

AT2030

Case Study: Full Report

Inclusive Design and Accessibility of the Built Environment in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Prepared by
GDI Hub

**Cluster 4 Capacity
& Participation**
Inclusive Infrastructure

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Summary: Becoming a more inclusive city

Ulaanbaatar city presents unique challenges and opportunities for accessible and inclusive design. The city is full of divisions between its more developed core city and the surrounding Ger areas. The Ger areas are unplanned settlements that have grown to become 70 percent of the city's population in the last 30 years. These parts of the city lack access to basic infrastructure, widening inequality, impacting health and wellbeing and presenting immense urban development challenges. The city's architecture and urban planning is blending its nomadic history, 20th century Soviet influences and contemporary plans towards a thriving technological city. These wider forces influence the extent to which disability inclusion can be embedded in the built environment.



Ulaanbaatar's Ger areas surround the city centre.
Image source: Google Streetview

In 2016, Mongolia adopted the 'Law Protecting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities', seven years after ratifying the UNCRPD. The law marks an important step in making progress towards inclusion across all sectors. In the built environment, this is accompanied by accessibility standards that were first developed in 2009 and are currently being updated. However, the standards are not mandatory which creates a barrier to implementing and enforcing them. Current understanding on accessibility and inclusion is being driven by international influences and standards and is not fundamentally embedded in architectural training or urban development programme delivery.

Ulaanbaatar's Ger areas and unique geographical, climatic and cultural context require an approach to inclusive and accessible design and planning in the built environment that embeds local context and knowledge. Currently the design of

accessibility is centred on basic physical modifications such as ramps and accessible toilets, inclusive design has the potential to do much more. Inclusive design can be applied across the city's urban development and planning initiatives to integrate local perspectives and amplify the voices of people with disabilities, who have some of the best understanding of how the built environment is



Participants felt stigma in the built environment

inequitable. To ensure inclusion and equity are embedded in the built environment; urban planning, infrastructure and building projects should set a vision for inclusive design that can ensure consistent implementation.

An inclusive built environment creates access and opportunity, allows for participation and builds equity in society. It is the result of collaborate efforts across society to ensure that no one is left behind. There is appetite for making Ulaanbaatar more inclusive across policy, built environment industry and community stakeholders and a reasonable understanding of the wider benefits of inclusive design. Setting a comprehensive vision and action plan for a more inclusive Ulaanbaatar should be complemented by training and education in disability inclusion and inclusive design across stakeholders and the general public. These steps would allow the city's design and development to accommodate and celebrate diversity, improving the lives of everybody: including people with disabilities.

“An inclusive and accessible Ulaanbaatar is somewhere that can be experienced by everybody in a fair and equal way. By creating safe and accessible environments for all members of the community the city can allow everyone to access and participate in the opportunities they would like.”

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