGBTQIA+ persons, PLWD, women empowerment groups and others — in order to ensure that government policies and services are socially inclusive and aligned with human rights and gender equality principles.

In parallel, PIN promotes active citizenship and climate justice, empowering individuals to exercise their human rights, engage in democratic processes and hold government officials accountable.

With the aim of supporting inclusive good governance, PIN focuses on active engagement of communities in local inclusive and equitable decision-making processes to achieve sustainable outcomes, and emphasises effective cooperation among civil society, governments, and communities. PIN's expertise builds up to:

- Strengthening capacities of local authorities and decision-makers.
- Raising the voices of local communities to national and international decision-makers.
- Improving dialogue between communities, CSOs, and national authorities.
- Strengthening accountability of local authorities toward communities and improving their ability to apply risk-informed, evidence-based decision-making in response to local needs.

In addition, prioritizing local civil society leadership can lead to more inclusive development and enhance the effectiveness of humanitarian efforts. In the future, development and humanitarian response initiatives should be driven by civil society organizations while also focusing on strengthening the capacity of government institutions. PIN has been working in areas such as social and behavioral change, skills development, sustainable livelihoods, and supporting the market and financing of climatesmart and green solutions.

- PIN has worked with 40 cooperatives and 10 CSOs which were supported with increased access to market and financial opportunities.
- PIN works with local journalism organisations to provide investments and financing to ensure independence and sustainability in the media sector.
- PIN provides innovative and tailored capacity building that supports
 CSOs to leverage financing opportunities.

OUR CROSS CUTTING APPROACHES

Market Systems Development

PIN's primary approach to MSD focuses on creating broad impact and **sustainability** by implementing development initiatives targeted at low-income populations.

People living in the poorest and most remote areas rely on markets as **producers** (small farmers, micro-entrepreneurs), **consumers** (buyers and users of goods and services), and employees. However, the benefits of these markets often do not reach the target groups effectively. Therefore, stakeholders such as vendors, service providers, national companies, and government institutions aim to contribute to the development of market systems that promote behavioral and habitual changes.

The MSD toolkit is integrated into our programs in the following ways:

- Green the urban living through market-based energy-efficient solutions.
- Increase vulnerable people's access and motivation to use products and services that can positively impact their lives and their local environment (e.g., agricultural inputs such as locally-produced food and beverages, financial services, and renewable energy products such as solar lanterns and biodigesters).
- Improve access to skills and decent work through vocational and soft-skill training.

Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

Gender-based approaches are deemed crucial not only to assess how vulnerable groups are impacted differently, but also to adopt transformative mechanisms to address gender inequities and support social justice.

PIN commits to implement its Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) policy in all of its provisions. Where the context allows it and it enables us to reach impact, PIN applies the Human Rights Based Approach, in line with national law and policies, to support people in addressing duty bearers and realizing their rights.

In Mongolia, harmful norms and stereotypes exist in society that limit certain emotions and behaviors of boys and men. Specifically, there is a prevalent belief that defines men as strong and sees the expression of emotions as a sign of weakness. This attitude negatively impacts men's ability to protect themselves from harmful behaviors and poses risks to their health and wellbeing. Additionally, due to this mindset, men may use violence as a means to assert and control power, which can lead to the abuse of those close to them.

To contribute to solving this problem, we will do the following:

- Integrating gender equality, inclusion and protection principles into the project planning and management cycle ensuring gender-disaggregated indicators are in place;
- Strengthening the staffs' knowledge and capacity to manage exclusion, gendered and protection risks; and promoting continuous cycle of learning on gender mainstreaming;
- Including the gender and inclusion agenda at all levels of the project cycle, from project proposal to the projects' end; at the programmatic side, as well as communications & advocacy;
- Integrating gender-sensitive and gender-transformative messages into PIN's communications strategy that challenges gender stereotypes and discriminatory practices;
- Identifying the specific barriers and challenges that women and socially excluded groups in Mongolia experience and integrate the solutions and measures to address those into PIN Mongolia's programming;

- Promoting best practices in combating gender inequalities and social exclusion and actively advocate for inclusive gender policy-making;
- In addition, PIN Mongolia uses two field-tested tools, the Designing for Behaviour Change (DBC) framework and Barrier Analysis (BA) study to enable people to practice positive behaviours. PIN's expertise in behaviour change includes: Understanding what barriers prevent people from practicing the desired behaviours;
- Realizing what enablers can help people with adopting such behaviours;
- Using this understanding to design effective behaviour change interventions, e.g., **Ending Violence Against Women and Girls**;
- Implementing and evaluating activities and programs with behavior change to the highest quality.

We work based on our extensive experience, specialized knowledge, and skills accumulated from operations in Mongolia and other countries, as well as the professional assistance and support from the Knowledge and Learning Department (KLD) advisors. We adhere to the aforementioned goals and principles. Additionally, the KLD provides expert support and assistance in various areas such as education, skills development, market system development, business, small and micro enterprises, climate change, gender equality, social participation, protection, equity, and behavior change, to ensure the successful implementation of programs and projects in the respective countries.

4. Current and past projects

Digital Inclusion through CSO empowerment (2023-2026, EU):

Empower CSOs to enhance societal empowerment through digital technology, address the digital divide with marginalized groups, and collaborate with government stakeholders to influence digital policy − €744,445

Switching On the Green Economy (2022–2025, EC-SWITCH):

Setting up an ecolabelling scheme in the Agri-Food and Beverage Sector in Mongolia and promote food to fork principles – €2.2M

Youth and children to advocate for climate change and clean air (2021, UNICEF):

Youth engagement activities for children and adolescents (aged 15–24) through social media, traditional media and messaging across main Mongolian urban cities $- \\mathbb{e}112,796$

Ending Gender Based Violence (2021–2022, UNFPA):

Strengthening national capacity for gender-based violence prevention by promoting gender equitable social norms through effective prevention mechanisms at the community level – \$74,000

Independent Media Project (2021–2022, Spirit of America, American Embassy):

The aim is to foster independent and sustainable media through a market-based approach, aimed at providing investments to scale novel business models – \$130,000

Emergency response to COVID-19 (2020, SDC, German Embassy, PIN HQ):

The aim is to provide food vouchers, medicine, education, and hygiene support to those who have suffered economic losses due to the COVID-19 pandemic. – \$250,000

CashEval (2021–2023, German Federal Foreign Office):

The project aims to enhance the capacity of households living in areas at risk of dzud (severe frost) by providing unconditional financial assistance to enable them to take prompt action against the disaster. − €199,856

CHIP (2020-2024, UNICEF, SDC):

Improving air pollution and energy efficiency in traditional gers and communities through climate-smart cooking, heating, and insulation products and services solutions − €332,929

Web-based Air Pollution Monitoring Platform – HazeGazer (2020–2022, UNDP, UNICEF):

Mapping air quality and run air pollution awareness-raising campaigns to support UNDP's efforts to bring data to the public and civil society − €110,000

SOAP - Switch off Air Pollution (2018-2021 EC- SWITCH, CzDA):

Reducing air and environmental pollution with energy advice and green financing support for sustainable housing in UB through community-based drone mapping – $\ensuremath{\in} 499,081$

R2B – Right to Breathe (2018 –2019 EC, EIDHR):

Setting up an air quality monitoring network and promote transparency and accountability, as well as fostering action at the level of civil society - \le 314,590

LTT4R (2016-2019 CzDA, ECHO, FAO):

Building resilient households to dzud-affected herders in eastern aimags and improving disaster preparedness through EWS, disseminating weather information on mobile phones – €526,547

EPIL (2016–2019 CSO-LA, CzDA):

Promoting sustainable livelihoods by strengthening cooperatives in Arkhangai and Uvurkhangai − €932,697

Cooperation between Czech and Mongolian universities on understanding interactions between livestock and wildlife (2017–2018, CzDA):

Improving university education on ecological interactions in rangelands and promote proper natural resource management − €103,000

SWBI (2013 –2015 EC, SWITCH, CzDA):

Promoting sheep wool as an eco-friendly and energy-efficient solution for thermal insulation of buildings and creating alternative value chains to support sustainable livelihoods - \$891,412





