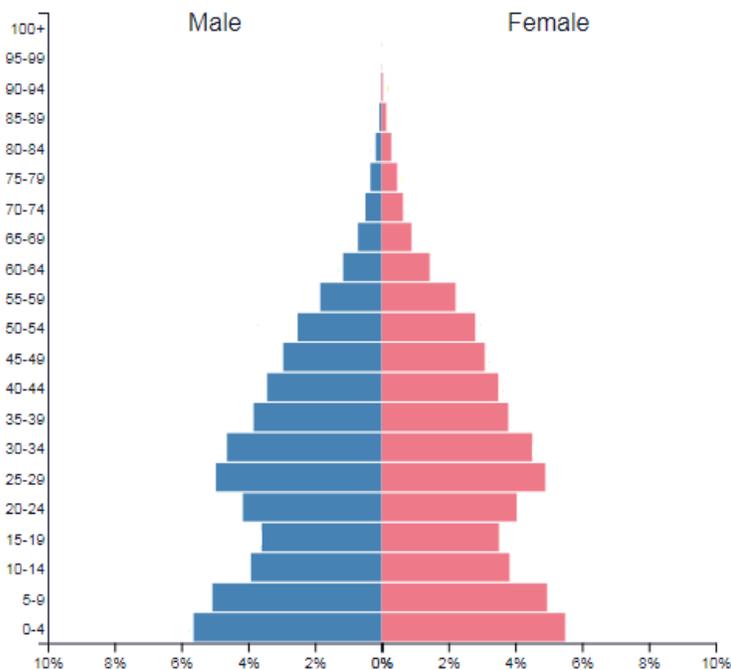


Case Study on Youth Issues: Mongolia

Introduction

With a population of just over three million, but considered the seventh largest landmass in Asia, Mongolia is the most sparsely populated fully sovereign state in the world. A total of 45 per cent of the population is concentrated in Mongolia's capital and largest city, Ulaanbaatar. The Government of Mongolia has been promoting population growth since its

Figure 1: Population Pyramid, 2017

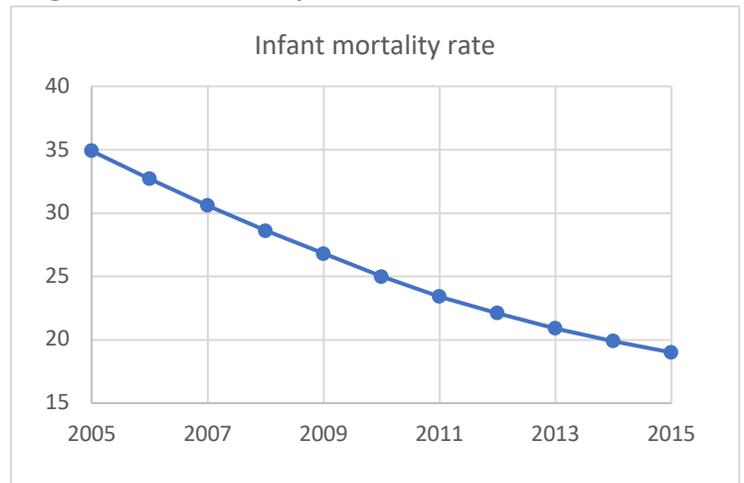


Source: PopulationPyramid.net

independence in 1921, and youth now constitute 15.2 per cent of the total population. This figure is only 0.2 percentage points below the Asia-Pacific regional average. Older persons constitute a mere 4 per cent of the total population, thus Mongolia can still be described as having an expansive population pyramid. From the late 1990s to the early 2000s, there was a drop in the country's fertility rate which resulted in the current lower youth (15-24) figure compared to that of working age adults

and children, see Figure 1. This was likely caused by a financial and social crisis triggered by the fall of the Soviet Union. The Government of Mongolia consequently strongly promoted population growth by campaigning for larger families, providing longer paid maternity leave, and offering monetary incentives for mothers with more than three children. The birth rate has thus increased 22 per cent since 2004 and there are now 2.7 births per woman. Advances in health care and the increased presence of medical professionals at births has drastically decreased the infant mortality rate, see Figure 2. This figure has more than halved since 2000, when 48.2 infants died per 1,000 births, and now the rate is 19.0. While this figure is an improvement, it is still much higher than other countries in the East and North-East Asian subregion. It is also higher than countries with similar income levels, such as Georgia at 10.6 deaths.

Figure 2: Infant mortality rate



Source: ESCAP Statistical database

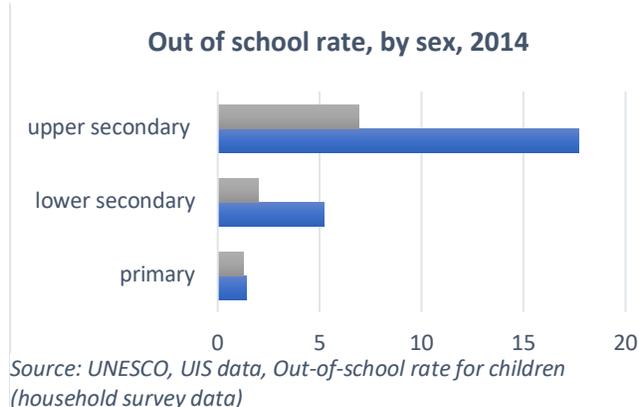
The life expectancy at birth is currently 69.5, a figure lower than countries in similar income categories, such as the Russian Federation at 71.2 and China at 76.4. There is also a great difference between male and female life

expectancy, with women expected to live 8.3 years more than their male counterparts at 73.7 years. In terms of the country's economy, there has been growth, with an increase of 4.9 per cent in real GDP from 2017 to 2018, the average for the region being 5.5 per cent. The GDP per capita in 2018 was USD 4,300, placing it in the lower-middle-income group.¹ However, according to ILO statistics, only 1.9 per cent of the employed population are considered working poor.²

Education

Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all. In spite of several challenges, Mongolia is working to satisfy the SDG 4 prerequisites. Literacy rates are high, with 98.9 per cent of young women and 98.0 per cent of young men considered literate. As the dropout rates are unavailable for Mongolia, the out of school rate will be assessed. The out of school rate is lowest in primary school, see Figure 3, demonstrating the positive effect government efforts are having on providing a full primary school education for

Figure 3: Out of school rate, by sex, 2014



all. Nevertheless, the primary school out of school rates are again higher than those of other countries in the East and North-East subregion. That noted, when compared with countries in similar income groups such as the Russian Federation and Armenia, with rates of 2.5 and 3.6 per cent respectively, the figure is comparable. The lower secondary out of school rate is, however, slightly higher than countries of similar income levels. Although data are lacking, it is clear that Mongolia fares better than its western neighbours in terms of upper secondary out of school rates. For instance, Kyrgyzstan has 15.6 and 22.5 per cent out of school rates among young women and young men, respectively.³

According to the latest data, the Government of Mongolia has invested only 4.6 per cent of GDP into education. When this figure is compared with other middle income, or even low-income countries, in the Asia and Pacific region, it is low. Timor Leste invested 7.8 per cent of GDP into education in 2014, and Viet Nam devoted 5.7 per cent. The low figure for Mongolia to a significant degree sheds light on the priority accorded to education - a basic building block for progress in the development process. However, it must be remembered that the relationship between educational expenditure and educational outcomes is complex. While the amount of spending is important, other factors such as efficiency and implementation also play a vital role in ensuring positive educational attainments. Well-designed, focused and inclusive educational policies need not be costly and can greatly improve the educational situation for all, particularly for those furthest behind.

¹ IMF, DataMapper, 2018 Available at: http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/NGDPDP_C@WE0/OEMDC/ADVEC/WEOWORLD/APQ/PHL

² ILO, Employment by economic class -- ILO modelled estimates, May 2018.

³ UNESCO, UIS database Out-of-school rate for youth (household survey data)

In order to lessen the dropout rate, especially that of upper secondary education, the Government has invested in the Cooperative Vocational Training (CVT) in the Mineral Resource Sector. This allows for highly-skilled training of Mongolian youth to exploit one of the country's natural resources. A co-financing arrangement by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) provides short-term training and career guidance measures, whilst also assisting students by providing career guidance, counselling and in-company vocational training. It further pilots vocational training courses at technician level, short-term qualification measures and vocational guidance. This project has been very successful, with roughly 700 students currently enrolled in study courses supported by the CVT project and 1,400 job seekers have received further qualification through short-term skills training. A total of 56 per cent of 630 job seekers surveyed said they had found employment after the training.

Youth Employment

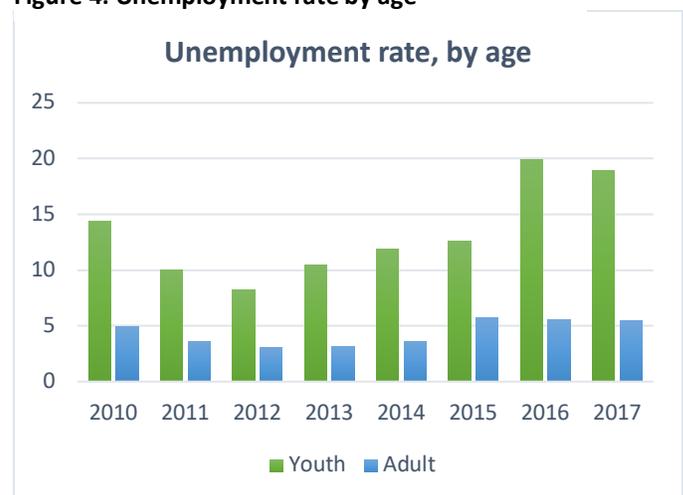
SDG 8 aims to promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all. This goal is specifically targeted at ensuring vulnerable groups - such as young people, women and persons with disabilities - enter the labour force.

Youth unemployment is a substantial problem in Mongolia and as a result International migration has significantly increased with an estimated one in eleven Mongolians living abroad.⁴ International migration and mobility of Mongolians is growing rapidly, with approximately 65 per cent of Mongolians migrating for economic reasons.⁵ Mongolian

⁴ IOM, <https://www.iom.int/countries/mongolia>, data from 2011

migrants to foreign countries are now usually educated and skilled young people who are in search of higher paid jobs and a better quality of life for themselves and their families. These migrants are mainly males and traveling to other Asian countries (with the majority going to China, the Russian Federation, the Republic of Korea and Japan) some countries in Europe (i.e., Belgium, the Czech Republic, Netherlands and Switzerland) and the United States of America. As mentioned, this mass migration is likely due to the very high youth unemployment rate, see

Figure 4: Unemployment rate by age



Source: ESCAP Statistical database

figure 4. The latest data (2017) show that Mongolian youth are 70 per cent more likely to be unemployed than Mongolian adults. When this unemployment figure is compared with other countries in East and North-East Asia it is extremely high; the youth unemployment rate in Japan is only 4.6 per cent.⁶ However, when compared to countries of similar income levels, higher rates than Mongolia exist; for instance, in

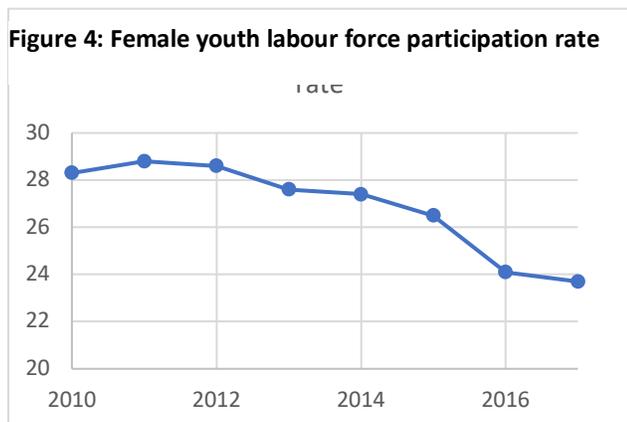
⁵ IOM, 2010

<https://www.iom.int/countries/mongolia>

⁶ ESCAP Statistical database

Georgia the youth unemployment rate is 29.3 per cent.⁷

The female labour force participation rate shows that only 23.7 per cent of young women were employed, or looking for work, see figure 5 – a figure that has decreased 16 per cent since 2010.



ESCAP statistical database

In light of these weak employment data, the Government of Mongolia has invested in the Programme to Support Employment for Youth and Graduates from Vocational Education and Training Institutes. This initiative aims to provide graduates of vocational education institutes with permanent employment opportunities and to support business initiatives. It also focuses on encouraging students to earn an income without leaving education, while facilitating the transition of youth and vocational education institution graduates to the workplace. The programme has been and is continuing to be a success. In the first 11 months of 2016, 454 vocational education graduates received financial support through the Province Labour and Social Welfare Service and the District Labour and Welfare Service. A mediation service for part-time jobs was also initiated, and in the first 11 months of 2016, a total of 8,026 students were hired in part-time jobs by 2,023

⁷ ESCAP Statistical database

⁸ ESCAP statistical database

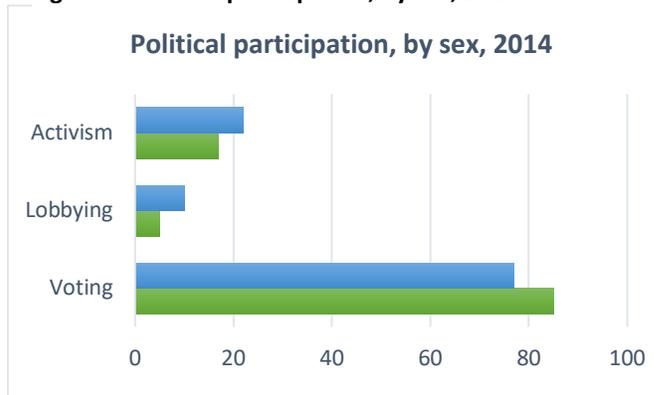
employers. The total number of participating students included 5,882 university students and 2,144 vocational training institute students.

Civic Engagement

In 2017, data show that only 17 per cent of the seats in parliament were held by women, a figure 11 per cent less than the ESCAP average.⁸ This lack of female representation is mirrored in the mode of young female citizens civic engagement, see figure 6. It is clear that while young women are more likely to vote, they are 50 per cent less likely to be involved with lobbying and 22 per cent less likely to engage in activism than their male counterparts. Compared with other countries in the region with available data, Mongolia has one of the lowest female participation in lobbying, on par with Japan at 5 per cent and just above Cambodia at 3 per cent.⁹ In spite of this, Mongolia has the highest percentage of female voters.

Data also show that only 57.4 per cent of young women follow political news compared to 67.1 per cent of young men. It is also shown that 51.2

Figure 5: Political participation, by sex, 2014



Source: UNDP, Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South-East Asia, 2014

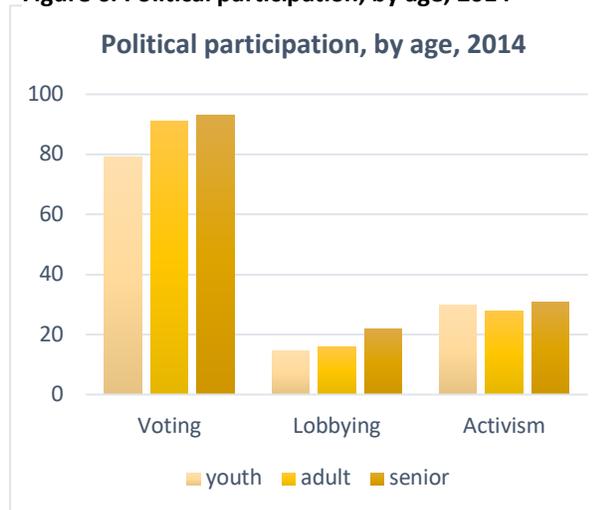
⁹ UNDP, Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South-East Asia, 2014

per cent of young men are interested in politics, while only 39.5 per cent of young women are.¹⁰

Compared with citizens in other societies, Mongolians in general express considerable dissatisfaction with government, and Mongolian youth tend to be even more negative in this regard than older citizens. Among youth, those with relatively higher educational attainments or who reside in urban areas are more critical of government than their less educated or rural counterparts. This indicates that youth with access to information about government performance tend to be critical evaluators.

When taken as a total, the youth population votes on average 14 per cent less than adults and seniors, and participates in lobbying 32 per cent less than seniors, see figure 7. However, in terms of activism, youth participate at a similar level to adults and seniors.

Figure 6: Political participation, by age, 2014



Source: UNDP, *Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South-East Asia, 2014*

When these figures are compared with other countries in the region, Mongolian youth have

one of the lowest percentages of lobbying participation; only Cambodia, at 14 per cent, and Singapore, at 9 per cent, have lower rates. Nonetheless, in terms of voting, Mongolian youth were at the highest levels, outranked only by Viet Nam and Thailand with 81 and 84 per cent, respectively.¹¹

A look at corruption shows that Mongolia has quite poor figures relating to trust in government and the prevalence of corruption. These data must be interpreted within the socio-political context. In Mongolia, the 2009 presidential elections were followed by a political crisis during which a number of high-profile corruption cases further shook public confidence. In a recent survey, when asked if corruption was non-existent or rare only 11 per cent of Mongolian youth responded favourably, compared to 18 per cent of adults and 23 per cent of older persons.¹² These figures are the lowest by a substantial margin when compared to other countries in the region for which data are available. For context, 86 per cent of Cambodian youth responded favourably and Taiwan Province of China, second lowest only to Mongolia, saw 22 per cent responding favourably. This perception of corruption explains Mongolia's low corruption perception index position at 103 out of 180 countries.¹³

¹⁰ UNDP, *Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South-East Asia, 2014*

¹¹ UNDP, *Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South-East Asia, 2014*

¹² UNDP, *Youth and Democratic Citizenship in East and South-East Asia, 2014*

¹³ Corruptions Perception Index, 2018. Available at: <https://www.transparency.org/>

Recommendations:

Education

Mongolia's upper secondary education dropout rate is high for its subregion and government expenditure on education as a percentage of GDP is low for the region and for the country's income level. This low figure indicates the priority accorded to education - a basic building block for progress in the development process. The government needs to invest more into the education system to ensure young people complete a full education. Financial incentives could be provided to poorer families who require their young members to sacrifice education for activities that provide a source of income. The government should also invest in vocational training and education for young people. Additional training will allow youth to have a wider skill set and broader experience, increasing their opportunity to secure employment.

Youth Employment

Youth unemployment is one of the predominant obstacles currently facing Mongolian society. While there are many government-backed initiatives to increase the number of young people in the labour force - such as the Part Time Project, Ulaanbaatar Soup and The Young Mongolian with a Job and Income Programme - more needs to be done. Training and skills workshops should be expanded to cover all regions of Mongolia, both rural and urban to ensure all youth are benefitting from such programmes. Labour market information and career counselling at school should be provided so young people can ensure they have a suitable skillset for the careers they wish to pursue.

Civic Engagement

Trust in the government and corruption perception are major issues that should be addressed across all sections of society, not just amongst youth. Young people should, however, be more involved with political decisions. A National Youth Parliament would bring more young people into contact with politics and governance and an emphasis should be placed on greater participation of those from rural areas, especially young women. Financial incentives should be provided to encourage those from lower economic backgrounds to become involved. If young people are at the core of decision-making which affects them, the corruption perception will decrease among the younger generation and more effective governance is likely to result.