



COMBATING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN MONGOLIA

PROJECT PHASE 1

ACHIEVEMENT BOOK

2020



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OVERVIEW

Gender-based violence (GBV) is any violent act rooted in harmful expectations, stereotypes, and power imbalances surrounding the sex and gender identity of another person. GBV is one of the most prevalent forms of human rights violations, and it deprives people of their right to live fulfilling social, economic and political lives. It causes a myriad of physical and mental health issues that span generations, and in some extreme cases, can even result in the loss of life.

However, for the longest time, GBV was an issue that was not understood and explored in Mongolia. With the lack of comprehensive national data on GBV, the public was not only unaware of the true scale and prevalence of the GBV problem in the country, but would also often interpret the absence of data to mean that GBV barely occurred at all. Many also saw GBV, especially domestic violence (DV), as a private affair between couples in which the state had no place meddling. While this belief was not reflected in earlier laws concerning DV that acknowledged that GBV is a serious human rights violation as well as a public health concern, perpetrating this violence was not considered a crime. Very few resources were also allocated to prevent GBV and to protect survivors of violence. Only a few shelters run by NGOs with support from international organizations offered any kind of support specific to the needs of GBV survivors. This is critical because a high prevalence of GBV is considered

to be a major obstacle to sustainable development, with negative impacts on human and socioeconomic development at the scale of the individual, community, and nation.

With a clear understanding of the gaps that must be addressed to tackle GBV in Mongolia, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) brought together stakeholders across different sectors in the government and civil society to create a comprehensive plan to strengthen national capacity to prevent and respond to GBV in the country.

The result of these dialogues is the “Combating Gender-Based Violence in Mongolia” (CGBV) Project – a four-year initiative that aimed to generate and use data to bring to light the realities of GBV in Mongolia; to help duty-bearers and the public to deepen their understanding of GBV and improve their readiness to confront the issue; and to strengthen coordination mechanisms and policy frameworks to protect and support survivors of violence, while also holding perpetrators accountable toward the long-term goal of preventing violence from happening again.

The CGBV Project was jointly implemented from 2016 to 2020 by the Government of Mongolia and UNFPA. The Project was catalyzed with USD 4.3 million from the SDC and USD 853,000 from UNFPA. The

Government of Mongolia also allocated USD 452,000 for the initiative, with the bulk of this funding coming in in the latter years as decision-makers became more sensitized and convinced of the government's role in combating GBV.

IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

UNFPA has long been an ardent advocate for gender equality and combating GBV in Mongolia, and thus took on the role of coordinator and implementer for the entire endeavor. Throughout the Project, UNFPA provided important strategic guidance for the direction of the Project as well as technical and financial support to implementing partners as they implement components of the Project in their respective areas. On the other hand, gender is among the priority areas of the Swiss Cooperation Strategy in the country, both as a transversal theme to be mainstreamed throughout SDC's activities, and as a standalone target for initiatives funded by the Project. As such, SDC played a pivotal role in ensuring the Project's success through its funding, as well as its strategic input as part of the Steering Committee.

However, the goal of the CGBV Project is to strengthen national capacity to tackle GBV, and as such, ownership of the initiatives falls under the national government and other national actors. The following government agencies and civil society organization took the lead in implementing the Project:

- Ministry of Justice & Home Affairs
 - Coordination Council for Crime Prevention
- Ministry of Labour & Social Protection
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Science and Sports
- Ministry of Health
- National Committee on Gender Equality
- National Statistics Agency
- National Police Agency
- National Emergency Management Agency
- National Human Rights Commission
- National Center Against Violence

Additionally, the Project also worked with various non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and media organizations to complement the national activities being implemented by the primary partners. This enabled the capacity building of other organizations that will ultimately contribute to the strengthening of Mongolia's overall capacity:

NGOS

- Beautiful Hearts Against Sexual Violence
- Mongol Urkh Psychological Institute
- Center for Social Work Excellence
- Gender Equality Center
- Sain Tus

MEDIA

- Mongol Content
- Zasgiin Gazriin Medee

- Press Institute of Mongolia
- Mongolian Journalists Confederation

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

IMPACT: STRENGTHENING NATIONAL CAPACITY TO COMBAT GBV/DV IN MONGOLIA		
OUTCOME 1: Evidence on GBV/DV is generated and sustained for improved policy.	OUTCOME 2: Rights-holders & duty-bearers have a better understanding and higher readiness to address GBV.	OUTCOME 3: Multidisciplinary response to GBV/DV in pilot areas strengthened.
National GBV survey is conducted	Public awareness on GBV improved	Supportive policy environment to institutionalize survivor protection mechanisms
eGBV database is strengthened & integrated	Duty-bearers' support for legal frameworks against GBV increased	Multidisciplinary response to GBV is strengthened



ACHIEVEMENT IN NUMBERS

I. SURVIVOR PROTECTION MECHANISMS

- 11 new One Stop Service Centers & 6 supported existing OSSCs
- 1 Men's Center for Perpetrator Rehabilitation
- A total of 9,677 clients served at OSSCs
- A total of 1,716 cases handled by MDTs

II. FUNDING

- MNT 1 billion was allocated at the local level for OSSC establishment and operations
- MNT 1.1 billion was provided by the Project to match local funding

III. DATA GENERATION & ASSESSMENTS

- 1 National GBV Survey
- 3 Databases
 - eGBV database at the National Police Agency
 - GBV Service Provision Database under the Ministry of Labour & Social Protection
 - GBV Data Hub under UNFPA
- 2 GBV Costing Studies
 - The Cost of Service Provision
 - The Economic Cost of Intimate Partner Violence
- 2 Small-Scale Surveys
 - One Stop Service Center Client Satisfaction Survey
 - Public Awareness and Attitudes toward GBV
- 5 Assessments
 - Assessment of the gaps of the former NPA Database
 - Assessment of the integration feasibility of the eGBV database with other social service databases
 - Assessment of OSSC Operations
 - Assessment of the impacts of COVID-19 on the GBV situation and response
 - Assessment and Content Analysis of Media Coverage of GBV
- 2 CSO Monitoring Reports on LCDV Implementation



IV. CAPACITY BUILDING

- 1 Training Hall at the National Committee on Gender Equality
- 177 Trainings, Workshops & Forums reaching 13,604 participants
- 4 International Study Tours and 2 Local Study Tours for a total of 122 participants
- 5 Pre-Service curricula on GBV issues developed and integrated and into curriculum of key courses
 - Press Institute
 - Department of Social Work, National University of Mongolia
 - Department of Journalism, National University of Mongolia
 - Mongolian National University of Medical Science
 - Law Enforcement University
 - GBV Core Curriculum

V. GUIDELINES AND INSTITUTIONALIZATION EFFORTS

- 31 Standard Operating Procedures to operationalize the Law to Combat Domestic Violence
- 3 Standards for Service Delivery and 10 Handouts/Manuals:
 - OSSC Standards for Health, Social Services, Justice and Police Services
 - Training module on gender and policy planning for newly recruited civil servants
 - Guidelines for Media on Gender Sensitivity and GBV
 - Training Manual on Service Provision for Persons with Disabilities
 - Clinical Guidelines for Psychological Counseling of Survivors & Perpetrators
 - Training Manual on Psychosocial Counseling for SV Survivors and Family Members
 - Perpetrator Training Manual

- Manual for Social Workers
- End-line User Manual for eGBV database
- Guidelines for OSSC Staff on COVID-19
- Guidelines for COVID-19 frontliners on GBV

VI. ADVOCACY & PUBLIC AWARENESS

- Advocacy for revisions of key laws:
 - Law to Combat Domestic Violence (passed)
 - Misconduct Law (passed)
 - Criminal Prevention Law (passed)
 - Family Law (under review)
 - Social Welfare Law (under review)
 - Statistics Law (under review)
- 4 Major Campaigns + several small campaigns reaching 15.7 million person/times

An aerial photograph of a densely populated city, likely Bogotá, Colombia, with numerous high-rise apartment buildings and a hazy mountain range in the background under a cloudy sky. A large purple rectangular overlay is positioned in the center of the image, containing white text and a large number.

OUTCOME

1

Evidence on Gender-Based
Violence has been generated for
improved policymaking



OVERVIEW

Data plays a pivotal role in combating gender-based violence (GBV). GBV, especially domestic violence (DV), is often seen as a taboo topic because many view GBV as a strictly private affair between couples, and is surrounded by enduring stigma and misconceptions that make it difficult to accurately estimate the breadth and depth of the issue without empirical proof. As such, many people would interpret the lack of data to simply mean that GBV does not happen, or at least does not happen often and severely enough to be a cause for governmental concern. This is why data is a crucial tool in advocacy initiatives; it is useful in persuading stakeholders, especially the government, that GBV is in fact a problem in Mongolian society that deserves attention and resources. Beyond advocacy, data also guides action. It allows for the design of more targeted and relevant interventions, while also serving as a feedback mechanism to improve implementation.

This is why evidence generation was a priority of the CGBV Project and the focus of Outcome 1. Through the Project's efforts, the pressing issue of GBV entered public discourse in the country as data on the prevalence of GBV in Mongolia was generated and disseminated through the landmark National GBV Survey. This not only increased the public's awareness about the issue, but it also served as an important advocacy

tool that instilled a sense of urgency among duty-bearers to respond to GBV. On the other hand, systems to regularly collect administrative data across the country, such as the eGBV database under the National Police Agency, were also established to improve GBV response for survivors, and to be a source of real-time data that can help duty-bearers more immediately assess the impacts of various interventions.

With the National GBV Survey, administrative databases, as well as other research activities that were implemented under the Project, interventions were designed and implemented especially in high-prevalence areas and for high-risk groups. The results from the National GBV Survey as well as other succeeding small-scale surveys guided the development of relevant and data-driven messages that were used in communications campaigns geared toward the public. The data generated under the Project also informed national priorities as well as other donor-funded projects on GBV prevention and response, and has been cited widely in succeeding research and reports on GBV in Mongolia. The availability of the survey, further enriched by other data sources, enabled evidence-based decision-making at the national and provincial levels.



HIGHLIGHTS

1 NATIONAL GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE SURVEY

“Breaking the Silence for Equality: 2017 National Study on Gender-Based Violence in Mongolia” that was published in 2018 is the landmark survey that revealed the prevalence of GBV, including intimate partner and non-partner violence, in Mongolia. The survey was a technical collaboration between the National Statistics Office and UNFPA Mongolia and Asia-Pacific Regional Office, and it used international qualitative and quantitative research methodologies adapted to the Mongolian context. The survey results included prevalence rates, as well as causes (harmful attitudes and beliefs that underlie GBV), consequences in relation to health outcomes and wellbeing of children, and coping mechanisms. The results of the National GBV Survey have been widely distributed in all 21 provinces and the capital city of Ulaanbaatar through technical workshops, as well as to the general public through multimedia content and readily available raw data. The Survey has served as the basis for important advocacy work, public information initiatives, as well as informed many government policies and even interventions by other international and local organizations in the gender space.

In 2019, the National GBV Survey was selected as the winner of the Gender Equality Category of the international “Making a Difference Competition” by the ESOMAR Foundation, the social development-focused charity arm of ESOMAR, the largest global professional organization for research and insights.

2 eGBV DATABASE SYSTEM

The eGBV integrated database system was established in 2017 under the National Police Agency to collect data on DV cases from police stations in all 21 provinces and 9 districts of Ulaanbaatar. The eGBV database has the dual purpose: a) to collect administrative statistics for policy planning and to serve as evidence in judicial processes should survivors choose to pursue legal action; b) to improve and individualize GBV front-liner response by collecting survivor history data that lets first responders approach situations with better context for more effective decision-making.

3 GBV SERVICE DELIVERY DATABASE

The GBV Service Delivery Database was developed and is being piloted under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection in 2020. The Database allows for the harmonized collection of client data in all OSSCs and shelters nationwide. This in turn will allow for real-time presentation of aggregated results for swift and improved policy planning. The Database logs pertinent information, including the number of times a specific client has sought help, the services they received and the cost of each, as well as documented evidence that may be used for legal proceedings. This also enables the identification of gaps in service provision, as well as the assessment of both the quality and completeness of the services provided to survivors. With the results and lessons gleaned from the pilot testing of this database, it will be further improved over time to be more encompassing and responsive.

4 GENDER HUB

With all the data-informed resources, good practices, and materials created on GBV and DV under the Project, GenderHub, a GBV database, was established under UNFPA in 2020. Gender Hub serves as a single repository of information and resources that can be accessed by the public, including those who wish to implement activities on GBV. Currently, Gender Hub Hub already contains resources developed under the Project, and will be expanded and turned over from UNFPA to the Mongolian Government in the future.

5 THE COST OF GBV IN MONGOLIA

In order to fully understand the costs of GBV to the national government as well as to the economy and individuals, two GBV Costing Studies were conducted and published in 2018 and in 2020. The first study looked into the cost of service provision to GBV survivors by first estimating the current level of government funding dedicated to these services and then by estimating the optimal level of budget allocation to address GBV. The second study estimated the economic costs of GBV on the household and macroeconomic levels, the findings of which are crucial in advocating for further investment in GBV response and prevention not only as a way to protect the rights of all, but also to lessen these economic costs to the country over time.



INDICATOR	RESULTS
OUTCOME 1: Evidence on GBV/DV is generated and sustained for improved policymaking	
1.1. GBV data collection is in place and institutionalized <i>BL:</i> No prevalence data (2016) <i>T:</i> Nationwide survey data is available (2018)	FULLY ACHIEVED National GBV Survey (2017), eGBV database (2018) and GBV Service Delivery database (2020)
1.2. Number of key policy documents using the evidence generated by the nationwide survey and/or database <i>BL:</i> 3 (2016) <i>T:</i> 6 (2020)	FULLY ACHIEVED Revised LCDV and 31 SOPs
1.3. Amendment of the Law on Statistics <i>BL:</i> Law does not include GBV survey (2016) <i>T:</i> Law mandates GBV survey (2020)	PARTIALLY ACHIEVED Amendment drafted & considered in Parliament; Data collection included in Crime Prevention Law and Family Law
OUTPUT 1.1.: National survey on GBV/DV prevalence, root causes, and contributing factors is conducted and disseminated.	
1.1.1. National GBV Survey report is published <i>BL:</i> No Survey (2016) <i>T:</i> Survey Results are published and disseminated (2018)	FULLY ACHIEVED National GBV Survey was published in 2018, and the results were disseminated in technical workshops and through multimedia content for the public
OUTPUT 1.2.: Administrative database on GBV/DV is strengthened and integrated among relevant agencies.	
1.2.1. Administrative database on GBV/DV is strengthened and integrated among relevant agencies. <i>BL:</i> Database for registered cases (2016) <i>T:</i> Database is connected to police of 21 provinces and 9 districts, and integrated with law enforcement and social sectors (2018)	FULLY ACHIEVED The eGBV database has been established under the National Police Agency, while the GBV Service Delivery Database is being piloted under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection

THE JOURNEY

OUTCOME 1

The survey covered
21 provinces and 9
districts

7860
involving households

With a travelled
total distance of
300000 km



7319
women
interviewed

Training for supervisors
and interviewers
continued for 21 days.



drivers

120 The training
involved
participants



95 Employed for
the survey

COLLECTING DATA ON VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN MONGOLIA

In early 2017, around one-hundred women gathered in a hotel conference room in central Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia. They had responded to a call to participate in a 'Women's Health and Life Experiences' survey; to work as interviewers across Mongolia gathering data for the National Statistics Office (NSO).

Although the advertisement provided little information about the role and nature of the work, the NSO was looking for women who had the tenacity and empathy to interview women and girls about different forms of violence they may have experienced throughout their lives.

"I just thought it was another survey. The government often advertised for interviewers," explains Lkhagvajav, one of the women who responded to the advertisement and, like most Mongolians, uses only her first name. "It was only when I started the training that I realized this was something different, and something really important."

Lkhagvajav, along with the other women, would now be trained by national and international experts to embark on Mongolia's first ever nationwide survey recording violence against women. It would take the women on a journey covering a combined total of 350 thousand kilometers across the vast and often challenging landscape of Mongolia.

It was also a journey that was to have a profound effect on the women taking part and would mark a 20-year achievement for those who had defiantly lobbied the government to address the problem of violence against women in Mongolia.

In Ulaanbaatar, the trainee survey enumerators took part in 21 days of intensive training. The three-week course included information about gender and gender-based violence as well as important ethical and privacy considerations. The women were given information about sources of support and services available to both them and the women they would interview - an important consideration as many of the women would be recounting traumatic experiences, many for the first time.

They learnt how to interview women sensitively and effectively. Their interview skills would be crucial to getting women to disclose their most intimate stories. The success of the survey would rely on collecting the most accurate data possible.

Fieldwork began in the suburbs around Ulaanbaatar with the women working in small teams. Once familiarized with the work, and sensitized to the personal and emotional responses that often went with it, the freshly-trained enumerators were deployed among the 331 districts of Mongolia and tasked with tracking down and interviewing the women assigned randomly to their teams by the National Statistics Office. In all, 7319 women were interviewed by the teams of enumerators.

Fieldwork for the quantitative component was completed during May-June 2017 using tablets to collect the data. This allowed for the data to be accurately recorded and then uploaded daily to the National Statistics Office in Ulaanbaatar.

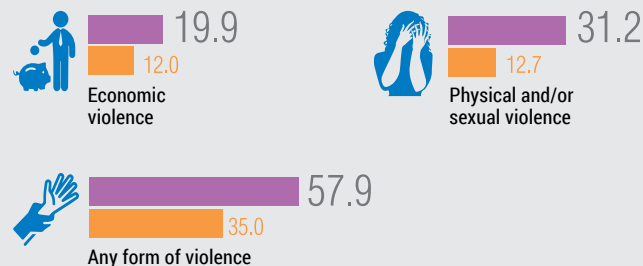
With a country as vast as Mongolia, the National Statistics Office faced many challenges. The survey took place in the summer months, but the unpredictable weather patterns still took a toll. Teams were pitted against the beautiful but harsh Mongolian landscape. Snow, sandstorms and boggy terrain provided many logistical challenges.

The challenges of the weather and the terrain spurred the enumerators on, often forcing them to take grueling detours and deviations to reach the women. "Our car got stuck one evening, so I asked someone to take me on a motorcycle," explains one of the survey enumerators. "When I got to my destination, there was no road. I had to climb up a hill. By the time I got to the address, it was quite late at night and everyone was asleep. I had to wake the woman up to interview her."

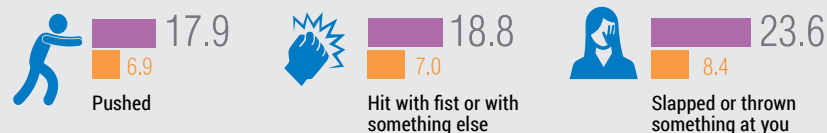
The survey sought information from women about many forms of violence; physical, emotional, sexual and economic. The National Statistics Office had never organized this very sensitive kind of survey before; a survey collecting intimate, personal data related to gender-based violence. Such a project required careful planning. International experts with experience running similar surveys were brought in to offer advice.

GENERAL INFORMATION

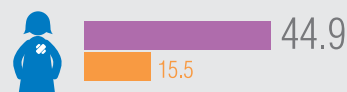
Percentage of ever-partnered women who have experienced partner violence, by violence type



Acts of physical violence



Percentage of women who have experienced physical violence and were injured as a result



Current (last 12 months) Lifetime

A partnership was formed with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) kNOwVAWdata initiative providing technical support. The kNOwVAWdata project, which is funded by Australian Aid, supports and strengthens the capacity of countries in Asia and the Pacific to measure violence against women.

In Mongolia, close family ties mean that many women live in close proximity to extended families. But these close family bonds can also place a heavy toll on women who can be subjected to violence from their extended family, parents-in-law and, for the older women, their children and their children's spouses.

Alcohol abuse can also be a contributing factor: cheaply available alcohol fuels the problem. Mongolia has a disproportionately high number of people dependent on alcohol, a legacy of the unemployment and poverty faced by many people after the closure of industries and the subsequent loss of jobs in the previous decades. Mongolia, once a socialist state with a highly centralized government, suffered from the same problems as other post-socialist states; the closure of unsustainable industries, the loss of state support, the end of collective agriculture and, with it, mass urbanization as people migrated to the cities in search of work.

REACHING MONGOLIA'S DIVERSE COMMUNITIES

Nailakh, an outlying district of Ulaanbaatar harbors many of these problems. A poor city with 37,000 inhabitants, it is also home to some of the 600,000 former herders who have migrated to the city over the past thirty years.


Socialist-era apartment blocks compete for space with traditional Mongolian yurts or 'gers' that serve as shelter from the brutal climate where temperatures can range from -50C in the winter to temperatures touching 50C in the summer.

'Ninja miners' tap into deserted and dangerous veins of old, abandoned coal mines to extract pure coal that burns in the harsh winter months and coats the city in a thick, black smog.

Nailakh has become home to many ethnic Kazakh people who abandoned their largely nomadic lives in the far western region of Mongolia.

The Kazakhs are the largest ethnic minority in Mongolia. The diverse population posed additional challenges for the National Statistics Office: How to ensure that all groups are represented in the survey and that no women slip through the cracks?

The majority of Mongolia's ethnic Kazakh community still live mainly in the far west of the country, where the edge of Mongolia nudges both China and Russia, with Kazakhstan lying a few more kilometers to the west.

A photograph of an elderly Kazakh woman with a weathered face, wearing a white headscarf with a red floral pattern and a grey sweater over a red garment. She is holding a young child in her arms. The child is wearing a pink and white striped sweater and red gloves. The background is a rustic interior with a yellow cloth hanging on the left and various items on a table in the foreground.

In the far west of Mongolia, nomadic Kazakh herders still tend their livestock and trade goods with their powerful neighbors along historic trade routes. For those who can thrive despite the harsh climate, it's a lifestyle that can be financially rewarding. Kazakhs in these districts tend to be wealthier than their more urban compatriots, but they are also isolated. Inter-marriage is rare, families are large and many speak only the Kazakh language.

The Kazakh community is predominantly Muslim. Religious practices tend to be more liberal in the big cities, but on the far western plains an understanding of the deeply devout religious practices was an important aspect of cultural understanding for the enumerators and survey designers. Ethnically Kazakh enumerators provided cultural and religious knowledge, as well as local language skills.

ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE: THE NATIONAL CENTRE AGAINST VIOLENCE

Enkhjargal Davaasuren has been fighting for women's right to live without violence for more than 20 years.

A lawyer and the founder of the National Centre Against Violence (NCAV), her organization advocates for the rights of women and children, lobbies the government to legislate for women's rights as well as providing direct services in every district of Mongolia for women and children fleeing violence and sexual abuse. The NCAV played an instrumental role in getting the Revised Law to Combat Domestic Violence passed in 2016.

Enkhjargal is cautiously optimistic that the government is committed to addressing the problem of violence against women. A revised law criminalizing domestic violence was passed in 2016 and the national Survey on Violence is underway. The public perception of violence is also changing, spurred by a sense of outrage after high profile cases of the murder and abuse of women and children that were extensively covered in the media.

Enkhjargal hopes that the data collected from the national Survey on Violence will provide vital information for services to be targeted to those

most in need. "We need to see the different needs of these groups; young, urban, rural, nomadic people," she explains. "What are their needs? We need this data because in Mongolia we have such a diverse population with many different living situations and many different cultures."

But it's work she and her team have continued to do without any financial support from the government. Their work is funded by international organizations, foreign embassies and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). "The dream of NCAV is that the government takes over and starts to provide these services that are so vitally needed by its citizens," says Enkhjargal.

A COORDINATED RESPONSE: THE NATIONAL STATISTICS OFFICE OF MONGOLIA

The National Statistics Office of Mongolia (NSO) was used to collecting data from across Mongolia, but the survey on Violence Against Women posed new challenges.

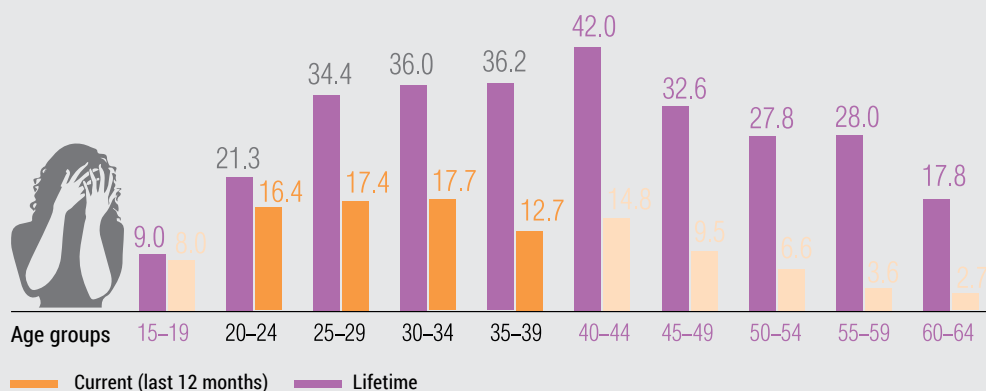
In the first nationwide study on violence against women, the NSO would use an internationally recognized methodology for collecting and analyzing the data: the World Health Organization methodology. The methodology involves a quantitative survey that consists of a structured

questionnaire and a qualitative component that includes focus group discussions and in-depth interviews with other stakeholders. The qualitative component gathered information from men as well as women, people with disabilities and people from the LGBT community and was aimed at getting in-depth information to improve policy formulation and to more effectively target the allocation of resources.

"We did not have the experience to do this survey alone," explains Ariunzaya Ayush, Chairperson of the NSO. "We asked for technical assistance from UNFPA and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) assisted us with funding."

NON-PARTNER PHYSICAL VIOLENCE

Percentage of women who have experienced physical and/or sexual violence, by age groups



1 in 7 (14%) women have experienced some form of sexual violence at least once from non-partners during the lifetime and 2.6% experienced it during the last 12 months

1 in 10 women in Mongolia have experienced sexual abuse as a child



In Mongolia 10.2% of women who experience severe sexual violence report it to the police



A project as large and as sensitive as the national survey on Violence Against Women required the cooperation and coordination of many partners; government agencies, external donors and the provision of technical assistance.

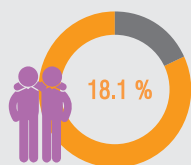
Using the World Health Organization methodology, UNFPA supplied technical assistance through the kNOwVAWdata project, with funding provided by Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) provided vital funding for the survey in Mongolia.

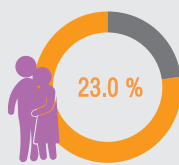
Results from Mongolia's survey on Violence Against Women was published in 2018.

This article was authored by Anneliese McAuliffe for UNFPA Asia-Pacific and kNOwVAWdata.

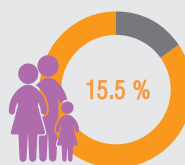
COPING WITH VIOLENCE: Percentage of women who told someone about the partner violence



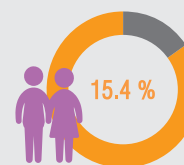
Parents



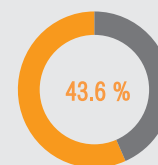
Friends



Brother or sister



Her in-laws and their relatives



No one

OUTCOME

2

Rights-holders and duty-bearers
have a better understanding
and higher readiness to address
Gender-Based Violence



OVERVIEW

The National GBV Survey revealed the true prevalence of violence against women in the country, and the revised Law to Combat Domestic Violence (LCDV) ensured that the government addresses this critical issue. However, the challenge that remained is working toward widespread awareness of and increasing intolerance toward GBV in the country. This is why advocacy, communication, and education of both the general public and of duty-bearers were implemented to plant the seeds of awareness of people's rights to lead violence-free lives, that GBV is both a crime and a human rights violence, and that GBV is a multifaceted issue that can only be eradicated if society at large come together to change the harmful attitudes and beliefs that underpin it.

These public information and communication endeavors not only raised awareness, but also translated to concrete political and managerial commitments, such as creating supportive policy frameworks matched with increased public financial and human resources that all together enabled better response to GBV.

HIGHLIGHTS

1 LAW TO COMBAT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

After initially being approved in May 2016 then soon shut down again by the Mongolian Parliament in September, the revised Law to Combat Domestic Violence (LCDV) was finally passed in December 2016 and took effect in February 2017 due to the extensive advocacy work, sensitization and capacity building efforts among stakeholders, including under the Project. The LCDV criminalized DV, which is a crucial step in effective prevention and response by creating legal consequences for perpetrators, as well as outlined the government's responsibilities in survivor protection mechanisms. This was key to dismantling the culture of impunity that surrounded domestic violence cases as the heavily implemented legal consequences made perpetrators think twice before committing violence.

Under the Project, a total of 31 Standard Operating Procedures, 3 Standards of Service Delivery, and 12 Guidelines and Manuals were developed and approved to help line ministries and agencies to operationalize the LCDV within their own areas.

2 PRE-SERVICE TRAINING

The inclusion of GBV modules into the curricula of key fields was institutionalized and rolled out at the Law Enforcement University, School of Social Work and School of Journalism at the National University of Mongolia, and the Medical University of Mongolia. The social work curriculum in particular was also adopted in 14 colleges and universities offering social work degrees across the country. This push for pre-service training is an effort to ensure that future generations of duty-bearers are not only trained in effective service delivery but are also sensitive to the complex nature of GBV and gender issues. This would help ensure that they are better prepared to provide services to those in need with the right knowledge, attitudes and skills to properly and sensitively address their issues.

3 PUBLIC INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION CAMPAIGNS

Over the years, actors in the gender space have launched many campaigns in an effort to raise awareness and change attitudes about GBV, but experience showed that campaigns would occasionally disseminate different and even conflicting messages. This is why an important achievement of the Project is to bring together duty-bearers across different sectors in the government, media and civil society to form the CGBV Project's Communication and Media Management Sub-

Committee. The Sub-Committee's goal was to streamline and consolidate the implementation of communication endeavors in line with the overall Communications Strategy and Key Messages that were developed and agreed upon.

As a result, over the years, several communication campaigns were rolled out to engage the public and educate them on healthier and more equitable beliefs about gender. The largest campaigns occurred during International Women's Day in March and for the global "16 Days of Activism Against GBV" campaign in November and December. However, beginning in 2018, the Sub-Committee initiated the first joint initiative to raise awareness among the public for the 16 Days of Activism in 2018. This was the first time that messaging about GBV shifted away from scaring people with legal consequences and instead focused on the positive changes that people can do in their lives. This campaign was also one of the first times that multiple government agencies and NGOs worked together under one theme, "Transforming Gender Relationships, Attitudes and Actions for The Better", though each organization had its own set of activities that it implemented. With the relative success of this endeavor compared to launching separate campaigns on the issue, the Sub-Committee further strengthened its collaboration through the design and roll out of two integrated campaigns supported by various stakeholders: the "Let's Understand and Respect Each Other" campaign for the 16 Days of Activism in 2019, and the "Love Shouldn't Hurt" campaign for International Women's Day 2020 and as a GBV prevention initiative in the context of COVID-19, both led by the National Police

Agency.

Over 15.7 million person/times were reached by 4 major campaigns and several small campaigns. These efforts in raising awareness also contributed to a decrease in the reported criminal cases of domestic violence by 32.1% and the threefold increase in misconduct cases of GBV, which include minor and first-time offenses, from 2016 to 2019 as captured by the police's routine data reporting system. This suggests that there is a shift in the public perception of domestic violence from being a purely private matter to a human rights violation that should not be tolerated, as well as that domestic violence cases do not escalate as often to the point that it becomes a serious crime because the issue is addressed early on.

Additionally, acknowledging the fact that changing mindsets to become more gender equitable should begin at a young age, a comprehensive sexuality and health education (CSE) curriculum, which includes a gender and GBV module, was also integrated into secondary school curricula. Videos on CSE lessons were also produced and aired on national TV as part of the tele-lessons that were rolled out during the COVID-19 school shut down.

4 PARTNERSHIPS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA INSTITUTIONS

To complement the initiatives by the national and sub-national government while simultaneously building the capacity of civil society and media institutions in the country, the Project provided financial and technical support to several pocket activities led by these organizations. This included working with NGOs such as: Beautiful Hearts Against Sexual violence to reach and engage young people through innovative initiatives; Center for Social Work Excellence to engage men, especially fathers, in ending GBV by promoting healthy relationships between parents and their children; Mongol Urkh Psychological Institute to rehabilitate perpetrators of GBV by working with them to change their behaviors for the better; and Gender Equality Center to educate school children and school social workers on GBV issues. Media NGOs - Zasgiin Gazriin Medee Daily Newspaper, Mongolian Journalists Confederation, Mongol Content online platform, and Sain Tus NGO - were also engaged to amplify public awareness through various content creation collaborations, while the Press Institute of Mongolia was engaged to assess and monitor how GBV and gender issues are reported on traditional media and to train journalists to cover such news stories in a sensitive way.



INDICATOR	RESULTS
OUTCOME 2: Rights-holders and duty-bearers have a better understanding of and higher readiness to address GBV	
2.1. LCDV Amendment is approved by the Parliament <i>BL:</i> Amendment withdrawn by the Parliament (Sept2016) <i>T:</i> LCDV amendment is approved (2020)	FULLY ACHIEVED LCDV approved in December 2016 and implemented since February 2017
2.2. SOPs are developed and implemented <i>BL:</i> 0 (2016) <i>T:</i> 3 (2019)	FULLY ACHIEVED 31 SOPs
2.3. Percentage of GBV cases reported increased <i>BL:</i> 1,713 (2016) <i>T:</i> 2,055 or 20% increase (2020)	FULLY ACHIEVED 9,947 total cases reported in 2019 (985 criminal + 8,962 misconduct)
OUTPUT 2.1.: Public awareness on GBV and its consequences is improved	
2.1.1. Number of community and support groups mobilized through MDTs and CSOs <i>BL:</i> 3 (2016) <i>T:</i> 7 (2019)	FULLY ACHIEVED A total of 11 small projects were implemented with 7 NGO and media partners.
OUTPUT 2.2.: Duty-bearers' support for legal frameworks to combat GBV/DV is increased.	
2.2.1. Number of SOPs for LCDV and related laws are developed. <i>BL:</i> 0 (2016) <i>T:</i> 3 (2020)	FULLY ACHIEVED 31 SOPs were developed over the years to operationalize the LCDV for various sectors



BEAUTIFUL HEARTS AGAINST SEXUAL VIOLENCE

IT TAKES A NATION TO TACKLE AN ISSUE AS COMPLEX AND DEEPLY ROOTED AS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV).

This was a truth held all throughout the planning and implementation of the Combating GBV in Mongolia (CGBV) Project. Strengthening national capacity to respond to and prevent GBV, which is the goal that the Project set forth for itself, entails engaging not only the national and local government, but also civil society, the private sector, and the general public. This is why under the CGBV Project, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were engaged to build their capacity to join the fight against GBV while leveraging their competitive advantages and their networks toward creating a violence-free society.

One such NGO that played an important role particularly in reaching and engaging the youth against GBV is Beautiful Hearts Against Sexual Violence (Beautiful Hearts). Beautiful Hearts is a women-led NGO working toward ending all forms of GBV, especially child sexual abuse and domestic violence, in Mongolia since 2012. It does this through four core programs: (1) advocacy for more gender equitable policies and legislation; (2) service provision, particularly of psychosocial support to women, children and young people to strengthen their resilience and help them cope and heal from the trauma of experiencing GBV; (3) awareness-raising toward prevention of GBV and violence against

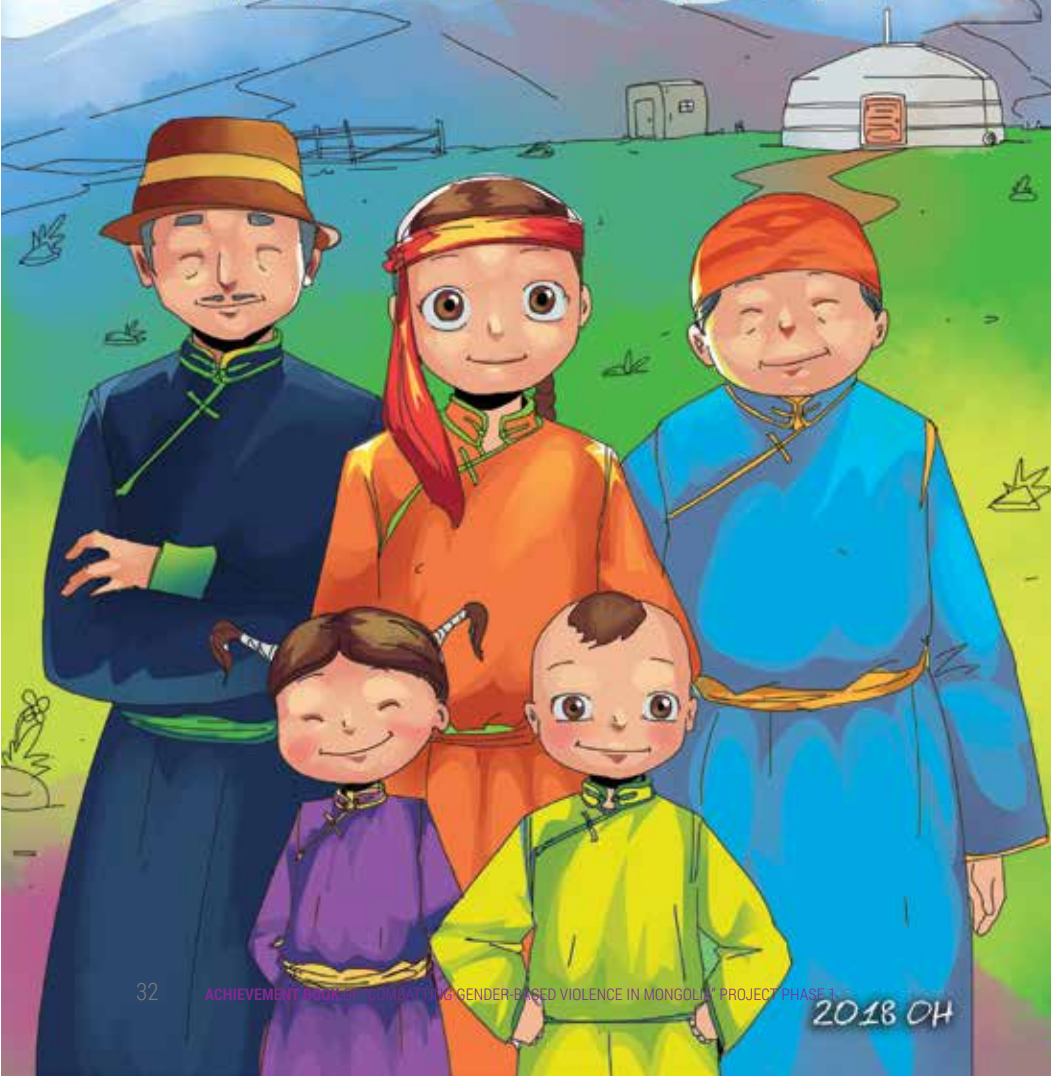
children; and (4) capacity building of professionals who work with young survivors of GBV.

Under the CGBV Project, Beautiful Hearts organized the “Break the Chain” campaign twice. The first campaign was in 2017 to promote the recently amended Law to Combat Domestic Violence, and following its success, the second campaign was launched in 2019 to draw the public's attention to GBV once more. Taking the approach of activism, or activism through art, Beautiful Hearts was able to reach out to more than 1.3 million people through a series of podcasts, TV talk shows, stand-up comedy performances, as well as through comic books, online discussions, and art exhibitions.

«Art is a great tool to reach the general public and inform them about the root causes of domestic violence, the forms it takes, and the complex challenge of tackling it in Mongolia where people come from different backgrounds,» said A. Khongorzul, Chairperson of Beautiful Hearts. «Art serves as an entry point to start the discussion, and it is accessible enough that people are encouraged to be part of the process of gender development and gender justice in the country.»

ЖЕНДЭРТ СУУРИЛСАН ХҮЧИРХИЙЛЭЛ - ГЭР БҮЛИЙН ХҮЧИРХИЙЛЛИЙН

ГИНХИЙГ ТАСАЛ



Young people in particular were heavily involved in the “Break the Chain” campaigns. Khongorzul shares that the content of the podcasts was developed with young volunteers, while school children across ages took part in the art exhibitions to showcase their understanding and take on the issue of GBV. Beautiful Hearts also made sure that the campaign included and reached people from all walks of life – from rural to urban, young and old – by sharing stories that resonate with various people and that reflect their lives, and by using channels that reach different demographics.

As a result of this campaign, Beautiful Hearts saw a 20% increase in the number of women and children who sought their help and services to heal from GBV. The success and visibility they gained through the campaign also resulted in a significant increase in the number of their volunteers - about 300 to 400 per year - including students working toward becoming the future social workers, lawyers and psychologists in the country. Some of the volunteers trained under the “Break the Chain” campaign ended up becoming full-time Beautiful Hearts front-liners, and one was even selected to represent the youth as part of the UN Youth Advisory Panel.

Today, Beautiful Hearts is working to expand what they have started under the CGBV Project. With the experiences, lessons learned and increased visibility they gained while implementing the campaigns, they were able to expand their advocacy work and service delivery at the national level. They have also continued to use the activism approach to GBV response and prevention, and have engaged more psychologists, social workers, and child rights experts to make use of art in the work that they do. Other organizations have also reached out to Beautiful Hearts to ask about their experiences and good practices in rolling out the campaign. Seeing the success of the podcast series initiated under the “Break the Chain” campaign, the team also chose to continue to raise awareness

about domestic violence and violence against children through podcasts that are now being distributed through online platforms as well as in collaboration with local media.

“Mongolian NGOs have played an important role in fighting for gender equality and tackling GBV from as early as 1990,” said Khongorzul. “They have held the government accountable in upholding human rights, and worked with communities to challenge harmful social norms and to create a better environment for everyone. This is why we should keep empowering local NGOs, especially grassroots organizations, to end GBV.”



LOVE SHOULDN'T HURT: A NATIONWIDE PUBLIC INFORMATION CAMPAIGN TO ADDRESS GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE IN MONGOLIA

In March 2020, social media platforms were filled with love stories and relationship triumphs of Mongolians from all walks of life. Naranbaatar, the lead singer at Mongolian National Philharmonic Orchestra, for instance, shares how he and his wife overcame the conflicts in the early phase of their marriage when they lived with his in-laws. While each heartwarming tale was unique and special in its own way, they were all sending a single message to the public: love shouldn't hurt.

This outpouring of personal stories was one of the ways the public was engaged under “Хайр Өвтгөдөггүй” or “Love Shouldn't Hurt”, a nationwide campaign against gender-based violence (GBV) in the country. The campaign is one of the largest public information and communication initiatives against GBV. It was organized by the National Police Agency (NPA) together with other members of the Communications and Media Management (CMM) Sub-Committee of the Combating GBV in Mongolia

(CGBV) Project. The campaign first ran from 6 to 28 March 2020 to commemorate International Women's Day as well as Men's Day (initially a day to honor the Mongolian Army but has recently become more widely celebrated as Men's Day). The campaign was relaunched from 20 April through 20 May 2020 with support from UNICEF National Committee of Japan to help combat the rising number of domestic violence cases during the COVID-19 pandemic.

While public information activities in the past highlighted the consequences of GBV, "Love Shouldn't Hurt" instead had a strong focus on promoting healthy relationships between couples and within families. This was a way to encourage the public to take action in their own lives toward the overall goal of ending GBV in the country, and instilling this sense of individual responsibility was an important step in GBV prevention.

"At first, we aimed to sensitize the public on the negative consequences of GBV and prioritize establishing and improving survivor protection mechanisms in the country because this addressed the immediate needs of victims of GBV. Now we are moving to the next level, which is changing the public mindsets of people to become more intolerant of violence, including GBV," said B. Oyun, National Programme Officer for Gender at UNFPA Mongolia. "Various government and nongovernmental actors have been vocal about their commitment to combat GBV in the country, and major achievements like the amendment of the Law to Combat

Domestic Violence have all been widely publicized and discussed. This created changes in the attitudes of people toward GBV, but we knew that we needed to build on this momentum to really contribute to GBV prevention."

Recognizing the need to scale up GBV prevention interventions through public information campaigns, the CGBV Project formed the CMM Sub-Committee to harmonize the activities and messages of the member agencies and organizations. The Sub-Committee was coordinated by UNFPA and included government ministries and agencies, and well as partner NGOs. Initially, the Sub-Committee was formed to avoid having different agencies delivering competing or even conflicting messages on GBV issues that may confuse the public. However, it eventually evolved into a venue for the members to collaborate on various activities, including nationwide campaigns.

In the last two years, the Sub-Committee members worked together on three anti-GBV campaigns. First, to commemorate the 16 Days of Activism Against GBV in 2018, Mongolian organizations individually implemented public information and communication activities under the theme, "ЭерэгБолГОЁ" or "Transforming Gender Relationships, Attitudes and Actions for The Better". However, in 2019, the Sub-Committee realized that campaigns would gain more traction and reach wider audiences if they pooled together resources and expertise to develop one integrated campaign. For the 16 Days of Activism in 2019, the Sub-Committee

jointly implemented its first integrated campaign, “ойлГОЁХҮНдэлье” or “Let’s Understand and Respect Each Other”, followed by this bigger campaign for International Women’s Day 2020.

With their extensive experience running public information campaigns to change behaviors for the better, NPA has taken on the lead role in developing and implementing the two integrated campaigns. However, they knew that a campaign on an issue like GBV that still unfortunately remains controversial and taboo will be more challenging than campaigns against universally accepted bad behavior, such as drunk driving and speeding in which NPA already has a strong track record that informed the anti-GBV public campaigns. But as the front-liners who work with both survivors and perpetrators of GBV, they regularly witness firsthand the devastating consequences of violence. The men and women in the Division to Combat Domestic Violence of the NPA thus recognize the importance of prevention initiatives to end GBV.

In the past, NPA’s efforts to change the public’s perception of GBV from a tolerable private affair to a crime and human rights violation were limited to organizing trainings and workshops in smaller groups, and eventually smaller campaigns under the CGBV Project. This is why NPA was careful to invest time and resources to develop and test campaign ideas, and to select activities that would be most effective among the target audiences. The Division officers would even work extra hours leading up to the campaign launch together with professional public campaigning companies to ensure that they come up with messages and materials



that are effective and resonant. They also made sure to coordinate closely with other Sub-Committee members, especially UNFPA and the Coordination Council for Crime Prevention, to seek technical guidance and feedback on the messaging and mediums to be used in the campaign.

Aside from encouraging Mongolians to post their own love stories online, the campaign also produced video content featuring public figures, posters with information on healthy relationship habits and GBV prevention, news articles and op-eds, and social media posts. Combined, these activities garnered as many as 3.7 million views on social media, while the campaign extension for COVID-19 garnered over a million views. The campaign also reached the masses through traditional media channels including broadcast and print media, print posters, brochures, leaflets as well as billboards and ads by the roads, bus stops and other public places.

The campaign was a tremendous success in reaching Mongolians everywhere, and this was due to not only the number and variety of content produced, but also because the content followed the right messaging strategy. The campaign had all the crucial ingredients for a successful public information campaign for behavior change. As proven by international good practices and researches in the communication field, desired behaviors would more likely be adopted by target audiences if the messaging positions the behaviors as the social norm that is feasible enough to adopt and if it is communicated in such a way that

the audience will feel positive emotions and attitudes toward it. “Love Shouldn’t Hurt” hits all three elements by highlighting that the desired behavior is to understand and respect your partner. This focus on healthy relationships also conveys that tackling GBV is everyone’s responsibility, and that each person can adopt changes to their own life to contribute to this bigger goal.

«Love Shouldn’t Hurt» was a successful national campaign, but more public information campaigns like this are needed as social and behavior change requires the commitment and continued efforts of the government, civil society organizations, the private sector, and the public at large. That is why the second phase of the CGBV project will have a strong focus on communication, education and behavior change interventions.

“Thanks to the CGBV Project, our work to prevent domestic violence, to increase public knowledge about GBV, to change social attitudes and beliefs for the better, and to protect the rights of survivors was expanded and elevated to the next level.” said Lt. Col. B. Tsengelbayar, Senior Officer of the Division to Combat Domestic Violence. “As we continue to learn from our experiences implementing these kinds of activities, we hope to explore more effective and innovative ways to reach the public and engage them to combat GBV.”

OUTCOME

3

Multidisciplinary response to
Gender-Based Violence and
Domestic Violence in pilot areas
were strengthened

OVERVIEW

The survivor protection and multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms, as well as policy frameworks and other guidelines, were developed and put in place. Duty-bearers were capacitated and mobilized, and these frameworks guided their response to GBV to ensure that the services they provide to survivors and perpetrators alike are gender sensitive, compassionate and just.

HIGHLIGHTS

1 COORDINATION MECHANISMS AT THE NATIONAL AND SUBNATIONAL LEVELS

The multi-sectoral coordination mechanisms to address GBV and DV that were mandated by the revised Law to Combat Domestic Violence (LCDV) were strengthened throughout the course of the Project. The Coordination Council on Crime Prevention, which is headed by the Ministry of Justice and Home Affairs and is mandated by the LCDV to oversee the government's efforts to prevent and respond to GBV according to the law, was strengthened at the national level and 30 subnational CCCPs at the provincial- and district-level were established and strengthened throughout the country with financial and technical support from the Project.

Multidisciplinary teams (MDTs) were also established at the primary administrative units (bag, khoroo, and soum) as mandated by the LCDV to create a coherent referral system that can address the different needs of survivors. The members of these teams have been extensively trained throughout the Project on service delivery and coordination.

2 ONE STOP SERVICE CENTERS FOR SURVIVORS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

One Stop Service Centers (OSSCs) are central in the survivor response mechanisms in the country. OSSCs provide accommodations, health, psychological, legal, counselling and protection services, as well as important referrals to other services that could aid the survivor in overcoming their trauma and moving forward with their lives. Under the Project, a total of 11 new OSSCs were established in 7 provinces (Bayan-Ulgii, Darkhan-Uul, Dornod, Khentii, Khuvsgul, Umnugovi, and Uvurkhangai) and 2 districts of Ulaanbaatar (Bayanzurkh and Khan-Uul) that had the highest prevalence of GBV in the country, as well as in 2 districts (Chingeltei and Sukhbaatar) that had the highest demand during the COVID-19 pandemic, while 6 more OSSCs received financial and technical support.

To complement these Centers for survivors, a Men's Center was also established at a detention center for domestic violence misconduct

offenders under the Court Decision Implementation Agency. This Men's Center is the first of its kind, and it has been the incubator for piloting a mandatory rehabilitation program that is required by the LCDV. This goes hand-in-hand with the OSSC in helping ensure a lower rate of repeated offenses over time.

3 CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVES FOR DUTY-BEARERS

Beyond establishing the mechanisms and infrastructure, the Project also provided sustained support through various capacity building activities specifically designed for duty-bearers of various fields. Regular workshops, seminars, and local study tours were rolled out on various aspects of service delivery, while guidelines, manuals and handouts were all developed to give duty-bearers the information they need to provide services that meet international minimum standards. Four international study tours were also organized for duty-bearers to learn from countries that are more progressive in GBV response, prevention, and legislation. Finally, the National and Regional Forums for Multi-Sectoral Response to GBV was organized thrice with support from the Project for decision-makers and on-the-ground staff to discuss common challenges, share good practices, and keep abreast with the latest trends and policies in the field while strengthening coordination among sectors and agencies.

4 GBV RESPONSE IN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

When the COVID-19 virus began spreading throughout the world, the Government of Mongolia immediately put into effect stringent precautionary measures to prevent an outbreak in the country. These included restrictions on public gatherings as well as on local and international travel. This had heavy implications on the Project, as many activities had to be modified or canceled altogether. Additionally, new challenges arose with the spike in DV survivors during this time, as well as the difficulties in continued service provision with the constant threat of an outbreak.

This is why the final year of the Project was reprogrammed to address the most pressing needs in tackling GBV in the changing country context. A rapid assessment on the impacts of COVID-19 on the GBV situation as well as on service delivery was conducted as early as April 2020 to guide the COVID-19 response planning and implementation for the short- to mid-term. Additionally, two more OSSCs were established in the Sukhbaatar and Chingeltei districts of Ulaanbaatar in response to the overwhelming increase in GBV survivors seeking help during the pandemic. Finally, to ensure continued service delivery despite social distancing measures, remote psychological and legal counselling modalities (hotline and online) were set up and continue to be run.





INDICATORS

INDICATOR	RESULTS
OUTCOME 3: Multidisciplinary response to GBV/DV in pilot areas strengthened	
3.1. Decision taken at the national level to institutionalize survivor protection and rehabilitation services <i>BL:</i> 6 existing OSSCs (2016) <i>T:</i> 10 new OSSCs (2020)	FULLY ACHIEVED 11 OSSCs and 1 Men's Center launched; 6 OSSCs and 2 shelters supported
3.2. Funding for GBV prevention and response is increased. <i>BL:</i> 20mln MNT (2016) <i>T:</i> 100mln MNT (2019)	FULLY ACHIEVED MNT 1 billion was allocated from local funding for GBV prevention and response.
OUTPUT 3.1.: Supportive policy environment for survivor protection and rehabilitation services is improved.	
3.1.1. Number of OSSCs institutionalized and providing services according to standards <i>BL:</i> 6 (2016) <i>T:</i> 16 (2020)	FULLY ACHIEVED A total of 17 OSSCs are established and supported by the Project to provide quality services to clients
OUTPUT 3.2.: Multidisciplinary service mechanism for GBV/DV victims/survivors established with effective functioning.	
3.2.1. Number of survivor visits to OSSCs increased <i>BL:</i> 1,713 (2016) <i>T:</i> 2,399 (2020)	FULLY ACHIEVED A total of 2054 survivor visits were made to OSSCs in 2019, and 1889 in the first half of 2020.
3.2.2. Client satisfaction rate is increased <i>BL:</i> No data available (2016) <i>T:</i> Data is available (2020)	FULLY ACHIEVED A survey was conducted by the NSO, and the data showed that 56.3 to 61.5% of clients scored their satisfaction above average.
3.2.3. Number of cases being handled by the MDT increased <i>BL:</i> 182 (2016) <i>T:</i> 219 (2020)	FULLY ACHIEVED A total of 758 cases were handled by MDTs in 2019, and 447 in the first half of 2020.

NARAA'S STORY

** All names have been changed for the survivors' protection.*

When One Stop Service Centers (OSSCs) were planned and established under the Combating Gender-Based Violence (GBV) in Mongolia Project, the expectation was that the clientele would be primarily adult women who may bring their children with them to escape violent households. Heartbreakingly, the experience of these OSSCs show that a large portion of the clientele are children, and many of them are survivors of sexual violence. In fact, out of the 55 clients who received service from One Stop Service Center at one of the western provinces of the country as of August of 2020, nine are children.

Naraa* and her mother found their way to the OSSC when the 11-year-old girl confided in her aunt that her step-father had been sexually abusing her. It took her months to break the silence about what she was experiencing at home. The trauma and fear from the death threats from the perpetrator forced Naraa to hide the suffering that she was enduring.

Unfortunately, Naraa's story is not unique. According to the National GBV Survey, the younger the woman or girl, the more likely she is to experience non-partner physical or sexual violence. A total of 17% of girls aged 15 - 19 have already experienced non-partner physical violence at least once in their young lives, while 39% already experienced non-partner sexual violence.

The fact that this violence is usually committed by family members or someone close to the survivor makes it all the more difficult for them to report the assault. Perpetrators would often use tactics like manipulating the survivor to make them feel like the abuse is a way of showing love, or would threaten to hurt the survivor or their families if they do not keep quiet about the violence. The State General Prosecutor's Office of Mongolia reports that around 26.3% of child survivors of sexual abuse have been assaulted more than once by the perpetrators. The tragic reality is that the assault is likely to continue unless signs of the abuse are detected by someone, or the survivor is able to speak up and ask for help. In Naraa's case, she was able to muster up the courage to tell her aunt during a visit while on her school break.

Fortunately, there was an OSSC in the provincial center. Naraa and her mother Khulan* come from a low-income household, and they did not have the resources to escape the violence alone. When Naraa's aunt reported the abuse to the police, they referred Naraa and Khulan to the OSSC for protection. There, Naraa was able to start her journey to heal from the physical and emotional trauma that she experienced.

As soon as the mother and daughter came to the Center, the staff created a case plan based on the information they gleaned from conversations with Khulan on the impacts of the violence on Naraa's mental and reproductive health, as well as on their financial situation. Creating a case plan is the fundamental first stage of providing comprehensive services to survivors because it allows the OSSC staff to assess the person's specific needs and tailor the services to their circumstances. In Naraa's case, she and her mother had to receive treatments for an STI, as well as psychological counselling. The OSSC staff also made sure that Naraa continued to receive education even during the COVID-19 pandemic by providing her with the required textbooks and equipment for tele-learning.

Naraa is one of the many survivors that this OSSC has helped since its establishment in 2018. The Center provides comprehensive services, including safe accommodations, medical, psychosocial, legal and protection services, and referrals to other social services available to citizens. This repertoire of comprehensive services is important because GBV requires a multidisciplinary approach to survivor protection. By offering all these in one location, OSSCs also help keep survivors safe by reducing the travel needed to avail of various essential services, avoid the retraumatization of the survivor by reducing the number of times they have to retell their stories, and protect their privacy by limiting the number of people who find out about their situation.

Whether they witness it or are subjected to it themselves, children experience damaging and long-lasting impacts of GBV. Survivors of GBV experience adverse mental health outcomes including post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, anxiety and feelings of guilt, shame, anger and low-self-esteem. Naraa's case was no exception. Naraa was highly traumatized from her tragic experience, but fortunately, the staff were quick to recognize this and provided her with psychological care. However, Naraa also experienced several health complications related to her experience, which at one point became bad enough to need urgent care.

Naraa and Khulan stayed at the OSSC until they found a place of their own. In fact, the OSSC staff helped significantly in this process by reaching out on their behalf to local authorities and the Social Welfare Agency to request for housing assistance for the two. The step-father was also held criminally liable for the violence he committed, and his case was recently assigned to the local court for sentencing.

Naraa and Khulan now reside in the provincial center. Naraa has returned to school, and their mother is seeking employment with the help of the OSSC team. They are hoping that all these efforts will someday translate into a brighter future for the family.



DOLJIN'S STORY

** All names have been changed for the survivors' protection.*

Doljin* and her husband moved to Ulaanbaatar some 10 years ago. Set against the grungy 2000s, the young family and their new baby had tremendous difficulties ahead of them. These were the years when Mongolia's development was undermined by a non-performing economy that led to increasing poverty and other complex social problems. The hardest hit was the soum centers-towns in remote areas that had to cope with unemployment, poor healthcare and education, alcoholism, and an uptick in incidences of domestic violence.

The decision to move to the capital struck Doljin and her husband Bataa* almost simultaneously. Thinking that most of their friends and family have already relocated and seem to be faring much better than they were, the couple carried this thought privately for months before broaching the subject with each other. To their surprise, they discovered that they both wanted to take this chance. However, they knew that it would not be easy, especially in the beginning.

"Our extended family helped us initially when we first came to Ulaanbaatar," said Doljin. "But we could not ask for their help for too long."

What little money they earned from selling their parents' livestock of some 200 sheep and goats was only good for buying a khashaa (fence with small house) and the initial expenses of settling in. Food, clothes, coal, water, and other basic necessities cost 7 times more in the ger districts than in apartments. Life was already difficult for the family when Doljin discovered that she was pregnant again.

"We could not afford contraception," said Doljin. "If I only knew then that there are UNFPA Reproductive Rights Programmes, I would have joined them."

The lack of social support, the inability to access information, the sense of isolation in an unfamiliar place – these compounded the everyday problems that the couple faced, and they found themselves fighting more often than usual.

"I sat home with the kids all day. They could not get accepted into any kindergartens because they were not registered in Ulaanbaatar," Doljin said with a tremble in her voice and tears in her eyes.

"My husband ended up picking up garbage to feed us. He started drinking and would come home late at night all drunk, angry and violent." Doljin started shaking as she shared these memories. Her tears flowed continuously as she nervously fidgeted and tore at the piece of cloth in her hands. "This was when the hell began."

Doljin's story is heartbreaking, but unfortunately it is not an uncommon one. "This is often the pattern of domestic violence: a situation of gender inequality exacerbated by a family situation of unmet needs for basic necessities, social services, and family planning," said B. Oyun, National Programme Officer for Gender of UNFPA Mongolia.

Doljin and her children were living through hell, and this experience landed them multiple times in trauma hospitals with broken bones, bleeding heads, and skin torn apart with glass, but it could have just as easily ended with even worse outcomes had they not found respite in the One Stop Service Center (OSSC) in the Bayanzurkh District of Ulaanbaatar.

OSSC brings hope, protection and support

The OSSC in the Bayanzurkh District opened its doors in March 2019. A small fenced house just off the main road was donated by the District for this purpose, and it was repaired and furnished to accommodate

survivors of GBV with the MNT 1 million by the local district and MNT 63 million contribution from UNFPA and SDC.

"Serving women and working with men is of equal and utmost importance in ending GBV," said Kaori Ishikawa, UNFPA Mongolia's Head of Office, at the launch of the Bayanzurkh OSSC in 2019. With 88% of survivors of domestic violence being women and girls, working with men, who are most often the perpetrators, is essential in GBV prevention. "Improving support for survivors and mitigating the consequences of violent acts must go hand in hand with understanding the root causes of GBV and providing the necessary measures to target these."

This was exactly what saved Doljin and her children, and what opened the possibility of reuniting with her family.

"We deploy multidisciplinary teams, which we call Joint Teams, that are made up of social workers and psychologists from the OSSCs, as well as medics, police persons, and other social workers from khorooos (sub-districts) to comprehensively resolve cases by reaching the best possible outcomes," said the social worker at the Bayanzurkh OSSC.

One of the key components of the comprehensive response to GBV is working with perpetrators. Some perpetrators may be detained depending on the level of threat that they pose, but all perpetrators undergo educational and psychological sessions that not only explain to them the causes of violence, but also teach them ways to manage their

emotions and express themselves in non-violent ways. Similar training and counselling sessions are held for couples as well to learn about non-violent ways of expressing emotions and resolving family conflicts.

Doljin and her husband underwent some of these training sessions. "In the past, we never even attempted to cool down and discuss a problem together," said Doljin with an embarrassed smile. "We never managed to get to the point where we could analyse the situation and find ways out of a problem as rational beings."

Doljin shared that learning methods of calming down and working through situations together became a turning point in their life and their relationship. "Now, we live our lives trusting and supporting each other," said Doljin. "Surprisingly, we became so much better off, even financially, because we started solving our problems as one big family. We even involve the young ones in our family decision-making."

This inclusion improved the self-confidence of her children. The peace and positive environment also immediately translated to better learning and school adaptation.

The Centre also helped Doljin enrol her two youngest in kindergarten and helped find a job for her husband. The Centre proved that a multidisciplinary approach, adequate social support, and human connections can altogether make miracles.

"There are many more families in our district who need our help and support," said the head of the Bayanzurkh OSSC. As a former police officer, she knows too well how critical such services are in the district, which has the highest rates of poverty and unemployment in the capital city. "Our OSSC can only take in 4 people at a time. Unfortunately, we cannot keep the survivors for more than 3 to 5 days."



*«The OSSC saved my family," Doljin said.
"Without this Centre, I'm afraid my family would not have survived any longer.»*



When the survivors need further support, they are transferred to the Ulaanbaatar City Protection Unit until the courts make a decision regarding what to do with the perpetrators. Sometimes, domestic violence survivors spend months in this unit.

"This is why continuous work on GBV prevention with society at large, especially with the youth, is very important," said B. Oyun. This is a need targeted by another initiative of UNFPA. The Youth Development Project conducts education training for young people on family planning, as well as other aspects of family life, healthy relationships, and conflict resolution. These trainings are based on 13 scientifically-developed volumes, and they are conducted in Youth Development Centers located

both in Ulaanbaatar and in the countryside. The Youth Development Council, who undergoes this training, then trains others to create a multiplier effect.

"With the scale of GBV and domestic violence in Mongolia, opening OSSCs must only be the beginning of this fight to end GBV in the country," said Ishikawa. "We have a long way to go, but the important thing is that we started this journey together with the Mongolian people and the Mongolian government. Together, we can make Mongolia a peaceful and prosperous society where the rights of every woman, man, and child is respected and protected."

DULAM'S STORY

** All names have been changed for the survivors' protection.*

When Dulam* first sought help in a One Stop Service Center (OSSC) in a province in northern Mongolia, she was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. At that time, the 38-year-old mother and her four children had suffered abuse at the hands of her husband for years. She felt hopeless about her future and even entertained suicidal thoughts.

Dulam's life was not always so difficult. She and Sambuu*, her husband of 18 years, lived a quiet life with their four children aged between 2 and 16 years. However, everything changed when in 2014, her husband lost a close sibling. To cope with his grief, he turned to alcohol and soon, he became a completely different person. He started beating his wife and children, and would even humiliate his family regularly.

Sambuu also lost his ability to hold down a job as a craftsman, which meant that Dulam had to be the sole provider for her family. She relied only on her severance pay and an unemployment benefit of MNT 50,000 or less than USD 20 every month, and these financial troubles added to her already tremendous amount of stress.

Over time, her husband became increasingly violent toward her and her children. She could not seek help, or even confide in friends or family about the abuse because she did not want her children to experience any shame or stigma because of what was going on in her family behind closed doors. Dulam was quickly losing hope that things would ever get any better.

It was Dulam's eldest son who finally made a decision that led to the mother and children escaping this violent household. It happened one cold winter night. Sambuu returned home drunk, and proceeded to humiliate, curse, drag and beat Dulam. Fearing for his mother's life, the eldest son called the 102 helpline. This led them to seek help at the OSSC in the provincial center.

Dulam and her four children spent a month at the OSSC, where they received a wide variety of support to help them heal from their trauma and move forward with their lives. They underwent extensive therapy, as well as various sessions that helped them build their life skills. These helped build their confidence and self-esteem, and equipped them with basic tools to better manage their relationships and confront challenges in the future.

Knowing that financial uncertainty is a driving factor that either prevents survivors from leaving a violent household or pushes them to return to their abusers even after seeking help, the OSSC also provided Dulam the opportunity to enroll and graduate from their Empowered Mothers program. The OSSC also ensured that the children were paired with a school social worker, and underwent a room-teacher educational program so that they did not miss out on any schooling during their stay.

Beyond the support given to Dulam and her children, the OSSC also helped Sambuu to take control of his life again. While his family stayed in the OSSC, he took part in a substance abuse rehabilitation program. He also met with a therapist from the OSSC weekly to help him overcome his alcohol abuse as well as the many different issues that led to him perpetrating domestic violence and child abuse.

It has been about a year since Dulam and her husband decided to reconcile and work together to create a peaceful and positive home for their four children. With her newfound confidence and optimism for the future as well as with the support and through the facilitation of the OSSC staff, Dulam seized opportunities like co-developing a business plan with her husband, which won a grant of MNT 6 million from the Livelihood Support Program by the Provincial Social Welfare Division. Since then, she and her family have been running their own business making wooden furniture, which has been comfortably supporting them even with the economic downturn driven by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Because of her own experience, Dulam also became active in raising awareness and advocating against GBV in her community. She has been helping out survivors overcome their circumstances, which has led to her full-time employment as a nursing assistant in a private hospital in her province since April 2020.

"They [OSSC team] helped rebuild my life and marriage. Without all the services and therapy, it would have never been possible to have my family all together again. It was a win-win situation now that my husband and my family were all rehabilitated." shared Dulam, summarizing her experience at the OSSC.



«I smile a lot more now than before. I now have faith in my future. With the support of the OSSC team, I found a new me and I feel like I have been reborn.»



Providing Life-Saving and Essential Services to GBV Survivors in the time of COVID-19

Stories like Dulam's are a testament to the life-saving and essential nature of services for survivors of GBV. While much of the world's activities have come to a standstill due to the COVID-19 pandemic, GBV, especially domestic violence (DV), continues to affect millions of women across the globe, with the situations of many even worsening during this time.

It is well-documented that GBV often increases in emergency and humanitarian situations such as the ongoing pandemic. Sharp increases in stress levels, as well as a sudden loss of income, limitations in mobility, and other social issues that arise during crises exacerbate existing gender inequalities, which in turn could lead to the perpetration of GBV. Globally, upticks in GBV and DV cases have already been recorded since the first quarter of the year.

Despite the country's relative success in preventing a community outbreak of COVID-19, a spike in reported GBV cases has also been recorded in Mongolia. In the first quarter of 2020 when COVID-19 restrictions were at their strictest, OSSCs supported by UNFPA reported an 87% increase in the number of clients compared to the same period in 2019. Similarly, the National Police Agency (NPA) reported a 47% increase in the total reported domestic violence offenses, and this spike is driven by the significant increase in misconduct offenses (62%) that include minor acts of DV as well as violence by first-time offenders.

The chief social worker and administrator at the OSSC where Dulam and her family sought help a year prior confirmed that they had almost double the number of clients in March 2020 compared to March 2019.

“We have more clients than usual,” she said. “There are also more cases of violence against children due to the closure of schools and kindergartens. Many businesses have closed as well, so more people are drinking at home to cope with the stress and fears because of the uncertainty.”

She also shared that the COVID-19 restrictions mean that many survivors now needed to stay at home all the time with their abuser, which led to both the increase in frequency and escalation of conflicts between couples these days.

According to the 2017 National GBV Survey conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO) and UNFPA, nearly 60% of Mongolian women have experienced some form of intimate partner violence at least once in their lifetime, while 35% have suffered intimate partner violence in the last 12 months. Emergency situations like the COVID-19 pandemic not only increase the risks for perpetration, but also make it all the more difficult for survivors to escape the violence and seek help.

“Our clients are afraid of becoming infected with COVID-19, but they are also frustrated about the lockdown and the economic uncertainty,” said the chief social worker. However, this fear and uncertainty are felt by service providers as well. “Service providers were very reluctant to

provide first-line support to survivors of GBV who do not wear masks, but as the imported cases increased and the duration of restrictive measures were extended, the mask prices increased. That meant that we could not purchase masks.”

Recognizing that GBV services are essential and potentially life-saving, the OSSC began exploring alternative methods of service delivery. She said “Services for survivors are generally still available, but many consultations are now done online or over the telephone. Online counseling and meetings have become popular among multidisciplinary teams so that they could continue to provide support to survivors without interruption.”

She also shared that the COVID-19 pandemic deepened the collaboration among different government agencies at all levels, both to prevent local transmission of the coronavirus as well as to protect the population from the many social issues that have arisen as a byproduct of the pandemic. The OSSC also collaborated with community leaders in bags, the smallest administrative unit in the country. Bag social workers and school social workers put together a list of families at risk within their communities, and together with the OSSC staff, they visited these families to raise awareness about the available services as well as to check on people at risk of DV and child neglect. Through this initiative, the OSSC staff also found three children taking part in illegal child labor. In line with this, bag police were also requested to work more closely with bag and provincial authorities to prevent DV as well as violence against children.

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, UNFPA has also been collaborating more closely with the Government of Mongolia, fellow UN agencies, as well as development agencies and donors such as the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and the Government of Japan to raise awareness about the growing GBV issue as well as to ensure continued access to GBV services during this time, and to promote healthy coping mechanisms to help prevent GBV from happening altogether.

UNFPA has been working with the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Ministry of Health, and the National Center Against Violence since March 2020 to provide remote counselling and other services through 24/7 hotlines and other online channels. UNFPA together UNICEF also developed guidelines for OSSC staff on continued safe service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as guidelines for COVID-19 front-liners on basic GBV and violence against children detection and response.

In mid-June 2020, two new OSSCs in the Chingeltei and Sukhbaatar districts of the capital city of Ulaanbaatar were established to respond to the sharp increase in GBV survivors seeking help since the government put in place stringent restrictions to control, contain and prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the country. Dignity Kits (basic hygiene and sanitation kits) were also distributed to people in institutional quarantine as well as OSSCs and shelters across the country to provide much-

needed supplies to maintain hygiene, self-confidence, and dignity in difficult circumstances as well as to reduce the risks of GBV, such as sexual exploitation in exchange for essential items. Finally, UNFPA together with the NPA recently concluded a three-month nationwide campaign against domestic violence called "Love Shouldn't Hurt" that reached over 1 million people/times.

Mongolia remains to be one of the few countries in the world where a widespread community outbreak has been prevented so far. The chief social worker is grateful for the government's success in this regard, but she still remains worried about the future as the world continues to battle the virus. "I need to focus more on my own health and ensuring safe service delivery, but I know that it is impossible for OSSC staff to social distance," she said. "We need to meet our clients in person."

Right now, the OSSC only has two sets of personal protective equipment (PPE) provided by the provincial branch of the Family, Youth and Child Development Agency. The OSSC staff have also participated in a training on COVID-19 preparedness.

"GBV prevention is the number one priority now, as well as protection of staff and clients from COVID-19," she said. "We need to continue providing essential services to survivors of violence, especially during this period of restrictions. We need to use technology like mobile apps, websites, and TV programs to offer remote support so that we can keep reaching people in need."

SARAA'S STORY

** All names have been changed for the protection of the survivors.*

Saraa* and her family were struggling to survive in their home province. Saraa's mother, Altan*, was a long-term alcoholic who also suffered from mental health issues that hindered her from holding down a job. That meant that their household - made up of Saraa, her little brother, mother, and sometimes the strange men that Altan would couple with at a time - basically had no income to give Saraa and her brother a stable life and home. For the longest time, Altan also insisted that the children had mental disabilities that made them unable to learn, so both Saraa and her brother never received any formal schooling.

With all these challenges, Saraa's family was identified as a vulnerable household in one of the poorest provinces in the country. This made them eligible to be part of the 2020 round of the Family Development Program (FDP), an initiative by the provincial Family, Child, and Youth Development Agency (FCYDA) to help uplift poor households through education, livelihood, and housing support. Assistance from the FDP also came on top of the monthly benefit and food coupons of welfare assistance that the family receives.

However, despite this opportunity, the family's lives hardly improved. For example, through the FDP, the family received a total of three gers and were even built a small house at some point, but Altan would always decide to sell each one. Fortunately, the FCYDA team persevered in helping the family despite these setbacks. On top of a new fully-furnished ger donated to them, the FCYDA team also worked closely with the family to teach them basic life skills on hygiene and household chores, and to help improve the development of Saraa and her brother through lessons on communication.

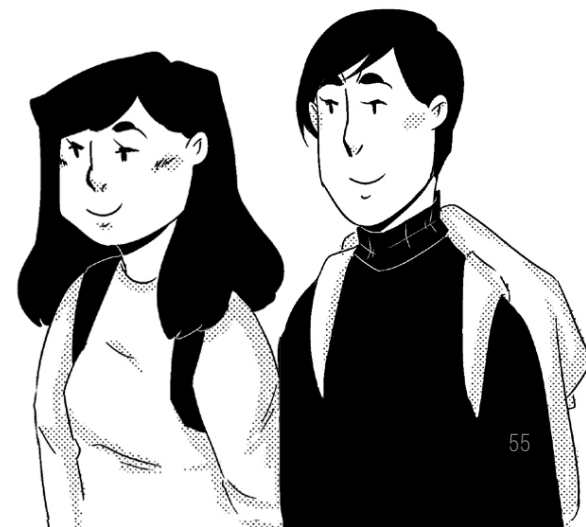
It was also through these regular visits that the FCYDA team discovered the sexual abuse that Saraa was going through in silence. Initially, the team wanted to conduct a risk assessment for Saraa when they found out that she would sometimes stay alone with her stepfather. However, this was swiftly blocked by Altan who claimed that because Saraa had mental disabilities, she could not speak for herself and may even be lying about her experiences. The team insisted and eventually learned that

contrary to what Altan had been saying, Saraa and her brother actually only had developmental issues that could be remedied. They also learned that she has been raped by her mother's partners, and that the children would even be subject to physical and emotional violence at the hands of Altan.

With this discovery, the FCYDA team quickly contacted the police. This was also blocked by Altan, who, worried that they would lose their welfare assistance, tried to discredit Saraa by claiming that she is not mentally fit enough to be believed. The FCYDA team nonetheless continued on with the legal process that led to the arrest of the stepfather. The team also referred Saraa and her brother for placement at the provincial One Stop Service Center (OSSC) for GBV survivors. In retaliation, the family began to reject the FDP initiatives. This unfortunately undid the progress they made in the last months.

Still, Altan was adamant about the children's return to their home. The FCYDA team reluctantly agreed and the children were brought back, but Altan's ways did not change. She continued to drink excessively, often inviting men at her place to drink together, and once even coaxing Saraa into drinking with the group. When the OSSC team heard about this incident, they quickly brought Saraa and her brother back to the OSSC where they stayed until the staff managed to refer them to a local child care center that the OSSC has established ties with for more specialized care for child survivors.

Beyond this, the OSSC staff and multidisciplinary team (MDT) have also taken steps to ensure the safety and wellbeing of Saraa and her brother in the long run. They have been working closely with Altan, providing her with psychological counseling that has led to significant improvements in her temperament and behavior. Altan used to come into the Center drunk and aggressive, but after some counselling, she now always comes sober and has developed good rapport with the staff. Altan also managed to find the biological father of Saraa, and the OSSC staff has been helping them forge a relationship in a way that is both safe and comfortable for the teen.



Acknowledging the multifaceted nature of GBV, both with regard to the causes and triggers as well as the impacts, the provincial OSSC has made a point to build relationships with various government, non-government, and business organizations to supplement their often limited resources and capabilities. This strong network within the province allows the OSSC to ensure that survivors are able to access holistic care, as can be seen in the case of Saraa and her brother.

For instance, the OSSC has cultivated a relationship with child care center so that young survivors are able to take part in educational activities that eventually lead to them being enrolled in formal schooling. The OSSC is also linked with an alcohol rehabilitation center run by a religious

organization as many survivors and perpetrators that the OSSCs work with are alcohol-dependent. In helping another client, the MDT has also approached community groups, such as an online group for women in the province, to ask for donations and other basic necessities, while OSSC staff would link with local companies to help survivors find their source of livelihood after their stay in the Center. The MDTs are also always looking for opportunities to enroll the survivors in other programs of the provincial government, including the FDP. With the persistent work and resourcefulness of staff from the FCYDA, OSSC, and MDT, clients are able to not only get the support they need to escape from violent situations, but are also able to reintegrate into society and move forward with their lives.

KHAN-UUL DISTRICT CASE STUDY

Creating an environment in which the rights of every citizen, especially the most vulnerable in society, are upheld and protected requires not only a strong policy framework, but also capable and committed duty-bearers. This is why for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), the revised Law to Combat Domestic Violence (LCDV) passed in late 2016 was critical in giving them a chance to seek the help they need to escape and heal from the violence. The revised LCDV, which was passed in part because of the extensive advocacy done under the Combating GBV in Mongolia (CGBV) Project, not only criminalized domestic violence (DV), but it also shed light on the many different roles that the government must play in providing essential and life-saving services to survivors.

When the revised LCDV took effect in early 2017, the Family, Children and Youth Development Agency (FCYDA) in the Khan-Uul district of Ulaanbaatar quickly sprang into action. Armed with a law that now requires every district and province in the country to have at least one facility for survivors of domestic violence as well as a multidisciplinary team to provide the repertoire of essential services to survivors, the district's FCYDA approached the district governor with a proposal to build a local shelter.

Admittedly at first, the local authorities were skeptical about the need to invest in GBV response, but the FCYDA staff were not easily discouraged. They continued to educate local authorities about their responsibility to

protect women, children and men against violence, while advocating for the establishment of survivor protection mechanisms as required by law. Eventually, the district Governor came to realize the pivotal role that the government plays in responding to and preventing GBV. The governor approved and supported the construction of a facility, which was fully furnished and supplied with the necessary equipment with support from the CGBV Project. The Khan-Uul OSSC was launched in late 2018.



However, beyond the establishment of the OSSC in the district, the FCYDA staff was also successful in persuading the governor to include the center's staff into the FCYDA's institutional structure. This arrangement ensured that the center's staff are all classified as civil servants who enjoyed both job security and all the other social security benefits that came with this title. The Khan-Uul OSSC is the only one in the country to have this arrangement.

In a sector that is as professionally and personally taxing as working with survivors, ensuring these benefits for OSSC staff was an effective step toward improving job satisfaction and reducing the high turnover rates that have plagued many centers and shelters throughout the country. This is particularly important for roles that work directly with clients. It takes time and effort to earn the trust of the survivor, and it can be retraumatizing if the survivor is asked to open up again and again to different staff. Extensive experience is also needed to really excel in social work, so having trained and experienced professionals stay in their roles for years is key to providing quality services to survivors of violence.

«As civil servants who provide crucial services to survivors, it requires constant effort to keep the decision-makers aware of the importance of multi-disciplinary services offered at a single location,» said senior specialist at the OSSC at FCYDA in Khan-Uul district. «Thanks to our advocacy efforts, we were able to institutionalize the survivor protection system under the FCYDA. For us, this meant that instead of constantly worrying about funding for operation costs, we could focus instead on strengthening the capacity of our staff to provide the best possible services to our clients.»

ARIUNAA AND TUUL'S STORY

** All names have been changed for the protection of the survivors.*

It is widely accepted that while harmful attitudes about gender and power imbalances between and among sexes are at the root of gender-based violence (GBV), the problem can be exacerbated by wider social ills, such as poverty. In Mongolia, the regions with the highest poverty rates are often also those with the highest prevalence rates of GBV, particularly domestic violence (DV).

According to the landmark National GBV Survey published in 2018, the Eastern region has among the highest prevalence of any form of GBV perpetrated by an intimate partner for both lifetime experience with provincial prevalence rates ranging from 54.1% to up to 68.6%. The provincial authorities of selected sites received an array of financial and technical support to set up survivor protection and response mechanisms in their communities, including establishing multidisciplinary teams and a One Stop Service Center (OSSC) to provide services to survivors of GBV/DV. With support from the Project, the government has also been training service providers from various sectors on GBV issues, detection, and response.

The importance of involving duty-bearers of all sectors in responding to GBV/DV becomes clear in stories like that of Tuul* and her sister Ariunaa*. While these adolescent girls grew up in different households, with Ariunaa raised by her grandmother as Tuul stayed with her mother, the two girls experienced strikingly similar traumas growing up. Both girls were victims of sexual violence by their guardians' cohabitating partners – the ones who were supposed to care for and protect them as they grew up. For both Tuul and Ariunaa, the violence went on for years as they were both afraid of confiding in anyone about what they were going through. The abuse took an immense toll on the mental health of the young girls, so much so that Tuul started having thoughts about suicide and made an attempt to take her own life.

It was only during a routine medical check-up at school that an adult in the family finally realized what was going on. Because both girls were minors, the school doctor had to report their case to the town's police, who started an investigation before turning over the case to the provincial police. The local police took the necessary measures to keep the case confidential during the investigation and the two girls were taken in by the OSSC in the provincial center for psychological, health and legal services.

After an investigation by the provincial police, the perpetrators were arrested and the legal process began. With funding from the Family, Child, and Youth Development Agency (FCYDA), Tuul and Ariunaa were able to hire the services of two advocates, with an additional legal representative at the court provided for by the provincial FCYDA. As a result, the perpetrators were sentenced to 18 years and 12 years in jail for the violence they perpetrated against Ariunaa and Tuul.

Tuul and Ariunaa were eventually referred to a home for children, an NGO that specializes in child protection, where they stayed for three months as they continued to receive counseling from the Beautiful Hearts Against Sexual Violence, an NGO partner of the CGBV Project. When the two girls had made enough progress in their recovery to return home, the provincial FCYDA found that because news of their experiences spread among the residents of their small town, the whole family had to be relocated to the provincial center to protect the girls from further harm.

The OSSC staff and provincial FCYDA continue to care and support the girls and their family to make a fresh start to their lives even after they have left the center. With their support, the family managed to have new home and also received additional financial support from the biological fathers of the children, which they were able to get the court to mandate with the support of FCYDA.

Tuul and Ariunaa continue to receive psychosocial support as they finish their education. Tuul now has hopes for the future, and dreams of becoming a hairdresser someday to help support her family.



OSSCS EMPOWER AND BRING CONFIDENCE AND HOPES BACK TO SURVIVORS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE: SARAA'S STORY

** All names have been changed for the protection of the survivors.*

When she first moved to Ulaanbaatar from her home province in Northern Mongolia, Saraa* was a bright young woman filled with hopes and dreams. She was the first in her family to attend university, which meant that she felt both pride in her accomplishments as well as pressure to fulfill the responsibilities and expectations of her family. School kept Saraa busy and the capital city with its countless options and many opportunities fascinated her. But Saraa never stopped reminiscing about her hometown. The city did not feel like home, even as she started to build a life there with a job as a school teacher and a place of her own. She even tried going on dates with a few men, but she could not bring herself to open up her heart to someone who came from a very different background and did not share her values.

This shared yearning for home is what sparked the instant connection between Saraa and Boldoo*, who was also from her home province. They met not long after Boldoo was left to raise his infant child when the mother passed away. He was in such a vulnerable state and shared Saraa's homesickness as well, and this drew them even closer. Saraa was even confident and willing to start a life together with Boldoo and share the responsibility of raising his child. Only a few months after their first meeting, Saraa and Boldoo got married and moved back to their hometown to build their life back in their hometown.

Unfortunately, life was not as easy as they expected it to be. Even with his educational credentials, Boldoo had a hard time finding a job while Saraa was expected to stay home to care for the child. This difficult situation led Boldoo to start drinking, and soon, he was behaving like a completely different person from the man that Saraa knew. When Saraa tried to find work because they barely had enough to feed the baby, Boldoo kept insisting that she stayed at home but eventually, Saraa started working.

That was when the violence began.

Boldoo felt jealous, and he took this out on Saraa by hitting her and beating her. The hopeful girl who came to Ulaanbaatar full of dreams for the future was gone. Instead, Saraa lived a life of fear, unable to escape her violent partner. She blamed herself for her choices and mistakenly believed that she deserved the life that she had. Sometimes, she even had suicidal thoughts, but she always overcame this because her love for her child was stronger. She was waiting until the child was a little older

before Saraa started looking for another job, but this plan fell through when she became pregnant. Instead of losing hope, Saraa was instead hoping that her relationship with Boldoo would improve with the new baby, but it never did.

Whenever the violence would become especially bad, Saraa would call the police, but a full investigation was never pursued. However, one day, Saraa felt that she had had enough. The violence escalated to a point she could no longer bear, so she went to the police station on her own to request for a full investigation into Boldoo. This prompted the police to send the officer in charge of domestic issues to investigate the family and assess their risk. The officer concluded that Saraa was in a high-risk domestic violence situation, so she and her two children were moved to the provincial One Stop Service Center (OSSC) for survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), which was founded in 2018 under the Combating GBV in Mongolia Project. Staying at the OSSC and receiving different services renewed Saraa's hope. She was relieved to put an end to the violent relationship, and the help she received encouraged her to make the decision to file for a divorce so she and her children could move on with their lives.

Saraa often had doubts about her ability to raise two children on her own, but the support she received at the OSSC renewed her confidence in herself. During her stay, she underwent one-on-one psychological counselling sessions, and attended support group meetings to help her

through her journey of healing and empowerment. Saraa also received free legal advice and health check-ups that helped her through her recovery.

Saraa's story represents stories of many survivors of violence. GBV, especially intimate partner violence, diminishes survivors and keeps them in a dark place where they could not see their own strengths and worth, which then hinders them from breaking free from the violence. The common misconception is that intimate partner violence happens only in families from low-income families and between couples who are under-educated. In reality, violence can be committed and experienced by anyone including those like Boldoo who are highly educated.

The underlying cause of intimate partner violence is the power imbalance wherein one wants to control the other with violence, gender stereotypes such as women are the main caregivers in the family, as well as negative attitudes and stereotypes regarding the gender and sex of people. All these were exacerbated by alcoholism, poverty and unemployment in Saraa and Boldoo's relationship.

Thanks to the services and support from the OSSC, Saraa regained her self-confidence and her optimism for the future. This motivated her to develop her skills, and more importantly, to trust herself. This empowerment that Saraa achieved through her own hard work with the support of those around her was important for her to hold onto,

especially as she won custody over her two children when the divorce was finalized with legal assistance from the OSSC. Saraa now lives happily with her children in her own apartment, and has a full-time job at one of the provincial organizations.

On her first day at work, Saraa felt the same excitement and hope that she once felt as the young woman who moved to Ulaanbaatar for a brighter future.



LIFE-SAVING SERVICES IN THE MIDDLE OF A PANDEMIC: NCAV STORY

For women, children and men in violent homes, One Stop Service Centers (OSSCs) and shelters across the country can mean the difference between life and death.

OSSCs and shelters provide essential services to survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) and domestic violence (DV), such as safe and secure accommodations, as well as medical, psychosocial, and legal services in-house or through referrals. In normal circumstances, these services help survivors get through the difficult journey of escaping and healing from violent households; in emergency situations, such as pandemics, they become even more critical as such crises can exacerbate the GBV situation in the country by not only presenting new triggers of violence, but also making it more difficult for survivors to seek help.

While the Mongolian government's strict measures to prevent a COVID-19 health crisis have prevented a community outbreak so far, the country was not spared from the social and economic consequences that the rest of the globe is likewise facing. In the first half of the year when the world was just beginning to understand the pandemic and the prevention measures were at their strictest, there was a spike (30%) in reported GBV cases compared to the same period in the previous year.

"The [partial] lockdowns led to more people stuck in their homes with many getting drunk often as there is nothing else to do. This has triggered a rise in domestic violence that is also not as quickly detected," said the social worker in the shelter operated by the National Center Against Violence (NCAV). "For example, when a child was at risk of violence prior to the pandemic, the family doctor, school teacher, or local social worker would be able to see signs of violence as they interact with the child regularly. With the new restrictions, it is harder to detect and help these survivors."

NCAV is the leading NGO working on GBV and DV issues, and has been an important implementing partner of the Combating GBV in Mongolia Project from the very beginning. With support from the Project, the provincial branch of the NCAV runs an OSSC in Bayankhongor province and the NCAV runs a shelter in Ulaanbaatar with support from the project. Since the pandemic, they have seen such a dramatic growth in the number of clients seeking help in their centers, as well as in the

number of calls their hotline receives, that they could no longer keep up with the demand.

The economic recession brought about by the pandemic also contributed to the growing number of GBV cases. NCAV noticed that many of the new clients were women who recently lost their jobs. This rise in unemployment coupled with price increases and shortages have increased household tensions, and made many survivors more dependent on their abusive partners. NCAV also noted that sexual violence against adolescent girls and children have also been on the rise. With the extended school closures, children are left alone or sent to distant relatives in rural areas where they are at greater risk of violence.

Faced with this influx of new clients as well as the uncertainty that the pandemic brought to both their personal and professional lives, service providers in OSSCs and shelters struggled to balance the need to continue to provide these essential and life-saving services while also keeping their clients and themselves safe from the disease. For example, early on in the pandemic, institutional care centers, including OSSCs and shelters for GBV survivors, refused new clients out of fears about COVID-19. NCAV shelter worker in Ulaanbaatar shared that the strict restrictions on gatherings and movements also led to delays in providing survivors with the services that they need, as well as with resolutions to their cases. OSSC and shelter staff were unable to accompany their clients to health

centers, police stations and government establishments, while meetings among multidisciplinary teams and other service providers were put on hold.

To adapt to the changing circumstances, NCAV's hotline expanded its operating hours with the Project's support. The hotline now runs around the clock every day to provide information to survivors, as well as crisis counselling as needed. With UNFPA's guidelines on service provision during COVID-19 pandemic for OSSCs and shelters, NCAV was also able to prepare their staff and facilities to provide continued and safe services, especially in case of a community outbreak in the country. NCAV has also procured personal protective equipment like masks and gloves, as well as hygiene and sanitation items for their centers. And all these survivor-centered initiatives are ones that NCAV staff continue to prioritize even as they face the challenges that the pandemic has brought to their own lives and families.

«I often feel that GBV survivors are living in a situation much like the frontlines of a war,» said the social worker. «This is even truer during crisis situations like this pandemic. Our work as service providers is to help them escape the warzone and find peace in their lives.»

FAMILIES FACE LOTS OF ISSUES.
IT'S OKAY TO SEEK HELP WHEN
YOU ARE STRESSED.



102 Police hotline 102

107 Domestic violence hotline 107

108 Child protection hotline 108



IF YOU ARE AT RISK OF EXPERIENCING
DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE CALL
THE HOTLINE NUMBERS FOR FREE

24/7

YOUR INFORMATION IS STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

TACKLING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE AMIDST THE INDUSTRY BOOM: UMNUGOVI CASE STUDY

In the last decade, Mongolia has enjoyed major economic growth largely driven by the booming extractives sector. Home to 10% of the world's known coal reserves as well as significant copper and gold reserves, Mongolia has drawn the attention of local and multinational extractives companies. This has led to the proliferation of small- to large-scale mining operations that underpins the rapid but unstable economic growth with rates in the high-20s.

While the impacts to the economy have so far been positive, key research on the sociocultural impacts of the mining sector boom in Mongolia has identified a strong association to GBV¹. Any industry boom often brings with it socioeconomic changes, like rapid industrialization and a growing transient population, that transforms the community's culture. This, coupled with the complicated working conditions of many mining companies, particularly the 21 days to 7 days work-break schedule, have in turn led to a change in the relationship dynamics among couples, as well as the rise of alcoholism as a form of stress relief.

With its abundance of mineral deposits, the Umnugovi province has become the epicenter of the mining industry boom in the last decade. Covering the southern end of the Gobi Desert within Mongolia's territory, Umnugovi is the largest province in the country with almost 70,000 residents living in its 165,380 square kilometers, and almost as many transient populations working in primarily the mining sector. Umnugovi also has the country's third-highest prevalence rate of lifetime experience of intimate partner violence at 63.3%² - an issue that local officials working with domestic violence survivors believe might linked back to the mining sector boom.

Many survivors of domestic violence who have sought help shared that when their husbands who work at mining sites come home after long shifts at work, they would be violent and abusive. Local officials also observed that many miners who come home after three full weeks of work would unwind by drinking with friends in bars and clubs as often as they could during their brief breaks. This frequent drunkenness combined

1 Cane, I., Terbish, A. & Byambasuren, O. (2014), "Mapping Gender-Based Violence and Mining Infrastructure in Mongolian Mining Communities"

2 National Statistics Office & UNFPA (2018), "Breaking the Silence: 2017 National Study on Gender-based Violence in Mongolia"

with the buildup of feelings of jealousy and suspicions about their wives' activities while they are away would sometimes trigger the perpetration of domestic violence.

According to data collected by the National Police Agency and local One Stop Service Centers (OSSC) and shelters for GBV survivors, the GBV situation worsened even further since the COVID-19 pandemic. More and more clients were seeking help at the OSSC. The pandemic led to the closure of some mining sites, so people's livelihood and income have either decreased or disappeared completely. Many had to return home unemployed. This caused problems and tension among family relationships. The local government also prohibited the sale of alcohol in bars and restaurants to discourage the public from going out and spending time in public places, but this initiative did not discourage alcohol consumption altogether; it just encouraged people to drink and get drunk within their homes. This tension together with the financial stress as well as the increased alcohol consumption at home would trigger violence. That was why GBV, especially sexual and psychological violence, is becoming more prevalent these days in Umnugobi. More people seeking help at the local OSSC, but part of it is because of the lower tolerance and increased reporting among the public.

Protecting Survivors, Preventing GBV

With the high prevalence rates of GBV in the province, there is a clear need for mechanisms to help GBV survivors heal, to protect them from further harm, and to hold perpetrators accountable for their actions.

However, many decision-makers were initially skeptical of the need to invest in addressing GBV because of the belief that it is not a pressing enough issue to be addressed at the provincial level.

In the past, gender issues like GBV were not given enough attention at all. Through advocacy work and the comprehensive training programs for those obligated by the Law to Combat Domestic Violence (LCDV) to respond to GBV, the attitudes of decision-makers toward GBV soon changed. Eventually the government allocated funding to GBV response, which is a clear sign of their commitment. One of the biggest impacts of the Project's support is bringing attention to this issue among duty-bearers, and as the GBV response mechanisms were established and expanded, public awareness on these issues also increased.

One of the first and most important initiatives was to upgrade the shelter for domestic violence survivors into a provincial OSSC offering a variety of services to survivors. While the "Combating GBV in Mongolia" Project provided technical and financial support to set up the OSSC, the provincial government needed to commit to investing in the Center as well to ensure its sustainability. However, the local government had very limited resources, especially at the onset when decision-makers were still not fully convinced about the need for a Center in their community.

This is why the local agencies had to all collaborate and explore innovative and cost-efficient solutions to their challenges. For example, the local government was strategic in choosing a plot of land next to the police station as the location of the OSSC, while the staff requested that the OSSC be included in the nightly patrols of the police. This ensured that

the Center would be secured and protected 24/7 without any additional costs.

The OSSC staff, with the support of the local FCYDA, have also been working on building partnerships with the private sector to mobilize resources. These partnerships have led to regular donations of food and medicine to the Center. A greenhouse with 9 types of fruits and vegetables was also recently set up in the OSSC to provide the residents and staff regular access to food.

The OSSC also tries to be more responsive to the specific needs of its clients. One example is their response to their discovery that while rooms were available in the Center, many clients who are used to living in a ger found it difficult to adapt to life within the house. The center decided to purchase a ger and set it up within the spacious backyard of the Center, so now clients can choose the type of accommodations that makes them feel the most comfortable. The staff also taught clients how to sew masks to protect themselves from COVID-19, as well as to be turned into a potential source of income.

The OSSC staff also help clients prepare for life after their stay in the OSSC. To illustrate this the OSSC coordinator shared the case of a GBV survivor who has sought help at the OSSC multiple times. She has tried to leave her abusive husband many times, but would end up returning to him because she had no livelihood and place to leave. This is why the OSSC helped her find donors to purchase a ger so that she could live in near her relatives.

The OSSC even provides services to other vulnerable groups beyond GBV survivors. For example, a young university student was left homeless when schools closed because of COVID-19. He did not want to return to the orphanage, so he sought help from the OSSC. The Center staff facilitated his transition to independence by securing temporary shelter for him at a friend's place as they searched for a foster family. They also helped him find work at a local company to support himself in the meantime.

However, the OSSC continues to face challenges in securing funding for human resources. At the moment, only 3 full-time staff are employed by the OSSC, and they need to alternate shifts to ensure that the Center can operate 24/7. Unfortunately, budget that was initially earmarked for additional staff was not approved by the local government, but both the OSSC staff and FCYDA continue to advocate for more resources.

In the meantime, with support from both the local FCYDA and the CGBV Project, the 3 staff members are regularly trained and capacitated to improve and broaden their knowledge and skills to more effectively help survivors. Under the Project, the OSSC staff had taken part in study tours in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar on service provision, as well as an on-the-job training program with the National Center Against Violence. The staff also had the opportunity to be trained by lawyers, social workers, and even art therapists on multiple facets of service delivery, which were complemented by practical guidelines on service provision.

Additionally, beyond the OSSC staff and MDTs in the provincial capital

Dalandzadgad, the provincial FCYDA also made sure to visit all the soums within the province to train the local MDTs on relevant laws as well as on service delivery for GBV survivors. As an incentive to encourage constant improvement of duty-bearers, the FCYDA even launched a competition among MDTs wherein the most effective team would win a motorcycle. FCYDA is working toward strengthening ties with community leaders of bags, some of which are up to 500km away from the capital, to establish mechanisms for referrals for GBV survivors.

As a result of all these initiatives as well as the commitment of the OSSC staff and local authorities, the feedback from clients who sought help at the OSSC remain overwhelmingly positive. The OSSC maintains close partnerships with other sectors and members of the MDTs to ensure comprehensive and holistic service delivery, and to ensure that these different duty-bearers know about the OSSC and the services available in it so that they could properly refer survivors without compromising the confidentiality of the Center. The local Coordination Council for Crime Prevention (CCCCP) also regularly organizes case conferences to encourage multi-sectoral cooperation. This support from the public has in turn led to an increase in support among decision-makers over time.



However, the OSSC staff knew that to they also needed to engage with the community and reach out to vulnerable groups so that survivors would not only know how and where to seek help, but more importantly to recognize that GBV is a human rights violation that they do not need to endure. To balance this need to raise awareness while also prioritizing the safety and privacy of the Center and its clients, the OSSC and FCYDA produced and distributed key chains, refrigerator magnets, and other promotional materials with the hotline number.

With all the advocacy initiatives, people began to understand that GBV has many forms and this helped them properly assess if they are experiencing violence or not. However, many who live in remote areas may not be as informed about GBV, or has simply accepted violence as a part of life.

With this in mind, the province also launched efforts toward GBV prevention. One recent key initiative is the FCYDA's petition to change the work schedule in mining companies from the prevailing 21 days to 7 days' work-break ratio to a more manageable 14 days of work for every 7 days of rest. This proposal aimed to reduce the stress of mining sector workers that would in turn reduce the triggers and risks of GBV. As a result of this advocacy, one company has already applied the proposed schedule while the FCYDA is working with 3 more companies on the issue.

The FCYDA has also been working with parents to become more involved in GBV prevention through the establishment of parent councils at provincial-level agencies that are tasked with staff welfare, including tackling GBV in their organization. The members are all educated on GBV issues, childcare, and other relevant topics to perform their council responsibilities while also raising their children with gender equitable values.

The local authority shared that the future intervention of GBV response and prevention in the province will be to prioritize the sensitization of the new government at all levels to ensure that the initiatives are sustained and even expanded. The OSSC staff also highlighted the need to improve the OSSC facilities, particularly by making it more accessible for people with disabilities and to work with perpetrators toward GBV prevention.

More resources should also be allocated to services that help clients transition to life after their stay in an OSSC. This was an observation of both duty-bearers and clients of the Center. For example, support groups could be formed to help survivors heal from the trauma in the long-term. Livelihood skills training should also be offered so that survivors can become empowered and financially independent. This can help them avoid the pressure to return to their violent partners out of necessity for survival.

GOOD PRACTICES ON THE GROUND

A multitude of initiatives have been implemented under the «Combating Gender-Based Violence in Mongolia» (CGBV) Project in the four years of its implementation, beginning with the two important achievements that catalyzed all succeeding efforts to strengthen national capacity to address gender-based violence (GBV): the passage of the Law to Combat Domestic Violence that criminalized domestic violence and enumerated the state's responsibility in combating GBV, and the publication of the National GBV Survey that revealed the true prevalence of GBV in the country.

Since then, Mongolia has made great strides in GBV prevention and response, with the bulk of work spurred by the CGBV Project, one of the first and most comprehensive endeavors in the field. Most notably, survivor protection mechanisms were set up at the national and sub-national levels to ensure that GBV survivors are able to access immediate and adequate services and care to escape their violent situations, to heal from their trauma, and eventually to reintegrate into society.

This is why one of the most integral interventions introduced by the CGBV Project is the establishment and continued support of One Stop Service Centers (OSSCs) for survivors of GBV. OSSCs provide GBV survivors with accommodations, as well as health, psychological, legal, counselling and protection services. A total of 11 OSSCs were established under the Project, and an additional 6 existing OSSCs continue to receive technical and financial support. Because this endeavor is still relatively new to the country, the CGBV Project also ensures that OSSC staff and other duty-bearers are regularly given the opportunity to upskill and build their capacity to provide services in an effective and compassionate way.

One of these opportunities was a local study tour organized in June 2019 to 3 of the longest-running provincial OSSCs in the country. This served as an opportunity for the staff of newly launched Centers to learn from the years of experiences of the longer-running OSSCs.

The OSSC highlighted here was established in 2013 through the efforts of the local government and UNFPA, and under the CGBV Project, this Center has been steadily receiving financial support for its continued operations as well as technical support to build their local capacity. The OSSC sets itself apart in three key ways: first, its strong and institutionalized multi-sectoral collaboration mechanisms; second, its focus on psychosocial services; and third, its efforts in providing legal services to the survivors.

In the first area, the OSSC has been leading many efforts to facilitate the meeting of stakeholders to reaffirm their commitment to combating GBV and to delineate their responsibilities for more effective multi-sectoral collaboration. In 2018, the establishment of the OSSC's Board of Directors was approved by the Provincial Governor. The Board of Directors, which is headed by the Deputy Governor, meets regularly to discuss the Center's annual work plan and report on results so far, and most recently, it developed the guidelines for multi-sectoral collaboration mechanisms to improve and streamline the process.

Beyond this, the Center has established contracts with key stakeholders in the province to provide free multidisciplinary services to OSSC clients. In particular, partnerships were forged with the Provincial Hospital, Police Agency, Prosecutor's Office, Health Department, Forensic Agency, Education Department, Labor and Welfare Agency, Family, Child and Youth Development Agency, and the Union of Advocates. The Center staff also ensured that the staff of these agencies were thoroughly trained in

gender issues and GBV so that services were delivered effectively and sensitively.

Related to this is the OSSC's many efforts to engage the public in combating GBV in the province. For example, last 8 March 2019, on International Women's Day, the Center staff organized a street demonstration throughout the province. A total of 3,000 people attended the demonstration in the provincial center, while 1,600 people attended the demonstration in smaller towns. Aside from raising public awareness on the issue, the show of force also caught the attention of the Provincial Governor, who met with OSSC clients as well as 400 women from vulnerable groups to understand their experiences and concerns. This led to an allocation of MNT 15 million from the Government's Office to fund the operations of the OSSC. The Center also partnered with NGOs, such as Red Cross and World Vision, as well as private companies and businesspeople to obtain supplies for the center (e.g., personal hygiene items, clothes, food) for free or at discounted rates.

The second area where the OSSC excels is in providing legal assistance to its clients. Many survivors would refuse to press charges or drop out of the legal proceedings in the middle of things. Sometimes, this is because of the lack of funding to pay for advocates, lawyers, and the other legal expenses. Other times, relatives of the perpetrators, who are also often the relatives of the survivors themselves, would exert pressure on the survivor to simply "forgive" the violence and to not seek legal recourse.

This was especially common among adolescent girls who suffered from incestuous violence. Older relatives, including even their mothers, would stop them from pursuing a case against their abusers. In these cases, the OSSC would take in the survivor all throughout the legal process to shield them from emotional harm.

The OSSC employs a legal advisor who works closely with the clients to guide them in providing evidence and compelling testimonies to investigators, prosecutors, and their lawyers/advocates for the best chances of a conviction. The resident Legal Advisor of the OSSC, shared that the OSSC recently partnered with the Union of Advocates in the province to implement a program wherein lawyers and advocates obtain academic credits for their professional development by providing free legal and advocacy services to women and children GBV survivors. This partnership resulted in more convictions, as now, survivors could pursue legal action without worrying about its cost, which they may not be able to afford on their own.

The OSSC also partnered with the Prosecutor's Office to conduct a review of past cases handled by the Center and its Multi-Disciplinary Teams (MDTs) to spot pain points and other barriers that survivors face in pushing through the legal process to hold the perpetrators accountable. Using these lessons, the Prosecutors trained the MDTs in effectively drafting strong and compelling demand letters to advocate for certain cases as needed. These efforts created significant improvements in the success rate of cases filed, which in turn helped reduce the culture of impunity in the province.

Finally, the OSSC is also so far unique in the priority it places on providing sustained psychological care for survivors. This was a difficult lesson that the staff learned after some of their clients, who then did not receive long-term psychological care after leaving the center, resorted to suicide attempts and other harmful behaviors like prostitution and alcoholism.

One of the psychologists at the OSSC, shared that the best results were seen among survivors who stayed in the Center longer, thus receiving psychological counseling for a longer time as well. The psychologists also ensure that the case plan for each survivor is developed in consultation with the survivor, so that the interventions, including psychological counseling, are based on their particular needs and circumstances.

Young survivors (aged 4-8 years) are also quicker to improve due to their inability to fully process what has happened to them, while teenagers have proven to be the most unstable in their path to recovery. The OSSC psychologist shared that the Center uses art therapy as a form of catharsis, as well as a medium for young girls to communicate what had happened to them when they do not have sufficient vocabulary to describe it verbally.

The tireless commitment of the OSSC staff shows through the proactive and effective initiatives that they put in place, setting the bar for good practices in OSSC management. These efforts have resulted in significant improvements in the GBV response mechanisms in the province, and consequently, the lives of the survivors who do seek help.

One survivor, AZ, shared her personal experiences in seeking refuge in the OSSC. After discovering that her young daughter was sexually assaulted by her husband, she and her daughter fled their home to seek help from the Police, who then referred her to the OSSC. During her stay in the center, she received all the routine services offered, but two in particular stood out for her: psychological counseling and the free legal services.

«When I first came to the center, my mental state was very unstable.» AZ shared. «I was depressed, and my memories were all mixed up. I had no sense of what was happening around me. This is why I was very happy in the Center. The psychologists really helped me find mental stability.»

AZ and her daughter both received regular psychological counseling from the in-house expert. She noted that even after just 3 to 4 sessions,

she could already feel the difference in her state of mind, and noticed the same improvements in her daughter. AZ also shared that their sessions with the psychologist continued even after they left the Center.

Aside from the psychological services, AZ also noted the impact that the free legal services made on their lives. “I couldn’t afford attorney fees,” she said. “The lowest fees are about MNT 800,000 and I have no way of affording that.”

The Center arranged for free legal counsel for AZ when she decided to pursue a criminal case against her husband. After months of work, the initial court hearing happened in May 2019 during which the husband was sentenced to 18 years in prison for his crime. The husband’s side appealed to overturn the sentence, but thanks to the determination of AZ and the hard work and support of her legal team and the OSSC staff, the court decided in June 2019 to uphold the sentence of 18 years.

All these efforts helped AZ and her daughter in their path to recovery. “We feel very protected, and we feel that the people care for us,” AZ shared. “Even the Governor came to visit, and that was such a big surprise that I started crying from happiness.”

REACHING OUT TO SURVIVORS

Every workday is unique from the last for the OSSC psychologist. On some days, she sits down with survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) to provide psychosocial counselling; on other days, she goes out to visit families to assess their risk levels and detect any signs of violence and other vulnerabilities among the members of the household. Occasionally, she also finds herself in more difficult situations.

While the psychologist was giving a witness statement at the Police Station, a middle-aged woman rushed into the station in a panic and seemingly lost. She was crying out for help, claiming that an acquaintance sexually violated her teenage daughter. With her experience and expertise dealing with survivors and their families, the psychologist stepped in and approached the mother to talk about how to help her daughter, including by taking advantage of the services offered in OSSCs.

This is only one of the many cases that the OSSC handled since it opened its doors in January 2020. Despite being the newest provincial OSSC established under the Combating GBV in Mongolia (CGBV) Project, the center already enjoys the trust of both the community as well as other duty-bearers like the police. Most clients find their way to the OSSC through referrals from the police, but some survivors were found and approached by the center's staff as a result of their own proactive outreach efforts. The OSSC staff also ramped up their efforts to reach their communities when the COVID-19 pandemic first broke out; in the last few months alone, the team had already conducted three household visiting initiatives to assess risks within families and to introduce the essential and lifesaving services provided in the OSSC.

Initially, the provincial Family, Child, and Youth Development Agency (FCYDA) established a shelter of domestic violence survivors in 2015 with support from the Government of Australia. The shelter had eight beds and only provided accommodations and referral services to its clients. The local authorities knew that these facilities and services needed to be expanded to reach out even more survivors.

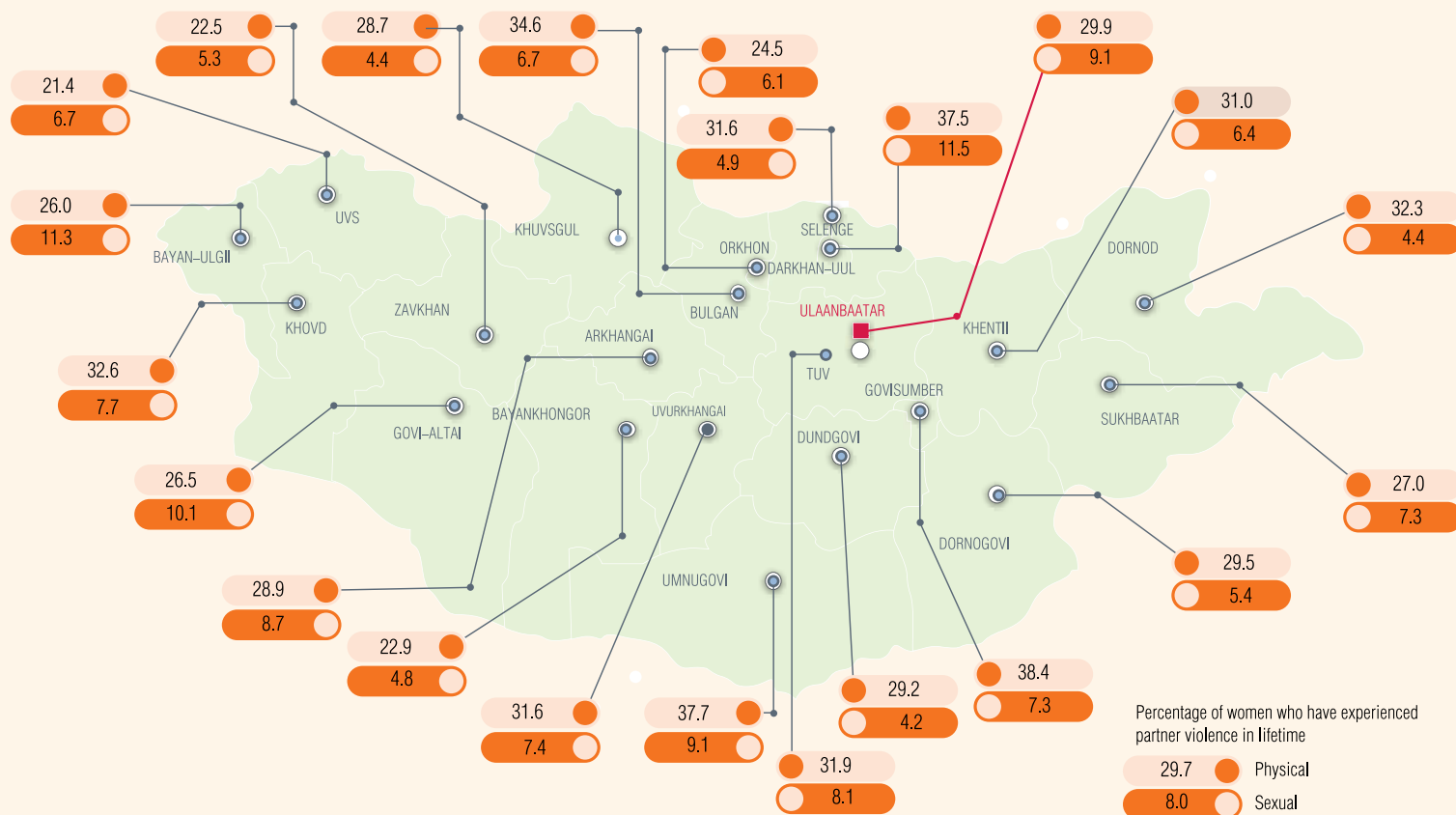
As one of the focus sites of the CGBV Project, a new building was constructed to house the OSSC that now offers comprehensive services including safe accommodations, health, psychological, legal, and protection services within the center, and referral services to more specialized care. The new building also now meets global standards for GBV survivors' protection, and can safely accommodate 16 survivors at any time.

On top of being able to accommodate more survivors and provide more essential services in-house, the OSSC expansion also led to more funding opportunities for new projects, as well as more space to offer various activities and trainings that can help empower survivors. With the bigger facility and the required equipment provided by the Project, the OSSC started organizing capacity building training for survivors, like sewing and crafts-making. The OSSC also built a greenhouse where survivors can learn to grow vegetables, and that supplies the center with food more economically. All these activities are aimed at helping survivors to improve their skills and find jobs while encouraging them to regain their trust in themselves and build better lives after their stay at the center.

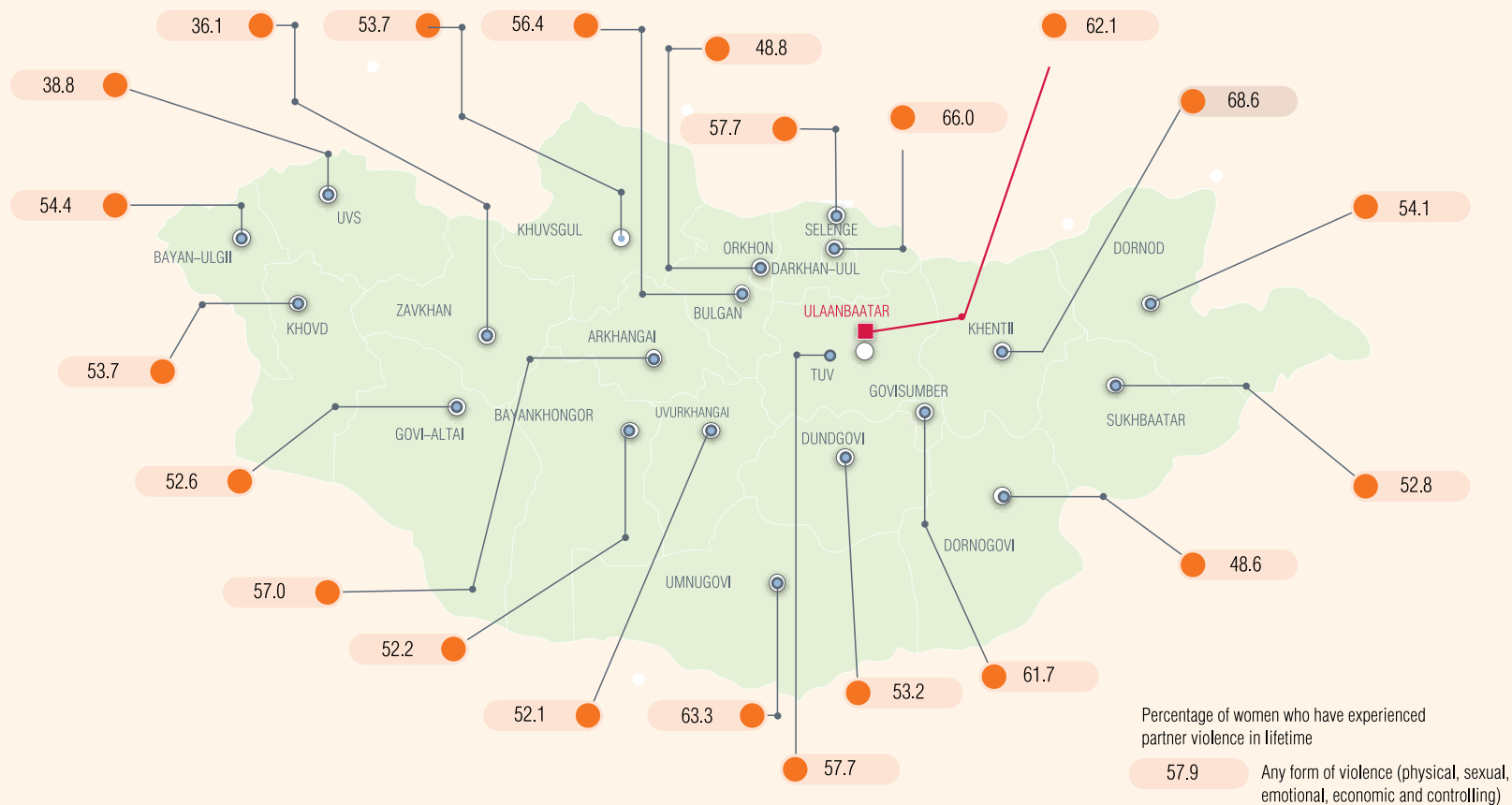
«Expanding the survivor protection facilities in the province from a shelter to an OSSC has opened many doors to new opportunities for both us and the survivors,» said the psychologist. She points out that their OSSC status has helped them seek more funding and support from both state agencies and donors to improve their services to better respond to the needs of the survivors. «We used to write many proposals for funding in the past, but we were unable to secure the resources we needed because we were too small. Now that we have a provincial OSSC, we have begun to hear more positive responses from potential donors and partners.»

The OSSC recently won a grant of MNT 13 Million from the National Coordination Council for Crime Prevention. This grant was for a proposal they developed to enhance their services by developing training modules and procuring books and training materials. Knowing the important role they play in saving and improving the lives of the most vulnerable in their communities, the team continues to explore opportunities for funding and capacity building, as well as for the survivors themselves to become more empowered and capable to move forward in living violence-free lives.

PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED PHYSICAL AND/OR SEXUAL PARTNER VIOLENCE IN LIFETIME, BY AIMAGS AND CAPITAL CITY



PERCENTAGE OF WOMEN WHO HAVE EXPERIENCED ANY FORM OF VIOLENCE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN LIFETIME, BY AIMAGS AND CAPITAL CITY



GOOD PRACTICES & LESSONS LEARNED

The CGBV Project is the first of its kind, and remains to be the largest and most comprehensive endeavors to tackle GBV in the country. The Project succeeded in the objectives it set out for itself, and as a result, considerable progress has been made in generating data, advocating for a conducive policy and legal framework, raising awareness of rights-holders and duty-bearers, and establishing effective survivor protection mechanisms. Below are some lessons learned and recommendations that could hopefully inform and guide future initiatives in this field:

1. Information- and experience-sharing activities among duty-bearers in the same field is one of the most successful initiatives in building their capacity, and this was especially true for service providers working with communities. Activities like local study tours for OSSC staff were particularly effective as information-sharing was made tangible by on-the-ground experiences and site visits. Participants were also able to discuss common challenges and share solutions and good practices that have already proven effective in the Mongolian context. As such, the lessons learned from these activities were actionable and more immediately implementable than lecture-type capacity building activities. These activities also gave OSSC staff a chance to interact among each other and build rapport, which led to closer collaboration moving forward.
2. With different agencies having different mandates, priorities, and expertise, it is important to ensure that there are mechanisms that allow for regular multi-stakeholder alignments. The establishment and activation of the Technical Committee composed of the Project's technical focal points from each implementing partner agency, as well as the Communications and Media Management Sub-Committee composed of communication focal points from the agencies, encouraged regular consultations and collaboration among the different implementing agencies that allowed for a truly multidisciplinary approach to planning and implementation. This also helped ensure smoother Steering Committee Processes as collaboration and agreements were already reached at the technical level.
3. It is crucial to ensure that all public information and communication activities are harmonized so that messages disseminated to communities are consistent and do not conflict with each other. As learned from the Project's experience in launching national communications campaigns, creating a consolidated overarching campaign to which different agencies can contribute allows for the capitalization of joint resources and comparative advantages of multiple actors. As a result, more people were reached, the messages and activities were amplified and reinforcing, and the risk of confusing the public with conflicting or misaligned messages was reduced.

4. While some activities, especially community engagement initiatives, are best done in person, it is important to explore and maximize available technology when possible and appropriate. For example, online video-conference platforms were especially valuable in ensuring that close coordination among partners was not disrupted during the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as in continuing the implementation of capacity building efforts among duty-bearers. While these online platforms cannot fully replace in-person modalities especially for more interactive workshop methodologies, it has proven nonetheless to be a cost-efficient and effective way to hold meetings and capacity building activities, especially when external factors restrict the in-person activities that can be held.
5. High turnover rates among government staff as well as changes in focal-points or decision-makers within partner agencies can cause significant delays in implementing initiatives. This is because it required repeated sensitization and capacity building of new staff, often starting from basic-level knowledge again, as well as advocacy work among government staff to prioritize GBV and other gender issues. This is why the institutionalization of GBV training of duty-bearers is key in not only minimizing the challenges faced when transitioning staff, but also ensuring that all duty-bearers have at least baseline knowledge of gender and GBV issues so that any service provided by the government is gender-sensitive. Institutionalization can be in the form of including GBV modules in regular trainings conducted by ministries and other agencies as well as in the curricula of universities offering relevant degrees. It can also entail designating an agency ultimately responsible for the capacity building and sensitization of all duty-bearers – a role that the National Committee on Gender Equality fulfills in Mongolia.
6. The continuous delivery of quality services to survivors and perpetrators alike require adequate and sustainable funding that covers not only operational costs, but constant improvements of infrastructure, human resources, and the services themselves. This means that it is key to institutionalize funding mechanisms that ensure sustainable budget allocations for gender issues, including GBV, regardless of the individuals in power. Gender financing legislation should thus be passed that mandates the national and local government to allocate a level of resources that is realistic and backed by research and experience.
7. Data generation has been at the heart of the Project's activities as data supports advocacy work and guides the implementation of initiatives. While national prevalence data is available and databases for administrative statistics have been established and are fully functional, there remains to be a gap in ensuring the harmonized collection, analysis and dissemination particularly of administrative statistics. The existing systems are currently incompatible for integration, and information-sharing among relevant agencies are done manually and are limited in scope. This can result in double-counting of incidences and makes analysis and trendspotting particularly difficult. As solutions are being explored

to address the challenge of database integration, there needs to be closer collaboration among data focal points of relevant agencies so that the GBV situation in the country is more holistically and comprehensively understood and in turn addressed.

8. The bulk of the CGBV Project's initiatives include reform and innovations at the policy and institutional levels to address GBV, and as such, it follows that most indicators consider progress at those levels as well. However, GBV impacts individuals, and ultimately,

all the policies seek to improve the lives of people. As such, it is important to include indicators that measure the impacts at the level of survivors to ensure that interventions are fulfilling the needs of the intended beneficiaries effectively. These indicators can include qualitative methods, such as retrospective self-assessments of change, that are able to give a more nuanced sense of the concrete impacts of initiatives.

