

# Hygiene and Low Cost Sanitation Improvement for the Urban Poor in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

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## Background

Mongolia is a landlocked country of nearly two and a half million residents, 915,000 of whom live in the capital, Ulaanbaatar. The transition from a centrally planned to a free market economy has been characterized by large-scale migration of the country's traditionally nomadic population to the capital, where they have settled in the outskirts, creating vast, underserved neighborhoods.

In Mongolia, urban poverty is a relatively new phenomenon. In the previous system most basic services and consumption goods were provided for free and subsidized by the State. Poverty is generally concentrated in the "Ger Districts" and the increase in the number of poor households is straining the municipality's safety nets and basic social services.

## The Problem

"We face a major problem of sanitation, especially during summer when silage starts melting and flooding occurs in the Ger areas. Many people came here to help us. We used to receive help. This is the first time when we ourselves are planning to address the problems and its solutions."

--The comments of an elderly resident of Ulaanbaatar's Ger District, at a World Bank-sponsored Community Dialogue held to examine possible ways to expand sanitation and hygiene services to Mongolia's urban poor.



A typical latrine structure in Ulaanbaatar's Ger Area.

## Existing Scenarios: Basic Infrastructure, Hygiene and Sanitation in Ger areas

The Ger areas have inadequate basic infrastructure and services in six areas:

- Inadequate centralized water supply;
- Extremely poor sanitation;
- Improper solid waste collection;
- Bad drainage;
- Lack of central heating, and;
- Bad roads.

The Ger areas are prone to flash flooding as they are situated on flood plains and hill slopes. These Ger areas also suffer from water pollution in two principal ways:

- Untreated sewerage contaminates surface water;
- Untreated sewerage contaminates groundwater due to prevalence of poorly constructed pit-latrines.

These Ger areas also suffer from soil and land pollution due to open dumping of solid waste, and air pollution due to thermal power plants, coal-fired cooking-cum-heating stoves and vehicular emissions.

## Prioritization and Bank's Involvement

The social assessment carried out during the preparation of the Second Ulaanbaatar Service Improvement Project revealed that on-site sanitation is very high on the list of priorities for residents in the Ger areas. The weakness of Ulaanbaatar's municipal finances prevents it from expanding infrastructure service and maintenance into the Ger areas. The Municipality of Ulaanbaatar has requested assistance from the World Bank in tackling the problem. In response, the Bank's Second Ulaanbaatar Urban Services Improvement project (USIPII), a five-year program, is addressing these issues. Given the high cost of providing a sewerage service, the lack of indoor plumbing, and the very low water consumption in Ger areas, improved low cost on-site sanitation is the only feasible option for improving the sanitary conditions in these residential areas. USIPII aims to improve the hygiene and sanitation services in the Ger areas of Ulaanbaatar by parallel grant funded activities from the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF). The low-

## Focus: Mongolia



## What do we mean by Ger areas?

*Ger areas are peri-urban informal settlements consisting mainly of traditional circular huts or tents.*



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cost sanitation is one of the pilots under the JSDF.

### The World Bank's Response to a Mongolian Initiative

As an initial step in implementing low cost sanitation activities in the Ger areas under the Community-led Infrastructure Project, the World Bank has provided technical support to the Mongolian Government through the Sanitation, Hygiene and Wastewater Support Service (SHWSS). Individual consultations were conducted with all key stakeholders, followed by the organizing of a national consultative workshop. The Project Management Unit, with support from the Bank consultant team, guided the key stakeholders to map out the existing hygiene and sanitation situation. This included the mapping out of existing resource materials for the Ger areas.

This was a groundbreaking event for Mongolia. For the first time, all key professionals and decision makers in the hygiene and sanitation sector came together to address the sanitation issues and explore the best solutions for the Ger areas. Ultimately, this paved the way for a more holistic approach to improving sanitation in Ulaanbaatar's urban periphery. This national consultation workshop was followed up with a second workshop at the district level in order to share the conclusions, recommendations and validate the ground situation.

The overall summary of the findings and recommendations from the two consultative meetings were then shared with the Ger communities at Bayankhoshou. The consultation strengthened the participatory approach and provided a better insight and ownership for Mongolian-led process. The consultation with the community was also used as an opportunity to test and validate the modified version of the participatory hygiene and sanitation transformation technique (PHAST) as methodology for demand-creation.

### Key Recommendations

The key recommendations identified during the consultation process were as follows:

- Develop policy and regulatory framework to support hygiene and sanitation activities.
- Establish an institutional framework that can support community-based promotion of hygiene and sanitation initiatives.
- Establish mechanism for coordination between government, NGOs/INGOs, ESAs, private sector and users for improved services.
- Design system and mechanism for "instituting learning" to share the best practices across the boundaries.

- Develop appropriate low cost sanitation technologies for offering 'informed choice'.
- Promote community education, promotion and community-based monitoring and evaluation system.
- Ensure capacity and confidence building within the government planners and implementers and the CBOs/NGOs to support community-based hygiene and sanitation activities.
- Support to create supply-chain.

### Immediate Outputs

The Project, with the assistance from Bank, has so far achieved:

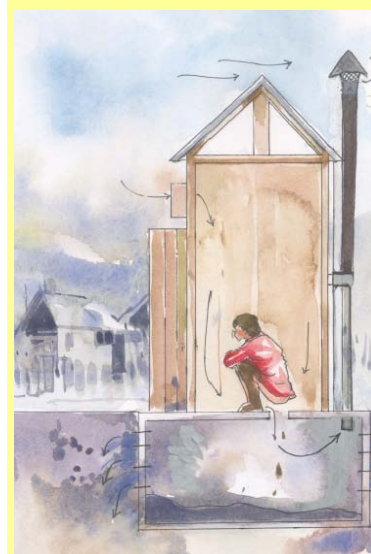
- Development of Hygiene and Sanitation Situation Report for Ger Areas, Mongolia: This report defines the current situation on hygiene and sanitation of the Ger areas in Ulaanbaatar, as well as in Mongolia as a whole.
- Development of a Manual on Promotion of Hygiene and Sanitation in Ger Areas, Mongolia (see illustrations in margin): This manual is a guidebook for workers in undertaking the community-based demand creation methodology. It provides the step-by-step process that can guide workers in influencing the behavior and decision of families and communities to adopt desirable hygienic practices and improved sanitation.
- Development of a Community Dialogue Tool Kit for Ger Areas, Mongolia: This tool Kit is a set of illustrated materials to be used by the workers to undertake the community-based demand creation methodology on hygiene and sanitation.
- Development of a Manual on Low Cost Sanitation Technologies for Ger Areas, Mongolia (see illustrations in margin): This manual provides various latrine options in building sanitary latrines based on the needs and capability of the families and the communities.
- Development of Guidelines for Implementation of Low Cost Sanitation Project in Ger Areas, Mongolia: This report provides guidelines for Low Cost Sanitation Project for JSDF Funding.

### Expected Overall Outputs

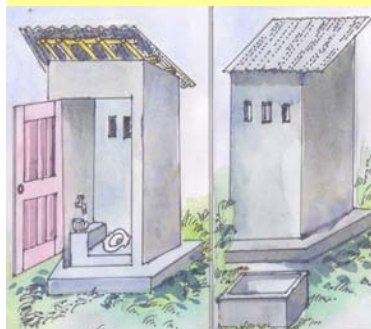
The current investment through JSDF and BNWP will help to pilot and create an enabling environment for scaling-up of implementation of Low Cost sanitation activities for Ger areas in Mongolia in addressing the Millennium Development Goals set-up by the National Government. The lessons learned will be valuable inputs for national policy formulation and programme planning and budgeting.



**Hygiene at the Household Level** was a major focus of the Manual on Promotion of Hygiene and Sanitation in Ger Areas.



**Ventilated Improved Single Pit Latrines, or "VIPs,"** have had limited success as a model in Ulaanbaatar's peri-urban Ger communities. Demand may have been limited by lack of promotion.



**Pour-Flush Latrines** Are often not an ideal technological solution for areas like Ulaanbaatar's Ger districts. This is because of the scarcity of water and the extreme temperatures in winter.

