PROJECT EVALUATION
LEARNING BRIEF

This learning brief is a summary of the key findings, conclusions, and recommendations prepared by the evaluator for use by IOM colleagues in Mongolia, as well as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (donor). Details on all of the findings, conclusions, and recommendations can be found in the full evaluation report.

Evaluation type: External independent mid-term review (MTR)

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Final report: December 2021

Commissioned by: IOM Mission in Mongolia
Managed by: LUTENCO Victor

Evaluation purpose: The evaluation will present a learning opportunity for IOM Mongolia in view of the implementation of a next phase of the "Understanding and Managing Internal Migration in Mongolia" project supported by SDC, ensuring sustainability of project activities.

Evaluation criteria: Relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

Evaluation methodology: Desk review of project documents and semi-structured interviews with project implementing team and partners.

PROJECT SUMMARY

Mongolia's transition from a collectivised to an open market system in the 1990s saw significant transformations in the social, economic, and political fabric of the country, including the emergence of a rapidly growing urban population as a result of a dramatic flow of rural-to-urban migration. A combination of unemployment in rural areas, developmental discrepancies, and natural disasters such as dzud pushed many Mongolians to migrate fro rural areas to the country's capital city of Ulaanbaatar. This raised Ulaanbaatar's population to 1.5 million - half the country's total - and has brought about profound challenges to both rural and urban Mongolia such as overpopulation of the capital, desertification in rural areas, social inequalities, and limited access to social services for internal migrants.

This project aims to improve the socio-economic well-being of internal migrants in Mongolia through providing national and local authorities with regular, evidence-based data on internal migration, supporting the mainstreaming of internal migration into policies in a coordinated and comprehensive way, and improve information and service delivery for internal migrants.

Understanding and Managing Internal Migration in Mongolia

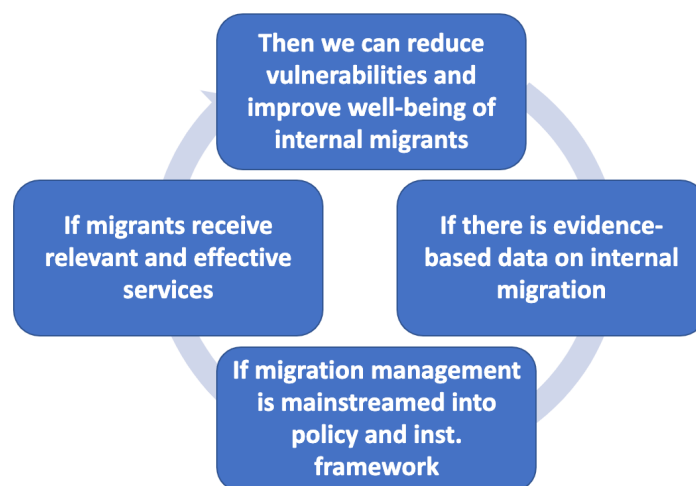|	
Geographical coverage:	**Mongolia**
Project type:	**MD - Mainstreaming Migration into Development**
Project code:	**MN.0010**
Project period:	**1 September 2019 - 31 July 2023**
Donor:	**Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)**

Below is the brief re-structured theory of change of the project subjected to this evaluation.

Then we can reduce vulnerabilities and improve well-being of internal migrants

If migrants receive relevant and effective services

If there is evidence-based data on internal migration

If migration management is mainstreamed into policy and inst. framework

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THE MID-TERM REVIEW (MTR)

The purpose of the MTR is to assess the performance level, the status of implementation and the capacity to achieve the project objectives. Moreover, it assesses the potential impact and sustainability of results including the level of capacity development of local stakeholders, and highlight both positive and negative, intended, and non-intended results and processes. It covers the period from the project's inception in September 2019 until 31 October 2021 and assesses the project along the six OECD-DAC evaluation criteria - relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability.

KEY FINDINGS/CONCLUSIONS

Relevance. The overall objective of the project responds to the national needs and priorities which have been defined in Mongolia's development policy documents and the expected outcomes (migration data, migration governance and targeted interventions) and planned activities are consistent with the needs of the target groups. However, the MTR concludes that there needs to be a clear linkage between the three outcomes in the project document.

Coherence. The UMIMM project is the only initiative directly covering internal migration issues in the SDC's portfolio in Mongolia. Despite this, the project has synergies with several other SDC projects in Mongolia in the realms of supporting the government's decentralisation efforts to achieve more equitable and inclusive development and building the government's service delivery capacity. The project is also coherent with an Asian Development Bank funded project aimed at improving the accessibility and quality of state registration services and inter-sector coordination of agencies in charge of state registry.

Effectiveness. Under the first outcome, **Migration Data (R1)**, the project aims to improve the quality of national data on internal migration using the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) methodology to collect data, track and monitor the displacement and mobility of internal migrants. The DTM is primarily perceived to be used in crisis or outbreak situations and/or to study temporary/seasonal migration flows, rather than collect general data on internal migration. DTM data will be complementary to data obtained by traditional collecting methods and possibly fill some gaps in the availability of migration data.

Under the second outcome, **Migration Governance (R2)**, the project has successfully put migration on the Government's priority agenda - characterized by the mainstreaming of internal migration into development and policy documents and by IOM's thematic research being used as a basis for policymaking. However, to mainstream migration into national, local and sectoral policies, formal coordination from the government side is necessary.

The third outcome, **Targeted Interventions (R3)**, aimed to reduce migrants' vulnerabilities through improved access to information (including the national "Should I Stay or Should I Go? Research It!" information campaign) and services (direct interventions with 17 local NGOs reaching over 10 thousand beneficiaries), as well as opportunity based interventions, particularly under the COVID-19 context.

Efficiency. The overall level of operational expenditures by the end of August 2021, i.e. at 50% of implementation time, stands at 27.7% whereas 36.9% the budget for staff and office expenses has been used. The contractual financial allocation for operational expenses only represents 60% of the total budget, with the split among the 3 Outcomes adequate and Capacity building representing the largest share of operational expenses (40%). Intensive training of different stakeholders may indeed be necessary, but in order to avoid repeated training activities, often justified by staff turnover, it would have been advisable to include more Training-of-Trainers (TOT) workshops to ensure better sustainability. Despite obstacles to the implementation caused by the 2020 elections and the COVID-19 pandemic, the project is reasonably on track.

Impact. The first and major impact of the intervention at this stage is awareness - increased awareness on migration related issues and potential problems, the importance of mainstreaming migration into policies at the national and local level, and data collection tools which can be used for both development and emergency/crisis situations. It is premature to report any other significant impact at the mid-term of the project.

Sustainability. The project is taking several measures to enhance sustainability of the intervention, including through cooperation agreements with the NSO, GASR, MUB, NDA, MLSP and close cooperation with the Cabinet Secretariat, supporting the formation of a network among NGOs, creating a bridge between NGOs and local administrations, etc. The government's ongoing efforts to integrate migration into regional, local and sectoral development plans confirm sustainability of the results achieved by the project. However, increased contribution from the government in all initiatives taken by the project is necessary.

Cross-cutting issues. It can be assumed that the intervention has adequately addressed **gender mainstreaming** throughout all activities in adopting a gender-sensitive approach, as evidenced by project reports and adherence to IOM's Gender Equality Policy. Additionally, the project has integrated trainings on organizational **governance** into the capacity-building training for NGOs.

Overall assessment. Overall, the UMIMM intervention is relevant and responds to the needs of both the migrants and authorities. The project falls in line with one of the four thematic priorities defined in Switzerland's International Cooperation Strategy 2021-2024 and with one of the focus areas of SDC's Cooperation Strategy for Mongolia (2018-2021). Despite three relevant Outcomes and a set of clearly defined activities, the link between the expected results needs to be more well-defined.
The project has made progress towards the achievement of the different outputs and outcomes. It has also delivered a comprehensive COVID-19 response which has been well received by all beneficiaries. A substantial impact of the intervention has yet to materialize, but important results have already been achieved, including increased awareness on migration issues and the needs of migrants, better understanding of the importance of mainstreaming migration into policies, recognizing the role of NGOs in supporting migrants, etc.
Considering the planned phasing out of SDC funding on migration issues, sustainability of the results needs to be secured at all levels in order to continually contribute to improving the socio-economic well-being of migrants beyond 2023.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations linked to operational issues:
Migration data and migration governance (O1 and O2):
1.   Prepare a comprehensive roadmap on improving migration data and mainstreaming migration into policies.
2.   Support a more pro-active engagement of all stakeholders (such as CabSec, MLSP) with project management in all aspects of the responsibility assigned to the implementing agency.
Targeted interventions (O3):
3.   Continue and intensify the capacity building programme for NGOs
4.   Define priorities for the next round of local NGO projects based on migrants' needs.
5.   Review procedures for the designation of a selection panel for the second selection of NGO interventions.
6.   Divert part of the funding planned for Outcome 1 and 2 to Outcome 3 to reinforce the capacity building programme for the NGOs and to upscale the delivery of services in selecting more projects than planned.
7.   Engage in capacity building for local government bodies in local soums.
General issues
8.   Present more results-based progress reports in the future.
9.   Develop a comprehensive M&E plan.
Recommendations focusing on sustainability
10. Increase private sector involvement and promote closer dialogue between the government and the Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry in discussions encompassing internal migration policies.
11. Support NGOs in their search for financial resources with a focus on funding from international sources.
12.   Engage with the ILO, and other UN agencies, to assess their potential interest to work with the government on both internal and international migration.