



Voluntary GCM Review - Mongolia

Conducted to contribute to the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF)
on 10-13 May 2022 in New York

1. Methodology for preparing the voluntary GCM reviews

In October 2020, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia (MFA) in cooperation with the IOM Mongolia organized the **Workshop on the Review of the Implementation of the Global Compact for Safe Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM)**. The workshop was attended by representatives of 7 governmental institutions, 8 UN agencies + UNRCO and NGOs at the level of heads of departments. Achieving its initial objectives, the workshop helped reiterate Mongolia's progress in implementing the GCM, clarify the timeline and division of labor for collecting inputs from all the stakeholders for the compilation and timely submission of the GCM Review Survey for of Mongolia, of which the final Review was successfully submitted in December 2020.

Capitalizing on the occasion of International Migration Review Forum (IMRF), a quadrennial meeting at the highest political level to gauge progress made, while identifying persistent or emerging challenges to the full implementation of the GCM, Mongolia has updated the Voluntary GCM Review, previously developed in 2020, with renewed inputs from relevant institutions.

To do so, a national multi-stakeholder Review Forum under a general topic of "Migration Partnership Forum" has been organized in December 2021, as a follow-up consultation to Mongolia's first Voluntary GCM review, to discuss the most important highlights and achievements since the last review and build up an updated Voluntary GCM Review report for the International Migration Review Forum (IMRF). The Implementation of the GCM was reviewed and discussed under the following four broad themes, capturing all of the 23 GCM objectives.

1. Ensuring that migration is voluntary, regular, safe and orderly; (GCM objectives 2, 5, 6, 12 and 18)
2. Protecting migrants through rights-based border governance and border management measures; (GCM objectives 4, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13 and 21)
3. Supporting migrants' protection, integration and contribution to development; (GCM objectives 14, 15, 16, 19, 20 and 22)
4. Strengthening evidence-based policymaking, public debate and cooperation for safe, orderly and regular migration. (GCM objectives 1, 3, 7, 17 and 23)

In particular, the Forum aimed to:

- 1) Take stock of relevant developments that have taken place in Mongolia since the GCM's adoption and the last GCM voluntary review.
- 2) Identify priority areas and emerging issues of relevance to the GCM implementation in Mongolia.
- 3) Provide a venue for an exchange of experience and good practices among all relevant stakeholders in line with Mongolia's vision of the GCM.
- 4) Explore the feasibility and desirability of a system-wide UN support to Mongolia's implementation of the GCM and potential benefits to Mongolia through the establishment of the UN Network on Migration at country level.

The forum was attended by over 50 representatives from a total of 24 organizations, including government agencies, civil society organizations and international organizations, applying a whole-of-society approach. The consultation allowed participants to take stock of relevant developments and achievements that have taken place in Mongolia since the GCM adoption and the previous Voluntary GCM Review in October 2020, as well as

to identify priority areas and emerging issues of relevance to the GCM implementation in Mongolia. The forum has been appreciated by participating organizations, especially the civil societies, to be a very insightful venue for an exchange of information, experience and good practices among all relevant stakeholders in line with GCM priorities and implementation in Mongolia. The information presented during the forum was incorporated to this updated Voluntary GCM Review in Mongolia, along with additional written inputs from the relevant organizations after the Forum.

2. Policy and enabling environment

The Government of Mongolia has prioritized migration by including the protection of migrants' human rights, access to public services, and increasing the positive impact of migration key issues in the national development agenda and SDG achievement agenda.

To contribute its collective commitment towards the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, as well as to integrate the national policies under the shared long-term vision, the Government of Mongolia has re-examined its national development strategies and developed the long-term national strategy "Vision 2050" with vast participation across various fields. On May 8, 2020, the "Vision 2050" was ratified by the Parliament of Mongolia as the policy foundation for all sectoral development policies and programs. The Cabinet Secretariat of the Government of Mongolia, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Economic Development, in cooperation with IOM in Mongolia, are working to mainstream migration into the seven Targeted Development programs¹ and to introduce to the Parliament in the second half of 2022.

The Parliament of Mongolia approved the Action Plan of the Government of Mongolia 2020-2024 in its Resolution No. 24 and included clauses² that advance the GCM objectives. The Action Plan also mentions that the Government plans to create a favorable environment for citizens working and living abroad to return to their home country to work as well as to make a contribution to the economic and social development of the country from overseas (Clause 4.2.11). This opens a window for the Government to better engage with the Mongolian diaspora for the development of Mongolia and allows IOM to support the Government's effort in achieving GCM objective 19 through establishment of dedicated institution or unit in the Government for better interaction and cooperation with the diaspora.

The Government of Mongolia developed the first state policy on population development in 2004, with the purpose to ensure sustainable development and growth on population and quality of life and implemented it for a period of ten years from 2004 to 2015, which was extended to 2025. Of the 6 significant outcomes that deal with population development, growth, and quality of life, the second outcome includes internal migration: "To maintain population migration at an appropriate level". For its implementation, an Action Plan was developed and approved by the Decree of the Minister of Labor and Social Protection (No.A/221) in 2017. The Ministry of Labor and Social Protection has evaluated the 109 activities in the Action Plan with the assistance and support of the IOM Mongolia.

The Government of Mongolia has been taking measures to eliminate trafficking in persons by joining the international human rights convention and by strengthening the legal framework by enacting such laws and

¹ The 7 Targeted Development Programs include Human Development; Social Development; Economy and Infrastructure Development; Environment Development; Governance Development; Regional Development; and Increasing National Competence.

² Clauses 3.7.6 and 3.7.7: To minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave Mongolia, the Government plans to build satellite cities of Ulaanbaatar as a necessary infrastructure to support the e-economy and service sector.

Clause 3.7.10: For low and medium-income citizens who pay social insurance premiums, the Government is enabling their eligibility for soft mortgage loans with 4-6% annual interest rates with no down payment when they purchase apartments for the first time.

Clause 2.3: To support skills and career development, the Government plans to strengthen the system to create equitable, inclusive, and quality education for all.

Clause 2.3.5: In this respect, the Government intends to establish a research results-based competitive financing system for professional education in conformity with graduates' employment opportunities in their field and develop research-based universities.

Clause 2.5: The Government plans to increase the quality of life of the Mongolian people by reforming the social insurance system, streamlining social welfare, increasing employment, ensuring human development and expanding the middle class

Clause 3.7.4: In efforts to enhance availability and flexibility of pathways for regular migration, the government intends to identify potential settlement areas for development with optimal regional structure based on the appropriate mix of locals and settlers and connect them to air, road and railway transport networks.

policies as Law on Combating Human Trafficking (2012), Criminal Code (2015)³, and National Program Combating against Human Trafficking (2017-2021). Additionally, on March 3, 2017, the Minister of Justice and Home Affairs issued Order No. A/49 approving the “Regulation on monitoring the crossing of children across the border”. Mongolia implemented a five-year National Anti-Trafficking Program (2017-2021) and workplan aimed at improving prevention and protection efforts of the Government. The impact assessment of the implementation of the National Program will be conducted in 2022.

Mongolia is a party to regional instruments, such as the Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution negotiated by the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation (SAARC), which aims to promote cooperation amongst the Member States so that they may effectively deal with the various aspects of trafficking in women and children, i.e. the prevention of the use of women and children in international prostitution networks, particularly where the countries of the SAARC region are the countries of origin, transit and destination, the repatriation and rehabilitation of victims of trafficking. Mongolia is also a member of the Bali Process, an official international forum, established in 2002, to facilitate discussion and information sharing about issues relating to people smuggling, human trafficking, and related transnational crime and appropriate responses to these issues.

The Law on the Legal Status of Foreign Citizens has been revised in 2021, strengthening the legal framework on procedures for introducing e-visas, and temporary (72-hour) on-arrival visas for tourists from certain countries, bringing visa issuance procedures in line with international standards, improving visa registration and monitoring. The Action Plan of the Government of 2020-2024 states its plans to enhance consular protection, assistance, cooperation, and optimize the location, structure, and staffing of diplomatic missions abroad, taking into account the level and importance of political and economic relations, number of Mongolian citizens residing in a particular country and the number of in-and-out travelers and other factors (Clause 4.5.4).

To support the UN’s initiative at the national level, the UN Network for Migration in Mongolia has been decided to be established with the overall objective of fostering a mutual understanding of migration dynamics in Mongolia through information exchange, contributing to the improved coordination within the UN system and the Government of Mongolia on migration-related issues, and strengthening national ownership of the GCM implementation and the protection of the human rights of migrants in Mongolia. In November 2021, the Terms of Reference has been presented to the UN Country Team in Mongolia and been unanimously approved to be established with IOM as the Main Coordinator and Secretariat.

3. Progress on GCM objectives

Over the past 20 years, Mongolia has transformed into a vibrant multiparty democracy. The country has experienced an economic boom, driven by the mining sector, with significant GDP growth and increased in-and-outbound migration flows. Mongolia is experiencing higher migration rates in all aspects with increasing numbers of international immigrants, the emigration of young people looking for work, rural to urban migration, and most recently urban to rural migration induced by the impacts of COVID-19. The increase of internal and international migration in recent years has brought about an array of challenges for the country’s political, social, and economic fabric. However, it’s important to note that internal migration has been more prevalent compared to the international migration, increasing year by year. Main challenges include regional discrepancies, overpopulation of the capital city, rural-urban inequalities, imbalanced social development, lack of adequate structures to protect migrant rights, and limited access to social services for internal migrants. Cross-border challenges include lack of integrated border management, fraud, border inspection avoidance, visa violations, and an increasing incidence of human trafficking, including internal.

As of 2020, the population of Mongolia reached 3.35 million, and the growth was at 1.6 percent, while almost half (47 percent) of the Mongolian population is currently living in Ulaanbaatar, and the share of the urban population has increased to 67 percent of the total population. Of the total population, 20.3 percent are settled in provincial centers, 1.6 percent in villages, 10.5 percent in village centers, and 21.7 percent in rural areas. 76.3 percent of the capital city’s movements consist of migrants, which is an increase of 1.3 points compared to

³ Article 13.1 of the Criminal Code criminalizes sex trafficking and labor trafficking with penalties of 2-8 years’ imprisonment for offenses involving adult victims and 5-12 years’ imprisonment for those involving child victims. Article 12.3 of the Criminal Code criminalized sexual exploitation offenses, including some forms of sex trafficking, penalties ranged from 2-8 years’ imprisonment for trafficking offenses involving individuals older than the age of 14, and 12 - 20 years’ imprisonment for those involving children younger than the age of 14.

2010. However, when looking at the regional migration situation, it shows that the central region (where the capital city Ulaanbaatar is situated) is most affected by internal migration.

Internal migration has grown exponentially, especially rural-to-urban (heading mostly towards the capital Ulaanbaatar) and, more recently, to mining areas. In Mongolia, internal migration and displacement are increasingly shaped by a diverse combination of environmental factors often linked to climate change. These factors can have a slow onset, like the deterioration of pastoral and grazing land, or rapid onsets, in the case of winter dzuds. Short term circular migration has been part of the Mongolian traditional nomadic lifestyle for many centuries, and herding, which provides 10% of Mongolian GDP and 25% of the employment, requires constant seasonal movement. Yet, climate change is shifting these traditional patterns and changing movement and displacement in unprecedented ways.

Due to climate change, the cost of desertification is around 2 billion MNT on an annual basis⁴. Aside from climate change, another main cause of desertification is linked to overgrazing. With around 75 million grazing animals, Mongolia has exceeded the carrying capacity of its land by almost three times⁵. Seventy per cent of all pasturelands in Mongolia is reported to be affected by overgrazing. In the last two decades, Mongolia has had an increased occurrence of sudden natural disasters, such as droughts, floods and dzuds. In 2020, Mongolia had a combination of dzud and COVID-19 pandemic when some of the communities have been affected by harsh weather and, at the same time, was under restrictions and lockdown in order to prevent from the spread of COVID-19 infection. All these environmental phenomena have a negative impact on the development of Mongolia, causing huge development gaps and increasing discrepancies between rural and urban Mongolia. Rural areas have a low resilience to slow on-set and sudden climate disasters, especially due to the lack of infrastructure and services. Most of the people in the countryside rely on herding as the main source of their income, and disruption of soil, grazing land and other natural resources have a disproportional impact on them. The overall effect of climate change-induced disasters on the lives of herders is increasing and causing climate-induced displacement. But another way to look at it is not just the impact, but the preferred coping strategy for the people in the countryside in response to disaster is migration.

In order to minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel people to leave their country of origin (GCM Objective 2), the Government of Mongolia has started conducting migration research and surveys in local context, in close cooperation and coordination with IOM, using international practice and expertise such as Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Mobility tracking and Flow monitoring. Mongolia was the first country in which DTM was effectively used in COVID-19 context. The usefulness of the DTM Flow Monitoring was confirmed when Mongolia has identified the first COVID-19 positive case at large that could potentially have led to community transmission. Municipality of Ulaanbaatar requested to extend the DTM monitoring two times and took over the methodology fully institutionalizing DTM Flow monitoring as a municipal instrument for emergency purposes.

Moreover, in 2021-2022, the Municipality of Ulaanbaatar has fully institutionalized the DTM Mobility tracking in Mongolian context to collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies (GCM Objective 1), including urban planning and development. In parallel, local governments in Umnugovi and Dundgovi provinces have also adopted the DTM Mobility Tracking methodology to conduct surveys on displacement, especially due to climate change-induced disasters, and population assessments, in direct consultation with the National Statistics Office. Accurate and disaggregated data for evidence-based policies (GCM Objective 1) is crucial for rural and regional development planning, as well as to ensure provision of basic services for migrants. There are around 8,000 households moving in *otor*⁶ seasonally, looking for greener pastures. When internal migrants (herders) are on *otor*, they're often left out of basic services and information (GCM Objective 3 and 15), facing discrimination from local herders for using the pastureland temporarily for free of charge and thus deteriorating the pastureland condition. There is no concrete coordination mechanism in the country to manage these *otor* movements nor accurate and timely data, and it has been determined by IOM and FAO to be an important issue to initiate dialogue and interventions in 2022 through targeted programmes and projects. It is worth to note that, in order to improve the access to information (GCM Objective 3) of *otor* migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic when accurate information is vital to pandemic prevention

⁴ FAO, 2020

⁵ FAO, 2020

⁶ Term used to explain the movement of herders during harsh winter, looking for better pastureland to stay until the situation improves in their homeland.

during migration, IOM has organized a radio program to inform otors herders on the move on COVID-19 and protective measures tailored to them in cooperation with the Mongolian National Public Radio.

The Government of Mongolia is receiving support from the IOM Mongolia through the project on Understanding and Managing Internal Migration in Mongolia (2019-2023), which is aligned with Mongolia's sustainable development vision that addresses the implementation of the SDGs and puts forth the objective of sustainable development to promote inclusive growth, economic opportunity and social protection for vulnerable population groups. After two years of implementation and cooperation at all levels of the Government, the internal migration has been put on the government priority agenda. Now the Government, particularly the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and Ministry of Economic Development, is focusing on better understanding the implications of migration and move towards solutions and vision on how migration can become part of development planning and SDG achievement. The authorities at national and local level have acknowledged that without exact figures on migration, without factoring migration into population dynamics, the program and budgetary planning for public services can become erroneous making the delivering of public services even more difficult. Hence the resulting in general openness and increased interest in migration data for policy development and planning. Moreover, the Municipality of Ulaanbaatar is establishing a unit dedicated to migration within the current structure of the Municipality of Ulaanbaatar. The Municipality will take the lead in staffing the unit and ensuring its sustainability while IOM will support in capacity building and migration expertise.

To effectively implement regional development policy and interventions and handle the affliction of population movement, well-founded statistics, standard outputs on internal migration and needs of future migrants are essential for policy formulation. Therefore, the Ministry of Economic Development is developing mathematic model of migration, identifying key determinants of migration, migration indicator forecasts, simulation of migration process for different scenario and suggest mechanisms and policy solutions to adequately manage and support migration.

There are also other policies and programs specific to urbanization and internal migration. For example, under its "40,000 Houses" program, the Government envisaged the construction of 15,000 suburban houses, 15,000 homes in ger ("informal urban") areas, and 10,000 apartment units. This is in line with the government's attempt to narrow the gap between the urban and rural areas. This will be done through the provision of infrastructure to *aimag*⁷ centers and the promotion of economic development. Municipality of Ulaanbaatar city has been making efforts to ease rapid urbanization through signing a Memoranda of Understanding with authorities in Tuv, Selenge, Bulgan, Darkhan-Uul aimags and Erdenet city in 2018 to implement a "Golden Triangle of Development," which aims to "increase the accessibility of human resources and workforce and improve market opportunities and resources in local areas using economic and administrative means" in an effort to reverse rural to urban migration and reduce intensive urbanization of Ulaanbaatar.

Mongolia faces challenges in having adequate, up-to-date factual data on both international and internal migration and needs support in enhancing its statistical system as well as adaptation of additional data production, analysis, and usage methods. The national population census is conducted every ten years throughout the country. However, the frequency of the census is considered to be too slow compared to the current and continuously changing migration dynamics in Mongolia. Within this limitation, we face an improvement of the socio-economic well-being of internal migrants in Mongolia through evidence-based, migration-inclusive policies and concrete interventions on the ground aimed at enhanced access to information and services. In 2021, the National Statistics Office, in cooperation with IOM, has initiated various interventions and activities related to migration data and statistics, particularly a systematic review of the Mongolian migration statistical system, including the census data, population and household surveys, as well as existing administrative data and administrative procedures and others to identify spaces for possible methodological enhancements and additional potential migration research questions that can strengthen the existing survey/census's scope, based on the migration international standards. This will allow better collection and utilization of accurate and disaggregated data for evidence-based migration and development policies (GCM Objective 1).

⁷ First level administrative subdivision

According to the National Statistics Office⁸ and IOM survey, in 2020, Mongolia has seen an increasing trend of reverse (urban-to-rural) migration, which, as it happened elsewhere in the world, seemed to be a strategy to cope with the economic hardship inflicted by COVID-19 and related restrictions. Due to the fact that Ulaanbaatar is the capital city (13 times bigger than the second most populous), for Mongolia urban-to-rural migration means Ulaanbaatar-to-anywhere else in the country. In the last 5 years a total of 43,478 people migrated from Ulaanbaatar to rural areas (officially registered). Most of those who moved are young and economically active (20-39 years old), educated, and married with children. Most of the Mongolians moving out of Ulaanbaatar preferred aimag centers but were also moving to *soums*⁹ and *baghs*¹⁰. Mongolians from Ulaanbaatar were moving back to the rural areas, including aimag centers, soums and bags, because they were nostalgic about their friends, family, home aimag and way of life, and were seeing better employment or business prospects. Major push factors were the air pollution, economic hardship, and lack of access to social services. Preliminary survey by IOM shows that 65% of the migrants who moved back to rural areas were fully satisfied with their decision and the employment and income have increased after migration. However, many migrants participating in IOM survey have expressed that there was lack of information before and after migrating, which resulted in delays in finding accommodation, jobs, education for children and accessing public services at the destination aimags.

The Ministry of Construction and Urban Development (MCUD), the Ministry of Economic Development (MED) and the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Light Industry (MoFALI) have developed their own reverse migration initiatives. For example, MoFALI has developed the initiative “New Life at New Rural”, which aims to mitigate social constraints brought by rural to urban migration and promotes re-designing and restoring rural livelihoods in Mongolia, in line with policies such as the “State Policy on Herders” and the Government Resolution on Action in Decreasing Air Pollution. The aim is to reduce urbanization in Ulaanbaatar by creating favorable living conditions in rural areas, restocking herders who lost livestock due to dzud, a condition characterized by deterioration of the weather conditions in winter and spring leading to a shortage of pasture and water for livestock suffering massive die-off, investing in new herding businesses. The Ministry of Economic Development is developing a VR-based welcoming services for reverse migrants, to better understand rural Mongolia, without bureaucracy, in an accessible and transparent way. The platform will include information on all 330 soums of Mongolia, providing necessary information to support decision-making process of potential migrants whilst being integrated with other government digital service platforms. The welcoming services are being piloted in Khutag-Undur and Bulgan aimags. This initiative will provide accurate and timely information to migrants before all stages of migration (GCM Objective 1), especially at the stage of pre-departure.

Having proof of legal identity and adequate documentation (GCM Objective 4) is crucial for migrants travelling both internationally and internally to effectively exercise their human rights and access basic services in their destination. Therefore, in 2021, the General Authority for State Registration, with support from IOM, has issued national ID cards to over 1000 marginalized internal migrants all over Mongolia for free of charge. Moreover, in line with the Government efforts to digitalize the public services to become more efficient and resilient, the General Authority for State Registration is also digitalizing the migration registration that will not only be efficient for public servants and migrants but will also strengthen certainty and predictability in migration procedures (GCM Objective 12).

According to the 2020 Housing Census, 122.3 thousand people are living abroad for 6 months or more, of which 58.8 percent live and work in the Asia-Pacific region and 23.9 percent in Europe. Of all the Mongolians living abroad, 34.2 percent went for study, 32.0 percent for work (of which 20.6 percent are self-employed, 10.4 percent are employed, 1.0 percent are on business trips), 12.6 percent are staying for family reasons, 11.7 percent are residing, and the remaining 9.5 percent are residing for other reasons. According to the data from Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia, as of 2021, around 167,300 Mongolians reside abroad in 87 countries. In regard to the reason for migration, 31,005 migrated on official duty, 80,133 migrated for private affairs, 7,126 for travel, 148,690 for employment purposes, 104 for transit, 7,967 for study, 4,687 to reside permanently and 2,515 for other purposes /This is a repeated data given that a person can travel more than once for more than one reason in a year/. Usually, Mongolians migrating to foreign countries are young people educated and skilled in search of higher paid jobs and a better quality of life for themselves and their families. These migrants are

⁸ 2020 Census and yearly administrative statistics collected based on residency registration

⁹ Second level administrative subdivision

¹⁰ Third level administrative subdivision

mainly males traveling to destinations in Asia, like the Republic of Korea, China, Japan, and some countries in Europe, with the Czech Republic and Sweden are the main destinations, as well as the United States. It's evident that there is a discrepancy in the actual number of Mongolian diaspora and requires further studies to determine the real number and develop diaspora development and engagement programs to understand the Mongolian diaspora more to create conditions for them to fully contribute to sustainable development in Mongolia (GCM Objective 19).

Concerning migration towards Mongolia, according to the Mongolian Immigration Agency, as of January 2022, there were 16,792 migrants from 120 countries residing in Mongolia. Migrant workers come mainly from China, the Republic of Korea, Russia, Australia, Canada, and Central Asian countries. Major economic projects with high contribution to Mongolian GDP are directly dependent on foreign labor force: mining projects, roads, factories, etc.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has been working with IOM Mongolia since 2011, facilitating safe and dignified return and readmission, as well as sustainable reintegration of Mongolian migrants. In this timeframe, over 8,000 Mongolians have been repatriated safely from over 22 countries. IOM has assisted over 3,000 individuals, many of whom were victims of trafficking, to help them reintegrate into society with a targeted reintegration plan with an estimated budget of over 3, 2 million USD in assistance.

To prevent the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of Mongolia has suspended all scheduled inbound and outbound flights from/to Mongolia and closed land borders with the Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China since March 2020. Since the suspension of all commercial flights and border closures and in conformity with its limited domestic capacity of quarantine facilities and medical institutions, the Government of Mongolia has only allowed special repatriation flights, which were operated under strict on board regulations with crews consisting of doctors and epidemiologists and has repatriated over 30,000 Mongolian nationals. The number of chartered flights and the number of returnees were strictly regulated in direct correlation with the capacity of quarantine facilities, where all the arrivals are required to undertake a 21-day mandatory quarantine.

Mongolians stranded abroad due to COVID-19 pandemic were facing a number of major challenges. Financial constraints mostly due to job loss connected to COVID-19 and challenges finding a job given that a significant number of migrants were in an irregular situation. Mental health problems and risks of exposure to violence, especially for vulnerable women and children because of the extremely stressful situations they are in. Therefore, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in cooperation with IOM in Mongolia and IOM missions in sending countries, provided immediate return assistance (GCM Objective 21) to and saved lives of over 1000 most vulnerable Mongolian migrants, children and their families stranded abroad due to COVID-19. Upon return, many of the vulnerable returnees have struggled to reintegrate into society, particularly finding employment. Hence, to provide enhanced reintegration services to returnees (GCM Objective 21), IOM has developed free-of-charge online training courses for skill development and opening small businesses, which has been largely supported by the Municipality of Ulaanbaatar and been placed on the public training platform of MUB to allow wider access for all returnees and citizens in Ulaanbaatar, in line with the Municipality's policy priorities to improve employment. This initiative has responded to the most important priority of the Government as identified in the UN Mongolia Socio-Economic Response Plan (SERP) and the Government COVID-19 Action Plan, which aims to ensure the safe return (GCM Objective 21) of the most vulnerable Mongolian migrants, especially children and their families stranded abroad due to COVID-19. The most important innovative approach utilized was mobilization and support from IOM missions in various countries where Mongolians were stranded, as well as full coordination from the Embassies and diplomatic missions of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia abroad and the Governments of sending countries. All these stakeholders ensured full cooperation and support during these challenging times in all countries, which has allowed this initiative to save over 1000 most vulnerable people's lives.

A significant number of Mongolians were traveling abroad for seasonal, temporary, or permanent employment, sending back remittances that supported the family members who stayed behind. According to the World Bank, Mongolia received \$574.4 million in remittances in 2019 (4.1% when compared to GDP). A recent report by ADB notes that a significant share of remittances occurs through informal channels and some unofficial estimates indicate that total remittance inflows could be as high as 10% of the GDP. World Bank projects that in 2020, remittances might decline globally as much as by 20%. Although data on the Mongolian international migrant contingent is lacking, global research suggests that women tend to send a higher proportion of their income,

even though they generally earn less than men. They also usually send money more regularly and for longer periods of time. These remittances cover the basic living expenses, health, welfare, and education costs of those staying behind and play a significant role as a safety valve for domestic unemployment. Therefore, there is a need to promote faster, safer and cheaper transfer of remittances and foster financial inclusion of migrants (GCM Objective 20). IOM Mongolia in cooperation with the Council of Mongolians Abroad, the biggest Mongolian diaspora association, conducted diaspora mapping and assessment of Mongolian individuals residing abroad and diaspora organizations operating abroad to collect data on the sizes and main characteristics of communities of Mongolians abroad and their overall development needs. Due to COVID-19 pandemic and its impact in local and international communities, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and IOM Mongolia have noted an increased activism and willingness in diaspora to provide support to vulnerable Mongolians abroad as well as to contribute to social and development projects back in Mongolia. Through this activity, IOM identified 81 initiative groups with regular activities held for Mongolians abroad to provide advice and support to channel their existing capabilities and collect key information for a future Mongolian Diaspora Program. The mapping exercise conducted showcases that the Mongolian diaspora of over 200,000 people living all around the world, which equals the size of around four to five provinces of Mongolia, are becoming increasingly influential actors, providing remarkable amount of remittance which equals up to five percent of the GDP and other in-kind assistances to families, friends and citizens back home, mobilizing diaspora bonds and associations to raise funds and support to send back home in response to crises and disasters, and bridging knowledge, expertise, resources and markets for the development of their countries of origin. The rapid diaspora mapping conducted by IOM has attracted great interest from the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection and resulted in a study on returnees from abroad during the COVID-19, particularly focusing on their employment situation.

Unable to travel internationally due to COVID-19 restrictions and without the possibility of sending back remittances for their families, returning diaspora is adding to the unemployment figures and finding it increasingly hard to prevent their households from slipping into poverty. During the COVID-19 lockdown, around 30,000 returnees arrived in Mongolia, of which 76% experienced a significant decrease in their household income after coming back to Mongolia. 62% of the returnees were female and aged between 26-38. Over 64% of the returnees had migrated for economic reasons, largely to explore short and long-term employment opportunities. With 28.4% of the total population in Mongolia already in poverty (2018) and other 14.9% of the total population vulnerable to slipping into poverty, especially when they are hit by negative shocks such as increasing prices, unemployment, illness etc., the interruption of outgoing migration from Mongolia could have a devastating socioeconomic effect. Without proper support upon arrival, the most vulnerable returning migrants may have limited success in integrating back into the community. The study initiated by the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection will be finalized in the first quarter of 2022 and its recommendations will be discussed at national level which would potentially signal more support and initiatives from the Government to Mongolian diaspora and returnees to create conditions for migrants and diasporas to fully contribute to sustainable development in Mongolia (GCM Objective 19).

The Consular Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has established cooperation with MIAT Mongolian Airlines, a national flag carrier, ticketing agencies, and the Tourism Association to aim towards promoting informed and responsible international travel for Mongolian citizens. The Ministry has also started cooperating with the World Wanderers Group, a Facebook group that has over 600,000 followers, to organize a social campaign titled "Let's travel responsibly" to raise awareness and influence self-responsibility and clarity in Mongolian citizens/travelers abroad.

Many Mongolians travel to South Korea for work, study, and travel. For many years, Mongolian citizens have faced difficulties when applying for a Korean visa due to its cumbersome procedures, lengthy process, and high application fee. As a result of continuous negotiations between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Korean side on alleviating such difficulties, the South Korean Embassy took measures to increase the number of consular staff and abolish the 5 million MNT deposit required for visa applications. As a result of these negotiations, families of Mongolian citizens working contractually in South Korea have the opportunity to obtain a visa without any additional monetary collateral or requirements. Additionally, the Republic of Korea decided to outsource some of its visa handling operations to IOM starting in January 2020 in Ulaanbaatar, the Korea Visa Application Centre. Although the processing capacity of the new facility is high and was planned to satisfy the high demand that existed in the past, the border closure caused by COVID-19 significantly reduced the number of processed visas.

During the unprecedented pandemic of COVID-19, there was a tendency to discriminate people who were stranded abroad and wanted to return to Mongolia. Because there was no local transmission inside the country, the public perceived them as a virus and threat to the health of the local population and opposed the return of Mongolians abroad. Similar discrimination is also observed towards internal migrants, where urban residents blaming migrants coming from countryside for traffic congestion and different types of pollution, including air, water and soil in the capital city, Ulaanbaatar. The Government of Mongolia, in cooperation with IOM, State Emergency Commission, UNRCO, UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, UNDP, UNFAO, Swiss Cooperation and Development Agency in Mongolia and Mongolian Red Cross Society, has implemented the “Support and Thank” anti-stigma information campaign in the period of 8 December 2020 and 27 January 2021. The focus of the campaign was to reduce stigmatization and discrimination towards infected people as well as internal migrants and to encourage the public to thank frontline workers for their hard work and effort to keep the public safe. Under the campaign, different information materials were produced, and videos disseminated through social media and more than 30 TV channels. The campaign reached at least 1 million people in total.

Mongolia is considered a country of origin, transit and destination for human trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation. Main form of trafficking registered in Mongolia is sexual exploitation. Forced labour and sexual exploitation of women and children in the country are becoming more visible in urban areas and the border provinces. Some Mongolian victims are subjected to forced labour in countries such as Turkey, Kazakhstan, Israel, Norway, and Sweden and to sex trafficking in China, Hong Kong, Macao, South Korea, Malaysia, Turkey, and to sex trafficking in Belgium, Cambodia, China, Germany, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Malaysia, Philippines, South Korea, Sweden, Turkey, and the United States, as well as in Mongolia. However, no labour exploitation case has been prosecuted and the government didn't formally identify any male victims of trafficking.

Traffickers often use fraudulent social networking, online job opportunities or attractive advertisements for study abroad scholarships or lure the victims with promises of lucrative jobs. Many women who fall victim to fraudulent schemes are from rural, poor economic areas with low level of educational background.

Domestically, Mongolian girls are increasingly subjected to sex trafficking in Mongolian massage parlors, hotels, bars, and karaoke clubs. Emerging trends and patterns of human trafficking in Mongolia are:

- Girls and women are held in rooms and clients select woman of their choice for the purpose of sexual exploitation;
- Bringing girls and younger women to karaoke bars catering to foreigners and allow guests to select the girl they like in order to make a profit by entertaining the guests;
- Girls and younger women are forced into prostitution behind private premises such as massage parlors and saunas for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

Externally:

- Traffickers lure victims with fraudulent offers of marriage, high-paying employment and scholarship in China and Southeast Asian countries to force victims into sex trafficking;
- Recruiting victims under false pretenses of high paying jobs in some sectors such as herding, circus and art performers, and domestic servants to People's Republic of China, Republic of Turkey, South Korea and India. After being recruited, companies allow to retain only a small portion of their wages while subjecting them to harsh living conditions.

The Government took significant measures to eliminate human trafficking by strengthening the legal framework and implementing programmatic actions. However, some challenges are faced to fully implement the enacted laws and regulations, including the inadequate systematic understanding of the human trafficking issues among law enforcement officials and insufficient human capacity and resources to fight against and prevent human trafficking. As human trafficking is a hidden, underground criminal activity, obtaining real, reliable data on trafficking cases is difficult. To overcome these challenges, further studies on emerging trends of human trafficking causes, methods, and dynamics, as well as research on the vulnerability and coping capacity of victims, are needed to reflect into policies, interventions, and programs in Mongolia. Therefore, due to increasing use of digital technology by traffickers during the current COVID-19 pandemic, it is urgently needed to enhance the capacity of civil servants, and furthermore, to improve work performance.

The Government of Mongolia has collaborated with various international organizations and foreign governments to prevent and combat human trafficking. Continuous cooperation and coordination with donor agencies and international organizations resulted in best practices in strengthening the legal framework and

enacting new laws and procedures to fight trafficking in persons, provide shelter and repatriation assistance to victims of trafficking, and building capacity of police, border protection officers, and relevant law enforcement officials in identifying victims and prosecuting offenders. In 2021, a nationwide prevention campaign from sexual exploitation among young girls and women called Dream Umbrella has been organized by International Organization for Migration with the support from the Coordination Council for Crimes Prevention and the National Police Agency. The capacities of law enforcement officials on identification of and assistance to victims of trafficking have been built and increased by several international organizations with the support of the government through regular trainings.

COVID-19 has degraded people's livelihoods at individual and family levels, further exacerbating their vulnerability to human trafficking due to a deterioration of vulnerably factors already present in the pre-covid era. These factors include fewer income and job opportunities, increased psychological stress and use of social media which, as reported by the police, posed challenges related to new modalities of recruitment of victims via the internet. Therefore, unprecedented measures including quarantine, curfews and public restrictions allowed criminals to commit the crime through the abuse of modern communications technologies, including social network. The forms of prostitution and sexual exploitation are more likely to be committed on a large scale compared to other forms and under more hidden ways.

According to the National Police Agency, a total number of nine cases were identified in 2021, including 10 victims and 14 perpetrators. According to the State General Prosecutor's Office of Mongolia, a total of 26 cases of human trafficking were investigated in 2021, leading to the prosecution of 21 people. 7-8 cases of detainees were transferred to the Courts and a total of 17 persons were convicted. No victim was identified from abroad in 2021 due to limited flights and slow border re-opening. Mongolia maintained mutual legal assistance agreements with China, Thailand, and Malaysia.

In order to prevent, combat and eradicate trafficking in persons in the context of international and internal migration (GCM Objective 10), several baseline assessments and mappings were conducted to analyze the current situation, identifying the key trends, issues, setting benchmarks against which future progress of Government initiatives can be assessed or comparisons made. For instance, "A Baseline Assessment into the Causes, Dynamics, Vulnerability and Resilience Levels to Trafficking in Mongolia" has been conducted by IRIM with the support from IOM in 2021. The assessment identified seven main findings:

1. Labour trafficking is emerging as a new vulnerability trend, but often goes unreported and unprosecuted due to legal constraints and a lack of adequate structural interventions.
2. Both men and women are similarly exposed to human trafficking in Mongolia.
3. Limited financial capacity and lack of employment opportunities create conditions for exploitation and increase the vulnerability of individuals to human trafficking at different levels.
4. Unregistered migrants are more vulnerable to human trafficking.
5. Ulaanbaatar city, Umnugovi, Dornogovi and Dornod aimags register high levels of vulnerability to human trafficking, but counter-trafficking efforts appear more concentrated in Ulaanbaatar city.
6. Assistance to victims is restricted by conflicting legal provisions, limited coordination and funding.
7. There is evidence that COVID-19 is exacerbating vulnerability to and impacting human trafficking trends due to pandemic control and prevention measures, but no specialized research is available yet.

"A mapping of the National Referral Mechanisms for Victims of Human Trafficking" has been conducted by The Asia Foundation and the "Baseline Assessment for the Project on Combatting Trafficking in Children" has been conducted jointly by the Government of Mongolia and the Government of the United States, under the Child Protection Compact Partnership (2020-2024) in 2021.

To manage state borders in a coordinated manner and regulate efficiency and safety (GCM Objective 11) in monitoring of border crossings in accordance with established international agreements with neighboring countries, information and data regarding border violations, illegal actions, and the number of passengers and vehicles crossing the state border is provided by the General Authority for Border Protection through their 3-level coordination of the border protection management, the border representative, and the relevant border points for the detection and suppression of cross-border crime. Managing the borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner has become even more important during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus led by the Deputy Prime Minister's Office and specialized border agencies, such as General Authority for Border Protection, Mongolian Customs General Authority, Mongolia Immigration Agency, General Authority for Specialized Inspection, risk assessments at six major border-crossing points and capacity building trainings were organized

for over 200 frontline border officials at the Point of Entry (PoE) in response to COVID-19 outbreak to increase border capacity and preparedness as well as to estimate further capacity needs that would allow gradual resuming of operation of border-crossing points during COVID-19. As a result of the risk assessment, the Government took the decision to gradually re-start border operation starting from June 2021. The Government also adapted an Action Plan with interventions necessary for supporting the border opening. The risk assessments created space for the Government to do an assessment of already existent SOPs and regulations, and a total of 14 temporary and permanent regulations and SOPs were synergized into one single unified procedure for operating the borders in COVID-19 context, which was later approved by the Government of Mongolia and is now in effect.

4. Means of implementation

In order to collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies (GCM Objective 1), the Government of Mongolia, particularly the Municipality of Ulaanbaatar, in close cooperation and coordination with IOM, has been utilizing the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) Mobility tracking and Flow monitoring from 2020. Mongolia was the first country in which DTM was effectively used in COVID-19 context. As of January 2022, both of DTM Mobility Tracking and Flow Monitoring were institutionalized in Mongolian context and been approved by local administrations where the tools are implemented. The data collected using the DTM methodology is used in both emergency and development context.

Given that one of the most important priorities on the Government Agenda, as well as the agenda of the Municipality of Ulaanbaatar, is promoting regional development and reducing overpopulation in the capital city, migration data and statistics are becoming crucial. Due to the low frequency of the national census and continuously changing migration dynamics in Mongolia, there is a need to identify spaces for possible methodological enhancements and additional potential migration research questions that can strengthen the existing survey/census's scope, based on the migration international standards. Therefore, with great support and openness from the National Statistics Office, IOM has started conducting a systematic review of the Mongolian migration statistical system, including the census data, population and household surveys, as well as existing administrative data and administrative procedures, and is also preparing to conduct migration research on rural-urban and urban-rural migration.

Nationwide information campaigns were utilized to raise awareness and emphasize the importance of addressing and reducing vulnerabilities in both international and internal migration (GCM Objective 7). In 2021, two large-scale information campaigns, organized in close cooperation between the Coordination Council for Crimes Prevention, National Police Agency, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the General Authority for State Registration, the Municipality of Ulaanbaatar, the Communication and Information Technology Authority, Swiss Development and Cooperation Agency and IOM, have raised the awareness and increased the knowledge and information of over 2,000,000 people.

To facilitate the access to basic services for migrants (GCM Objective 15) and complement the efforts of the local public administration with service provision, a network of local NGOs has been created to support each other in increasing the quality and the impact of services provided to existent and potential internal migrants. The network and the individual local NGOs are working in close cooperation with local public administrations and in 2021, provided direct support services to over 10,000 migrants. Strengthening the Network of NGOs as actors who support connecting most vulnerable migrants to public services, decrease the pressure on the public sector and contribute towards overall strengthening of civil society in Mongolia, ensuring whole-of-society approach to support migrants, particularly in addressing and reducing vulnerabilities in migration, providing access to basic services for migrants (GCM Objective 7), and empowering migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion (GCM Objective 16).

During the risk assessments conducted at six major checkpoints, Deputy Prime Minister's Office, General Authority for Border Protection, Mongolian Customs General Authority, Mongolia Immigration Agency, General Authority for Specialized Inspection and IOM have identified that in order to manage state borders in an integrated, secure and coordinated manner, there is a need for an integrated border management and information system (BMIS). Not to mention, given that Mongolia is expecting to have more international PoEs in 2022 and due to the new tourist visa regulations and arrangements, increased tourists through small and remote bilateral border crossings, there is an urgent need for technical support and capacity building for border crossing points and officials.

5. Next steps

One of the most important policy work to be achieved to fulfil the objectives and commitments outlined in the Global Compact is to successfully mainstream both international and internal migration into the seven Targeted Development programs of the Mongolian long-term policy document – Vision 2050 - and ensure actual implementation and concrete policies. Until 2021, Mongolia has been successful in preparing evidence-generating documents for mainstreaming migration into national policies, now the focus will be directed to actual reflection into mid-term development policies and implementation.

It's also important to expand the implementation of migration research and population movement surveys (using DTM methodology and other international experience) to the rest of the rural provinces to collect and utilize accurate and disaggregated data as a basis for evidence-based policies (GCM Objective 1) at local level.

In order to minimize the adverse drivers and structural factors that compel rural people to leave their aimag of origin (GCM Objective 2), provide equal access to basic services for migrants (GCM Objective 15) and promote regional development, Cabinet Secretariat is planning to implement a whole-of-government approach in coordinating migration policies and a more pro-active work in developing policies to support reverse (urban-to-rural) migration. According to the national statistics, there's been an increasing trend of reverse (urban-to-rural) migration in Mongolia, which, as it happened elsewhere in the world, seemed to be a strategy to cope with the economic hardship inflicted by COVID-19 and related restrictions. Moreover, as internal migration has been determined to be a coping strategy for migrants during climate-change induced disasters, researching and supporting the otor population and movements in rural areas, studying the climate change impact on migration and agriculture and building the resilience of the people affected by the adverse effects of climate change in rural areas is an important intervention to implement in 2022.

Mongolian diaspora has become economically and socially significant in the country. During the COVID-19 pandemic, diaspora became much more visible for the government and the Mongolian public at large. In accordance with the Action Plan of the Government of Mongolia 2020-2024 (Clause 4.2.11), more efforts would be put to create a favorable environment for citizens working and living abroad to return to their home country to work as well as to contribute to the economic and social development of the country from overseas. Now, there is a need to increase the level of trust between Mongolian diaspora and the Mongolian government and public at large by supporting and enhancing the ongoing activities implemented by diaspora associations, generating data, building institutions, and developing necessary policy framework.

The Government took significant measures to eliminate human trafficking by strengthening the legal framework and implementing programmatic actions. However, current cooperation between stakeholders to combat trafficking needs be improved. The number of human trafficking cases is expected to increase year-by-year due to intensifying structural level vulnerability factors, including economic crises, unemployment and restrictions related to COVID-19. Therefore, it is crucial to focus on improving socio-economic conditions of rural areas and intensify preventative activities, beside improve crime detection capacity in high-risk areas where certain cases reported, especially in Ulaanbaatar, Umnugovi, Dornogovi and Dornod, which have been identified as high-risk places. In particular, it is also essential to strengthen the capacity and capability of human trafficking detection in economically active regions close to mining development and border areas, in line with Mongolia's decentralization development policy.